

The Book Of Life

"... Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of fellow-workers whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3)

Paul's mention of "*the book of life*" is an almost casual inclusion here. His appeals to steadfastness is widespread through all his letters; his expression of confidence in the resurrection and future life was the underpinning of the endurance and martyrdom of early Christians, but nowhere else does he specifically refer to the "*book of life.*" Still, the existence of such a book, etched in God's mind and memory is as essentially an element of our faith as are the eternal natures of our spirit, a future resurrection and an eternal life with God.

Jesus made reference to such a book when the seventy returned with joy from the preaching tour Jesus had sent them on. They reported, "*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in thy name*" (Lk. 10:17). Jesus commented, "*I beheld Satan fallen as lightening from heaven*" -- their preaching and work had brought about great injury to the wicked one! Still He continued, "*Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven*" (Lk. 10:18, 20). The highest joy to Christians is to have their name enrolled in heaven!

Reference to the book of life is found most frequently in John's revelation. Why should we be surprised at this since the book sings victory to suffering saints? The church at Sardis was assured, "*He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life*" (Rev. 3:5). At the judgment before the great white throne, books will be opened including the book of life (Rev. 20:12). Those whose names are not written in that book will be cast into the lake of fire for there are just two places where men can spend eternity; either in heaven or hell, and we are further warned, "*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean or he that maketh an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life*" (Rev. 20:15; 21:27.) In view of these sober truths, the following questions are eminently important:

1. "Can one spend eternity in heaven, if his name is not enrolled there?" Absolutely not. John's word in Revelation 21:27 makes this exceedingly clear.
2. "How does one have his name written in the book of life?" Man's name is enrolled in the book of life when he is born. But when the age of innocency is lost through sin, man's name is blotted out of that book.

Therefore, it must be written in again. When Moses plead with God to forgive Israel's great sin in making the golden calf, he said, "*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written*" (Ex. 32:32). Jehovah replied unto him, "*Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*" (Ex. 32:33). Man's names are re-enrolled in the book of life when his sins are forgiven. Man's sins are forgiven when he obeys the gospel (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

3. "Once my name is enrolled in God's book of life, can it be blotted out again?" Most assuredly so. God would not have promised those of Sardis He would not blot their name out of the book of life, if it could not be so done. The fact that when we come to an age of accountability -- and thus have our names blotted out of that book, tells us that as sin once caused one's name to be removed from God's book, so sin can cause it to be removed again. Thus there is the constant urgency which we must all exercise to daily live a faithful, pure and watchful life.
4. "Is your name in the Lamb's book of life?"

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