

The Wages of Sin is Death

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles tonight to Romans chapter 6, Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 6. I have something to tell you tonight, and what I have to tell you is a matter of life and death.

Now something tells me that if I could, and this isn't what I'm about to say, it's not the matter of life and death, it's an illustration. But if I could give you, I think, credible information that a deadly airborne virus, kills in less than 24 hours, had been released into this building.

And everyone here had already been infected with that virus just by breathing the air when you walked in the building. And I had the only antiviral medication that would counteract this particular virus.

And I had it right here with me, right here in the pulpit. Antiviral medication. This is water, but if I had it. It could counteract its effects, and you had to take it in the next half hour in order to survive.

I think you would be begging me, or maybe better, attacking me, to get it. So that you might live to see tomorrow. Because it would be a matter of life and death.

[1:24] But what I do have to tell you tonight is even more extreme than the example I've just given you. Because it's not talking about life on this earth and physical death.

We're talking about eternal life. And eternal death. Now that's enough, I think, for some of you probably to tune me out.

But that would be a more devastating mistake than ignoring my antiviral medication. Did I have such a thing? And were you infected with such a virus?

Tonight we want to consider a very familiar text. To persuade slaves of sin that are headed for death. An eternal death. To come to Christ, in whom you can find life.

And to encourage those who are in Christ. And who have that life. To be all the more grateful. All the more praising our God. And all the more living a life of holiness.

[2:27] That is pleasing in His sight. Romans 6.23 Most of you could probably recite it with me. For the wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. We want to consider death and life tonight. And it is a matter of death and life. Or life and death.

It's that serious. It's that significant. It's that important. Which is your destiny? Which are you headed for right this moment as you sit there in your seat tonight?

Life or death? We'll take them in turn. Beginning with death. Death. The wages of sin is death. You know what wages are. Something you earn.

Many of you here have a job. And you bring home a paycheck. You earn money. And it's given to you by your employer as a wage. It's something you've earned. Something you have a right to. For some it's an hourly wage.

[3:24] For other it's commission from sales. For other it's a wage based on the amount of work you're expected to do over the course of a year. But you earn it. You work for it. And you earn it.

And if you have a fair employer, you can expect to be paid a fair wage. There's a wage to be paid to those that have worked for it. Those that have earned it. And here in the passage, in this verse 23, sin is the employer.

It's the master for whom you work. Sin is the one paying the wages. Paul's been talking about those who have been enslaved to sin, but now instead are slaves of righteousness.

And as he concludes the section, sin isn't so much the action done, but the master serves. Sin is the one who pays the wage of death. Now, if you're a servant to sin, of course you sin.

And you earn your death by your sin. So it's the wage paid. It's the work that you do. It's both. But everyone since Adam has been born into the world a slave to sin. You come into this world sinning

and earning that wage of death that you will receive if you continue in your sin.

[4:35] And that means that each person here either is now or has been in the past enslaved to the cruel, relentless, heartless, taskmaster sin.

Your every inclination sinful. Every part of your being warped and corrupted by this employer. And so you live in sin. You do those things that are contrary to God's law.

You could ask, I think, most of the youngest children here what sin is. And if they've had Mrs. Withrow Sunday school class, they'll tell you that it's disobeying God. And that's what sinners do. Those who are enslaved to sin violate God's law. They break it. They either do what it says not to do or they don't do what it says to do. They sin. And so earn that wage of death.

You don't do what's right and holy. You don't love the light because it exposes your sinful, dark deeds. And so what is it that you get for this life of sin that you hold so dear? What wage does the master sin pay to his servants?

[5:37] To the slaves of sin? Well, it's death. The wage that sin pays is death. Now, that's not what sin is going to tell you it's going to pay. That's not the wage it holds out to you.

It doesn't say, come sin and I'll kill you. No, that's not what it says. It says, come sin and here's the wage I'll pay. I'll give you pleasure. I'll give you acceptance with the people that matter.

I'll give you happiness. I'll give you joy. I'll give you all sorts of things. I'll give you satisfaction. I'll give you wealth. I'll give you long life. I'll give you power. And it may deliver some of those things temporarily.

But the real wage that it's going to pay is masked from your view. Sin doesn't want you to know. Sin doesn't want you to know that Romans 6.23 is in your Bible. It would prefer that I never read it tonight. It would prefer that you had never heard it before.

Sin doesn't want you to know that the wage that it pays is death. That's perhaps why you don't like reading your Bible. You don't like coming to church. Sin has convinced you that such things are a waste of time and full of lies.

[6:41] In reality, God's Word, what you hear from this pulpit is the truth. And it exposes the lie of sin. That sin will pay all these good things. But you don't want to hear the truth.

