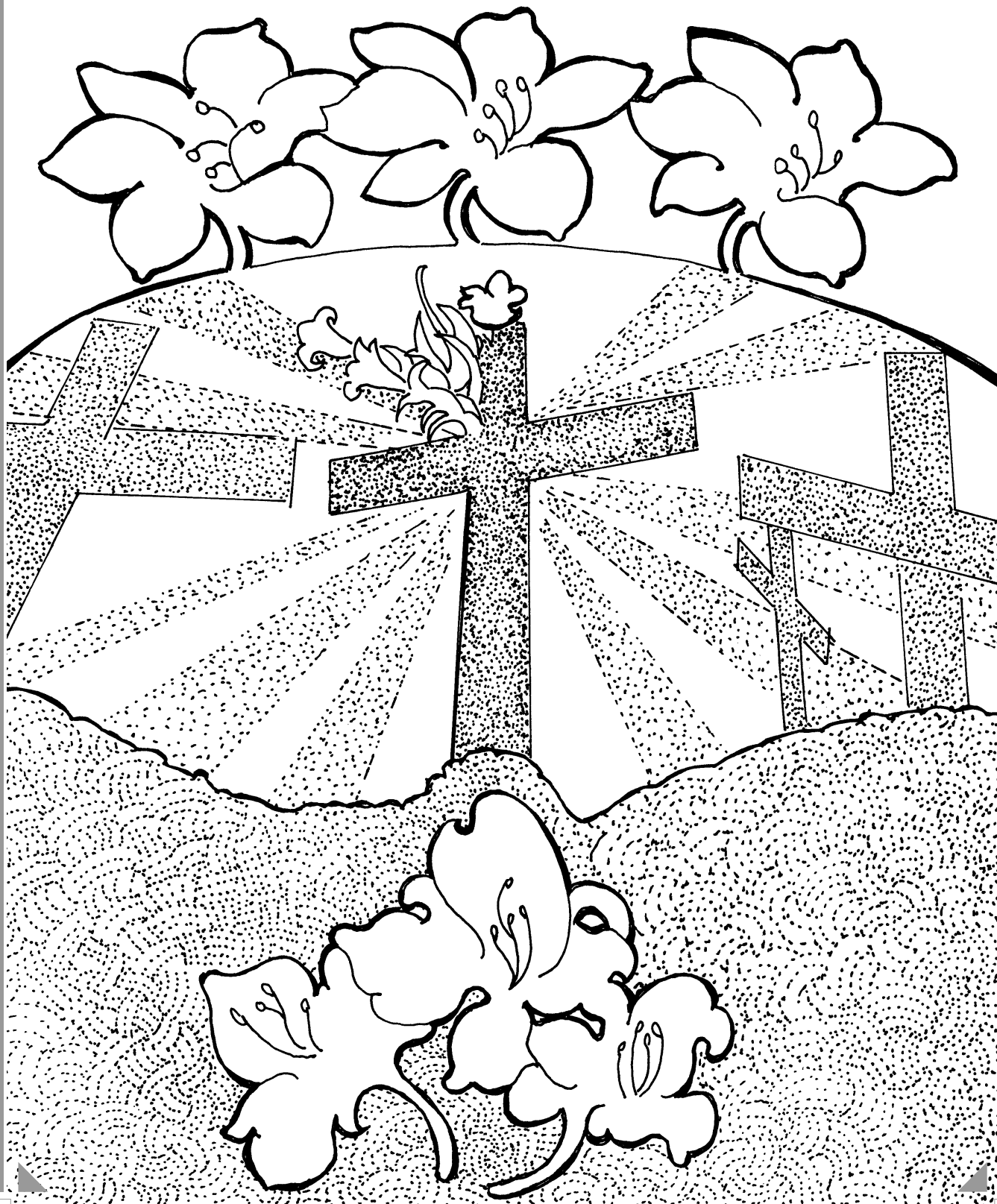


*All other crosses mean only death! But there springs from the cross of Christ  
a new flower of life that is no myth. "I am the Resurrection and the Life."*



## **John 3:14-18**

New International Version of the Holy Bible

### **I BELIEVE IN LIFE EVERLASTING**

**“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” John 3: 14-18**

One of the qualities of God is that he is from old, even from everlasting. He has no beginning and he has no end. One of the qualities of sinful man is that he is born, lives for a few years and dies. Because we are children only for a day, we do not understand eternity or life everlasting. Our text says that whosoever believeth on Jesus as their Savior will have eternal life. Sin brought into the picture death. God told Adam and Eve in the Garden that they should not eat of the forbidden fruit for they would die, and they did. From that moment in the garden, the germ of death entered into their very being. But the very opposite is said of God for he is the very essence of eternal life. He had life even before there was human life on this planet. In him is life. And now he who is life declares that Jesus is the giver of eternal life by removing the cause of death, namely sin. Paul says: **“But now that you have been set free**

**from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.” Romans 6:22** But how long is eternity? In trying to explain eternal life to his students, a teacher used the following illustration: There is a little bird that returns every thousand years to a mountain of granite, whets its beak three times on its uppermost heights and then flies away. When that little bird has whetted down the mountain then one second of eternity will have passed. So the legend goes, but even this illustration falls short. Eternity is something that boggles the human mind and it is the reason that we confess in the Third article of the Apostles’ Creed: I BELIEVE IN THE LIFE EVERLASTING. It is not something that we understand; it is something that we believe because it has been promised to all who believe in Christ. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16**

Why are people born? What are we here for? What is our destiny? Why does God have people born when he knows they are going to die? These are real questions for all of us to answer.

