

Lesson 5 --- Enslaved to God

1. Read and re-read chapter 6 of Romans. This lesson focuses on verses 19-23.

2. Can you relate to Newton's response to his breakfast Scripture reading? If so, how?

3. Please provide brief answers to the following questions:
 - a. What is necessarily the end result of our salvation?

 - b. What must believers be careful of as they seek sanctification?

 - c. According to Lloyd-Jones, what more do you need in order to be sanctified?

4. Briefly recap the summary provided in the notes for Romans 5 and 6.

5. Romans 6:23 is a great Gospel statement. Delineate the nuances of truth given here:
 - a. Describe *wages*—

 - b. Clarify *death*—

 - c. Consider how the *wages of sin* are realized in this life—

d. Give the contrast stated in this verse—

e. Define *gift*—

f. Discuss two possibilities facing every individual—

g. Explain the significance of the phrase *in Christ Jesus our Lord*—

Notes for Lesson 5

Question 2 (“Enslaved to God” Romans 6:19-23)

John Newton was the English slave trader who was converted while bailing water out of a sinking ship. He had lived a reckless and immoral lifestyle. After being born again, he wrote one of the most popular hymns of all time, “Amazing Grace.” Two years before his death, his sight had become so dim that he was no longer able to read. He was read a portion of Scripture each morning at breakfast. It was his custom to give a short response to each passage.

One morning the passage was 1 Corinthians 15:10, “*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*”

His response that morning was as follows, “I am not what I ought to be, how imperfect and deficient I am. I am not what I want to be. Soon, I will put off mortality and with it all sin and imperfection. Even though I am not what I ought to be, nor am I what I want to be, I can truly say that I am not what I once was—a slave to sin and Satan. And I joyfully concur with the apostle Paul that, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’”

“I am not what I once was” should be the joyful statement of every believer. Yes, we are still in process. Because I am alive to God and I am enslaved to Christ, I am continuing in the process of sanctification, for it is part of the reason that Christ died for me.

Question 3a (“The Wages of Sin and the Gift of God” Romans 6:22-23)

The eternal ramifications of heaven and hell are rightly emphasized, no doubt. But heaven and hell are not the only issues at stake in the Gospel. Your sanctification was also purchased at the Cross. If we have learned anything in our study, it is that sanctification is not optional. Sanctification will necessarily be the end result of salvation as much as the eternal well-being of your soul in heaven.

Question 3b Paul describes the process of sanctification. It is a daily task to present the members of our bodies as slaves to righteousness. It is important to understand that it is a daily and continual process because it is easy for us in our instant, drive-through culture to look for a quick fix—a simple,

effortless way towards achieving sanctification. The multimedia world that we are exposed to teaches the populace at large to look for speedy solutions for physical and emotional problems. If a person is depressed, he takes in a movie, goes shopping, or pops a pill. If he is having trouble with a personal relationship, he goes to a weekend seminar or to some bar to find somebody new.

Believers must be careful or else we could find it easy to carry this outlook of quick solutions into our spiritual lives. Many look for that one big emotional experience that will supposedly “flip the switch.” Some look for miracles. Some go to psychology. But these are not God's answers. He has already done everything necessary for our salvation and given us everything we need to live consistent Christian lives.

Question 3c Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote this, “You have already received 'all things that pertain to life and godliness.' (2 Peter 1) You do not need another experience. You do not need some new gift. You have been given everything in Christ. You are 'in Christ' from the beginning of your Christian life.”

Question 4 (“The Wages of Sin and the Gift of God” Romans 6:22-23)

This morning, as we finish chapter 6, we come to a verse that is well-known among believers for a variety of reasons, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” One reason that this verse is so well-known is that Romans 6:23 is part of the popular “Romans Road” for sharing the Gospel. This verse establishes that sin leads to death but that salvation is a gift from God. Another reason that this verse is so familiar is that certain texts of Scripture contain important summaries of vital truths which form the very heart of the Gospel, for example, John 3:16. Our text this morning contains one of those verses, 6:23.

This verse is a summary of what we have been studying in chapter 6 and even the last part of chapter 5. We saw in chapter 5 that a person is either “*in Adam*” or “*in Christ.*” Adam disobeyed God. His disobedience brought condemnation and death to all of his descendants. Hence, “*the wages of sin is death.*”

Jesus obeyed God. His obedience resulted in justification and life for those who are united to Him. Furthermore, at the end of chapter 5, Paul made a distinction between Law and grace. The Law affected the increase of sin and the result of sin is death. However, where sin increased, grace superabounded, bringing righteousness and eternal life. Therefore, “*The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.*”

Chapter 6 makes clear that the believer is immersed into Christ and, as a result, the old man is dead. Consequently, the old man who was enslaved to sin cannot coexist with the new man who is alive to God and walks in newness of life. Furthermore, Paul describes two slaveries. All are born into slavery to sin which leads to impurity and increased lawlessness. This kind of slavery leads to death: “*The wages of sin is death.*”

On the other hand, slavery to God leads to righteousness and eternal life, “*The free gift of God is eternal life.*” We saw last week that there are two choices, two paths in life. A person cannot be on both paths at the same time. All of this is summarized in 6:23.