The truth that the place that your sin is going to land you is in death. And that's eternal. Now, ever since Adam, sin and death, inextricably linked.

Romans 5.12. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. And in this way, death came to all men because all sin. And so, sin pays the wage of death. And in some ways, everyone here, even those who are now in Christ, will pay part of that wage or will receive part of that wage.

We're all going to physically die. Our lives are going to come to an end on this earth. And so, we must face physical death. Everyone here. And that's an effect of sin in the world. That's an effect of the fall.

Death is not a natural thing. It's an effect of sin. And so, that's the wage that will be paid. But for the one who is in Christ, the Christian, that physical death is but their entrance into life.

[7:48] We'll speak more of that in a moment. But for those who die in their slavery to sin, their physical death is just the beginning. The full wages, their eternal death, their eternal destruction.

And I wish tonight that I could convey to you the fullness of what that means. The depth of what eternal death is.

I wish that you could see it's far worse than just the ending of your physical life by some virus.

When you die, your soul will depart and go to hell where it will be tormented.

And then at the resurrection, your body and soul will be joined and will suffer for all of eternity. Your body will feel the pain, burning fire. But it won't ever be consumed. And so, it will last forever.

There will be nothing good there. Nothing pleasurable. Nothing happy. No relief there. You'll find none of the promised wages that sin held out. No pleasure.

[8:53] No approval. No happiness. None of those things. Only the real wage. And that is death. And if that frightens you, good, it should. But I want you to simply see tonight that this is what your life of sin will get you.

This is the wage that sin pays. It shouldn't be a surprise to you when you come to the end of your life and find yourself in eternal torment if you've been a slave to sin all your life.

It's very clear. The wage of sin is death. It's your problem because it's your sin and your enslavement to sin. Sin will pay this wage and nothing else.

And you'll have no one to blame but yourself. And so don't be deceived about the wages of sin. Don't be surprised when sin tries to convince you to laugh this message off tonight. Tell you, it's not a lie. He doesn't know what he's talking about. It's death. Everybody's going to die. And so, sure, you're going to die. But look at all of these good things I have to offer you. Don't listen to the lie.

[9:55] What would you expect from sin? It's not going to tell you the truth and warn you. It's not going to say, go read your Bible and be warned that I'm going to kill you. It's going to hide that. It's going to mask it. And so listen to the truth tonight, to the Scriptures, to the Word of God about where your sin will land you.

This is what you are earning. This is the wage that sin will pay. It will bring death. But you should know as well that it doesn't have to be this way.

Though all are born in sin, you can find escape from slavery to sin. The half of the verse that we always seem to remember is the wages of sin is death. And it's good for those even here tonight who are in Christ to remember that.

That's where we were headed. That's what we have earned for ourselves is death. That's what we deserve, what we just talked about. And some here are still on that path, still moving in that direction, still earning that.

But many here in Christ, that's where you were going. That's where I was going. That's the wage I had earned. And so what a marvelous thing that we gather to remember tonight.

[11:04] That there is a Savior. One whose death we remember tonight around the Lord's table. And so there's not just death to speak of tonight. There's the second half of the verse.

But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. There's a gift. Now this is different than a wage, isn't it?

This is Christmas time and people are giving and receiving gifts. And when you open your presents on Tuesday, if you so celebrate Christmas with the giving and receiving of gifts, it won't be because you've earned that present that you got.

It will be because somebody who loves you out of the goodness, the kindness of their heart gave it to you. Because it's a gift. It's something you received that you didn't earn.

Something that you didn't deserve. But was given to you anyway. Because someone loves you.

And so you're privileged to receive a gift from them. Both ways you receive. A paycheck, you earn it.

[12:04] You get your wage. And a gift, you get a gift. But one you earn and one you don't. And here in Romans 6.23, we learn that we can have a gift instead of the death wage.

And it comes from God. Sin pays the wage of death, but the gift of God is eternal life. It comes from a good, a generous God. Instead of the cruel, slave driver sin, we have the generous and kind and gracious and loving God who delights to give good gifts to His children.

He loves to give good things to you. And isn't it funny how sin lies to us? And how it tries to paint God as exactly the opposite. It tries to paint God.

He's a cruel taskmaster. All He has is a list of rules for you. And He's cruel and He's mean and he's tyrannical. He's not loving. He's not kind. That's the picture sin paints. And in reality, that's what sin is.

Sin is the cruel taskmaster. Sin is the tyrant. Sin is the one that enslaves. And sin tries to paint itself as the one who sets you free.

[13:09] Free from all these rules. Free from all these things. When in reality, it's God who can set you free. See how sin twists and takes the truth and mangles it until it's unrecognizable.

No, God is the one who gives good gifts. The testimony of Scripture. Every good and perfect gift is from above. Coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows.