**1. In the first place, God has people born so that they may be a blessing to others here on earth.** All people are meant to be a blessing to others and many are. Maybe you don’t feel that you have been much of a blessing, but don’t under-estimate what God can do with you. Who can measure the blessing some of you have been as husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, parents, children, grandparents, church members, or citizens of this community and the world. By your life, by your work and your offerings you have brought good not just to those in your own family or community but to many people in the world whom you have never met. God has blessed you and made you a blessing beyond what you have ever imagined. Only eternity will reveal it all.

**2. Second, God has people born so that they might live in heaven forever.** That's the main reason. People have been given life by God not that they might die, but that they might live. You see, when a believer dies, he or she really does not die, but simply moves to a new place which we call life everlasting. To understand what we are saying we have to remember that a person is made of two parts, body and soul. When God created Adam, he first formed his body out of the dust of the ground. Then he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and Adam then became a living soul. Every person is made of two parts and death is a separation of the two. The body is laid in the grave and returns to dust, but the soul returns to God who gave it. The soul of a Christian is taken to heaven right away. The body remains in the grave until the return of Christ and the great resurrection. At that point, the Christian is with Christ body and soul forever. Because the Christian's soul is taken to heaven at death, Jesus told Martha: **“. . . whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” John 11:26** All who have died believing in Jesus as their Savior are alive. When you, who are Christians, die that won't be your end but instead the beginning of a new life in heaven. We believe this. It isn't something that we have had an experience or feeling about, we believe it because the Bible says so and that is why we confess in the last sentence of the Apostles' Creed: *“I believe in the life everlasting.”*

### **I. Why We Believe In Life Everlasting**

Madelyn Murray, who is an atheist, said in answer to a question on life after death: *“Of course, I don't believe in any life after death. We are just like all other animals - when we die that's the end.”* We have to feel sorry for her and all others like her. How fortunate we are! By God's grace we believe in life everlasting. No, it isn't some wild dream or an escape from reality. Death is not the end. There is a life everlasting for all who believe in Jesus as Savior.

Christ gave his life to make life everlasting possible. Our text speaks of a prominent man named Nicodemus. He was a member of the Supreme Court of the Jewish church at the time. He had evidently heard about Christ and his miracles. Maybe he had heard Jesus preach. One night he visited Christ to find out just who he was and what he taught. In this evening session Jesus emphasized two very important truths: One, you are a sinner and in great need of salvation and two, I'm your Savior and can give you life everlasting. **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” John 3:14**

Nicodemus knew the story of the serpent well, for he remembered that he had been taught that this story had occurred back in history when Moses led the people of Israel from Egypt to Palestine. In spite of God's goodness, the people had repeatedly complained against God and even threatened to revolt and go back to Egypt. Suddenly snakes appeared all over the camp and thousands were bitten and hundreds died. When they cried unto the Lord for help, the Lord told Moses to make a snake out of brass and then to lift it up on a pole where the people could really see it. He promised that all who looked at that snake of brass would not die but live. As a result, all who believed the promise of God and looked at the serpent on the pole lived.

Jesus said: **“. . . so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” John 3:14** Christ, of course, was speaking of Mt. Calvary and his crucifixion. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so Christ was lifted up on Calvary. As all who looked at the serpent lived, so Christ said, all who would look to him would have life everlasting. The exact promise of Christ is: **“. . .**

**whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16** Does anyone believe that Christ would have gone through all the agony and suffering of crucifixion if there were no life beyond the grave?

We believe in life everlasting because God gave his only Son to die for us. Our text continues: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. . .” John 3:16** It’s easy to say, but who would be willing to do it? During World War II our country was fighting on many fronts. A father who had taken his son to the airport in order to send him to join the fight remarked sadly: *“It isn’t easy to send him off when I don’t know where he is going or what’s going to happen to him.”* It wasn’t easy for our Father in heaven to send his only Son, not just across the ocean but from heaven to this miserable earth, knowing exactly what would happen to his Son. The Father knew that the church would reject him, that the courts would condemn him, and that the people would lift up their hands and voices to crucify him. In spite of these facts, the Father sent his one and only Son because he loved the world. Yes, the Father loved the world and he also loves us, for he sent Jesus to us.

Why did he do it? Our text answers: **“that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16** Does anyone believe that the Father would have sent his Son to suffer such agony if there is no life everlasting? The great theme of the Bible is: There is a life everlasting for all who believe in Christ Jesus.