Question 5 (“The Wages of Sin and the Gift of God” Romans 6:22-23)

Paul concludes chapter 6 with an all-inclusive statement in Roman 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

As I said at the beginning, Paul essentially summarizes this chapter in this verse. For it points back to all that he has written to that point. As I said, verse 23 is one of the great statements of the Gospel.

Paul seemed to condense the Gospel into one sentence. It is important that we do not allow familiarity with this verse to cloud our thinking about it. There are some important nuances of truth that we find here.

“For the wages of sin is death.” Notice that “wages” is plural. There are a number of consequences of sin that lead to death. The term “wages” was mostly used in Scripture of a soldier's pay for his service. This would particularly point to a daily wage. In other words, it does not refer to a large payment given at the end of the soldier's period of service but rather to something that was measured out to him day by day.

So Paul certainly is referring to death in terms of the “second death” as described in Revelation—that final, eternal death in hell. But there is also a reference to the ongoing wages of sin in this life that ultimately lead to death.

Consider for a moment how the wages of sin are realized in this life. For example, pride is a sin whose wage wreaks havoc for people. Pride looks at others as steps on a ladder to be climbed up as one is on his way to the top. Pride attempts to exploit people and control them. Pride sees life as all about “me,” and brings destruction to all who are touched by it.

Other examples of the wages of sin in this life are the effects of lust and other sexual sins. Adultery undercuts loyalty and trust. It destroys integrity; it ruins marriages and families. Homosexuality distorts and twists what is natural, exposing people to all kinds of disease.

Gluttony destroys the body, whether it be the overindulgence of food, drink, or drugs. It is self-destructive. Anger destroys others whether by physical violence or by words. You can wound others with your words and kill them slowly from the inside out. Envy, jealousy, greed, cheating, and stealing destroy contentment. Lying, cruelty, and gossip all have their own way of bringing destruction and death in this life. The wages of sin really is death in this life and the life to come.

But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But . . . Again, here is the great contrast that God brings to man by grace. Instead of death, there is life. Instead of sin, there is a holy, gracious God. Instead of wages, there is God's free gift. Ephesians 2:8 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”*

Gift . . . The Bible teaches that salvation is the gift of God. Wages are something that we earn. They are the results of our working or doing. A gift is something that is unearned. It is free. Scripture lays heavy emphasis on salvation as a gift given by God to sinful, undeserving men and women. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, “There is no more wonderful word than ‘grace.’ It is not merely a free gift, but a free gift to those who are without hope and without God and without merit.”

In the end, we can say this—and I have said it before: There are two possibilities facing every individual who comes into this world. There are only two. You either build your house on the rock or you build it on the sand. You go either through the narrow gate or through the wide gate. You are either on the narrow road or the broad road. You are either bearing good fruit unto Christ or you are bearing fruit to yourself.

These two paths are black and white, no shades of gray, no spectrum. There are only contrasts, stark differences. There is nothing in common between believers and unbelievers, in a spiritual sense. It is worth noting that this section on sanctification ends with a statement about the one question that the Bible asks about every one of us, “Whom do you serve?” stated in other ways: For whom are you living? Who is your master? Is it sin or is it God?

There is a finality in the contrast seen in 6:23. There is the second death and eternal life. The second death does not mean annihilation. It means a final and irreversible separation from God, outside of God's life. The end to which sin leads its slaves is found in the imagery of the book of Revelation. It is the lake of fire—a place of misery where the devil himself will be a fellow sufferer forever. It is a place of not knowing God. Right now in this life on earth, even unbelievers have the privilege of knowing the general revelation of God in creation. But in the second death, the sinner no longer has access to the glory of God.

On the other hand, the gift of eternal life is to be in the perfect presence of this God who is far above our comprehension. In a discussion this past week, I and a fellow believer were considering how great a place would be where there is no more conflict, arguing, fighting, pain, pride, sorrow, selfishness, lying, death, immorality, discontentment, and strife; but only joy, pleasure, peace, knowledge, love, and service to others.

As I said, eternal life begins now. We have it, but we will one day know the fullness of it. Paul ended Romans 6 with the phrase, "*In Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Paul made clear that it is through