

Living Life to the Fullest

Part XXXV

It's Family and It's Permanent

1 John 5:6-13

It was one of those striking moments that forever will be etched in the theater of my mind. I had just stepped off the bus and finished the long walk home when I saw something that had to be out of an inconceivable dream. I could not have been more than 8 or 9 years old.

There, walking in front of our farm house, was what appeared to be my father as he surely looked 20 years earlier. I know, for I had seen pictures of him in his late teens and early twenties. This site actually frightened me. The sense of bewilderment rocketed when, after a few moments—which seemed like an eternity—my father walked around the corner. There they were, two men who appeared as clones. One had the features of a young man and the other features of a weathered and aged man. Had it not been for the age difference, they could have been identical twins. Unbelievable!

The awkward silence was broken by, “Son, I want you to meet your cousin Harlen.” With great reservation, I reached out to shake the hand of one I had only heard about on two, maybe three, very brief occasions.

Harlen by no means was the pride of the family as I was to find out later. He was a troubled kid, equivalent to a modern-day runaway—only this was the 40's. It's not that he wasn't talented and attractive. Those he was, but he was the family member no one talked about. How could two people look so much alike and be so very different?

Why was he here? The way I heard it, he was desperate for food, clothing, and of course, money. He came to our place because he was “family.” Later I discovered Dad had tried to help him on several occasions. None of us will ever know the extent of his trouble with the law and personal demons, but I do remember a few years later when I was in high school, my father received a call in the middle of the night. It was from the authorities in New Orleans. I could see the pain on my father's face. I didn't need to be told that Harlen had been found dead.

And why did they call Dad? Harlen had been born a Ewing—regardless of the circumstances, even given the estrangement and disappointment, Harlen was still a member of the family. Harlen knew that, but somehow he was never able to understand it.

It's only in a small degree that any of us can understand what it truly means to have been born into *God's* family. God in His grace has not only made it possible for us to experience spiritual birth but also to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that regardless of our circumstances and often estrangement, we will always be His child. But there's more. Not only can we know we are His for eternity, but we can and must grow in our understanding for the present. 1 John 5:6-13 opens the door for that understanding.

LIFE RESPONSE:

1. This week **MEMORIZE** and **MEDITATE** on 1 John 6:13, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*”
2. Scripture is loaded with specific references to our eternal security that God in His grace has promised to those who have been born in Him. The following are but only a few. Beside each one, write out a simple phrase or sentence that reflects the effect it should have in our understanding and experience.
3. How does our knowledge of the truth, the facts of being born into God's eternal family, affect how we live out our eternal life in the present? Refer to John 14:25-27; John 16:7-15; 1 John 5:7, 10, 18-20.
4. List specific areas of your life that take on a new and different significance when viewed through the lens of an eternal perspective.

PRAYER

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 6:13

Father,
Thank You for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Thank You for the opportunity to choose to receive Your gift by placing my trust in Him.

Thank You for the eternal life that only You can give.

Thank You for the gift of Holy Spirit that shapes my thinking and my actions.

Thank You for the security I can experience with You, and the members of my family.

I ask that You will create in me an understanding and that I will demonstrate a willingness to reflect all that I know and all that I am in my eternal relationship with You.

. . . and for Your Glory
Amen