Now, God is often blamed or accused, mocked, or rejected because He's supposedly cruel or capricious, saving some and not others.

He gives this gift only to certain people. God should by right send all of us to eternal punishment and death. It's what we've earned following our taskmaster sin, but instead, God has mercy on His people.

He gives us a wonderful gift, and that gift is life. eternal life. He gives us the gift of not having to fear death.

[14 : 09] He gives us the gift of looking forward to an eternity in His presence with all of His people. He gives us an alternative to eternal torment and agony. He plucks us from the grip of Satan and won't let anything snatch us back out of His hand.

Preserving our life in Him. But if you've been around here for any length of time, you know that God just couldn't overlook all of our sin and just give us the gift of life when we've earned death for ourselves.

And that's where the Lord's Supper comes into play. Paul doesn't stop by saying the gift of God is eternal life. There's a way He can give us eternal life, and that is in Christ.

And so what we've gathered to observe here tonight is the gift whereby we can have the gift of eternal life. The gift of God's Son. It's what we remember at Christmas. Jesus coming into the world to save sinners like us.

Romans 5.15 But the gift is not like the trespass for if the many died by the trespass of one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many.

[15 : 18] That's why He says it's eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. God punished our sins in His own Son at the cross so that we don't have to be punished.

You hear that? We deserve death. And God gave the wage that we earned to His own Son. And we who haven't earned life, God gives us that gift because His Son earned it for us.

He did earn life. We didn't. And God gives us that gift through what Christ has done for us. We receive the wage He earned.

He receives our wage. Matthew Henry says it this way, and this gift is through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is Christ that purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it.

He is the Alpha and Omega all in all in our salvation. And so through the obedience of Christ, God can give us the free gift of eternal life.

[16 : 21] Free for us, but it costs Jesus dearly. It costs so high that we have a sacrament given so that we'll never forget. An ordinance given to feed and strengthen our faith as we remember tonight.

The suffering and death of Christ who paid the penalty for our sins so that we might have life. And then He didn't stay in the grave, did He? He rose from the dead conquering death so that death no longer has a sting for those who are in Christ so that we might have life.

And so the response tonight must be one of faith. If you're not in Christ tonight, you can come to Christ and open your hand of faith, receive this best of all gifts, pray that God would open your eyes to it tonight.

We really have the best of all worlds here tonight. We're remembering the birth of Christ at Christmastime. We have the Lord's Supper to remember His death, the reason why He was born. We've heard of His resurrection by which He gives us life.

All of this here together tonight. What better time to come and rest on the Savior, to cry out to Him, God be merciful to me the sinner. Understanding your sin.

[17 : 37] Remember everything that we've already said. You're a sinner. And you're not going to be able to earn your salvation. It's too late for that. And so your only hope is Christ to come to Him.

Won't you come tonight? If you had been exposed to a virus that was going to kill you in 24 hours and I had the medicine here, you'd be all over me to get it. You'd want it.

And that's just your physical life. And so won't you come tonight to get something far more valuable? Come to Christ. Faith in Christ. There's your antiviral medication.

You come and receive Him by faith tonight. And instead of the wage of death, you can have the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And for those who have received this gift, it ought to move us to thanks and praise tonight. What a thing that the Son of God has done for us. It didn't just take time to describe sin and slavery to it and the death that we deserve just to awaken lost sinners tonight.

[18 : 41] It's to remind us of what we once were. Of what we would be apart from the grace of God. That's where we were headed and yet God has taken us and He's set us on the path that leads to life.

And so as we gather around the Lord's table tonight, be filled with hearts of gratitude and praise. that pains us because we know that it was for our sins. Our enslavement to sin.

Our love of our sin. Jesus went to the cross. And yet, it causes us to rejoice because He did go to the cross that those sins might be forgiven.

And it ought to spur us on as well to a life of holiness. That's what Paul's been talking about here. Change of life. Those who were once alive to sin are now dead to sin. And those who were once dead to Christ are now alive to Him.

Walking in newness of life. That is what we must be doing. How can we who have had such a high price paid for the forgiveness of our sins then go and continue in those sins?

[19:41] Why would we continue in sin if the wage of sin is death? And we want nothing to do with that any longer. Sin is no longer our master. God is. We live by His rules. Not by sins.

And so let us be putting off that old man. Coming afresh in repentance when we find ourselves stumbling again. Coming back to seek to honor God by the way we live.

We're His servants now. We live by His truth. And so may God open our eyes tonight to have hearts filled with gratitude and praise. And if you've never had your eyes open to your sin, may they be open tonight.

Your sin is real. The wage that sin will pay is real. And may God awaken you to that reality and send you fleeing to Christ. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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