David, in the Old Testament Psalms, rejoiced in a life everlasting. **“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalms 23:6**

Christ himself said: **“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19** Christ wasn’t talking of this earth in this passage; he meant the heaven to which he ascended shortly after his resurrection. On another occasion he told his followers that on the last day he will come in all his glory, escorted

by millions of angels. Without any trouble he will separate the sheep from the goats, that is, the believers from the unbelievers. To all believers he will say: **“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” Matthew 25:34** Now note these words: **“. . . the righteous to eternal life.” Matthew 25:46**

St. Peter declares that Christ’s resurrection guarantees us an inheritance that never fades away; it is reserved in heaven for all who are kept in the faith. **“Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” I Peter 1:3-5**

St. Paul in his classic letter to the Christians in Corinth admits that if Christ didn’t rise from the dead on Easter morning then all preaching is in vain, God is a liar, our faith is useless, and those who died trusting in Christ have perished. But then he declares emphatically: **“ . . . Christ has been raised from the dead. . . Death has been swallowed up in victory . . . thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I Corinthians 15: 12, 54, 56**

St. John sums it up when he writes: **“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” I John 5:11**

So David, Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, as well as many other holy and inspired writers of the Bible proclaim the same glorious message: God gave his Son; the Son gave his life so that all who believe in him might have an everlasting life. That’s why we confess: *“I believe in the life everlasting.”*

## II. The Joy and Glory of the Life Everlasting

Some unbelievers say flippantly: *“You like chicken and I don’t. You believe in an everlasting life and I don’t. What’s the difference?”* It makes all the difference in the world because there really is an everlasting life and its joy and comfort is beyond description.

How do you describe the pleasures of heaven to your children? Somehow words can never fully describe it. How do you describe ice to a South African who has never seen ice or felt the cold? How do you describe heaven in human language? The apostles and prophets begin by telling us what we will not have in heaven: no more pain, no more sorrow, no more death, no more crying. **“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Revelation 21:4** Go ahead and list all that’s evil in this world from arthritis or cancer to worms in your peaches; add all the sinful feelings which afflict us like doubt, fear, guilt, depression, loneliness, hate, rejection . . . none of these will find any place in heaven.

On the other hand, the Scriptures tell us that heaven will last forever: **“. . . and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you . . . “ I Peter 1:4** We will have fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore: **“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” Psalm 16:11** The holy and clean we will enjoy the presence of Christ and sing in an everlasting choir composed of the holy angels and our fellow redeemed. **“. . . a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in the hands. And**



**they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’“ Revelations 7:9-17**

Hans once asked his father, Martin Luther, if their pet dog would be in heaven. Luther answered: of course, heaven will have dogs, ponies, kittens and bunnies as well as candy for the children. There will also be fruit trees, mansions, sailboats, and anything else that will be a delight for adults. St. John speaks of a city with foundations made of precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets paved with gold (*found in Revelations chapter 21 and 22*). Can earthly language ever describe heavenly glory? Of course not. That’s why we look ahead with great wonder and expectation. We wait for the day when we can see this heavenly glory and live in eternity as God promised his own people.

### **III. Who Will Enjoy Life Everlasting?**

Life everlasting was intended for all for: **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” II Peter 3:9**

People are often self-willed, stubborn and rebellious. Some, in spite of God’s love, prefer to have things their own way. They seem to feel no guilt for sin and no need for a Savior. Those who reject Christ have also rejected life everlasting. No unbeliever will ever enjoy life everlasting for our text says: **“. . . whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” John 3:18**

One of the joys of our everlasting life will be just this: in heaven there will be no unbelievers to molest us, no criminals to fear, and no prisons to build for them. Heaven is for believers only, but it is for all who believe in Jesus Christ. Our text says it three times:

Verse 15: “. . . **everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.**”

Verse 16: “. **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”

Verse 18: “**Whoever believes in him is not condemned . . .**”

It makes no difference whether you are white or black, rich or poor, a child or an adult, “good” or “bad” – if you turn to Christ in repentance, then everlasting life is yours. That’s why we confess with joy: *“I believe in the life everlasting.”*

Now, what will we do about it? If you and a group of others were out in deep water and about to drown, if a ship came by and threw you a lifeboat - what would you do? Wouldn't you try to get into the boat? After you were safely in the boat, what would you do? Ignore the rest and let them drown? Of course not, you would make every effort to save the others. So, in Christ there is life everlasting. Your first concern is to save yourself, to get into the eternal life boat. Are you in the boat? Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior? Secondly, when you are saved, will you then try to save others? There are so many still outside the boat splashing around in sin and doubt. Some are near, others are far away; some are your fellow workers, others are your own relatives; some are your friends, others are just neighbors. What are you doing to help them get into the boat? Women have given their sons or daughters for full time church or mission work. Some of you bring your regular mission and church offerings. Some of you pray without ceasing. Some of you speak to those around you about Jesus and his love. Praise the Lord for all who do these things! But the time is short for everyday some die and perish forever. Keep on working, praying and giving. There is a life everlasting not just for us but for all that we help bring into the boat.

When I enter the beautiful city  
And the saved all around me appear,  
I want to hear somebody tell me:  
“It was you who invited me here.”