

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME VI // WAGES AND GIFTS
APRIL 17, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Note: Today is Easter Sunday when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Our text from Romans 6 for today is appropriate for this great occasion! For more information about Easter, see “For Further Study” at the end of this devotional.

Discussion Starter: What is the difference between a wage and a free gift?

Key Text: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

In 1830, a man named George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail Service and was sentenced to be hanged. President Andrew Jackson issued a pardon for Wilson, but Wilson refused to accept it. The matter went to the Supreme Court. Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Wilson would have to be executed. Marshall wrote: “A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon.”

Christ’s death on the cross is the pardon God sent for our sin. But before it becomes a pardon, we must receive it in faith. John 1:12 says, “*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*”

Let’s learn four important truths from our lesson’s key text: Romans 6:23.

1. Those who serve sin earn the paycheck of death.

“*The wages of sin is death...*” (v.23a).

Our sin separates us from God, who is the creator and sustainer of life. Isaiah 59:2 says, “*Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*” Since life is in God, and our sins separate us from Him, we are separated from life—we experience death.

In the Bible, the word “death” carries with it the idea of separation. *Physical* death occurs when the spirit is separated from the body (James 2:26). *Spiritual* death occurs when the spirit is separated from God. God told Adam in the Garden of Eden that if he disobeyed, he would surely die (Genesis 2:17). Sure enough, the moment Adam and Eve sinned, they began to gradually die *physically*, but they immediately died *spiritually*—their spirits were instantly separated from God. Their relationship with God was severed, and they could do nothing on their own to restore themselves to God. To bring Adam and Eve back into a relationship with Himself, God had to kill an animal and provide its skin for a covering for them (Gen.3:20)—a foreshadowing of the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. So, the person who works for sin earns the wage of death—spiritual death immediately, and physical death eventually.

Discuss: Why would separation from God be the worst thing that could possibly happen to a person? Why would an inseparable relationship with God be the best thing that could happen to a person?

2. Those who receive God's gift of salvation receive eternal life.

"...but the free gift of God is eternal life..." (v.23b).

Receiving God's gift of salvation by receiving Christ restores us to a relationship with God, who is life. So, we are no longer separated from God—we have eternal life! 1 John 5:12 says, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

The word "gift" (v.23) means "a present given as a sign of good favor." This gift of God is "free" (v.23)—it cannot be earned like a paycheck. Ephesians 2:8–9 explains this further: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Sin pays its wages in death, and sinners get what they've earned. But God offers a free gift, and believers in Jesus Christ receive what they don't deserve: eternal life.

Discuss: Read Romans 8:35-39. What difference does God's assurance that you are eternally secure in His love make in your life?

3. Eternal life is available only through Jesus Christ.

"...eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (v.23c)

Jesus took our physical death and our spiritual death to the cross. He endured the full payment of our sin so that we would not have to. The Bible inextricably links eternal life with Jesus Christ. The gift of eternal life comes to those who believe in Jesus Christ, who is Himself "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

Discuss: How do these verses assert that eternal life is available only through Jesus Christ? John 3:16, 36; 6:68; 10:28; 17:3; 1 John 2:25

4. Eternal life does not begin when we die; it starts at the moment of salvation.

Eternal life is independent of time—eternity is not associated with years. Eternal life can function outside of and beyond time, as well as within time. Eternal life does not start when we die; rather, eternal life begins the moment a person exercises faith in Christ. It is our current possession—it is something we experience now! John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life." Note that the believer "has" (v.36)—present tense—this eternal life. (Also note the present tense emphasis of eternal life in John 5:24; 6:47). The focus of eternal life is not only on the quantity of our life in the future, but on the quality of our current life in Christ.

Discuss: How has your relationship with Christ affected the quality of your daily life?

For Further Study:

Search "Easter Questions" at www.gotquestions.org

"What Does 'The Wages of Sin is Death' Mean?" article at www.biblestudytools.com

Free online commentary on the Book of Romans at www.enduringword.com