Romans 6:23 (T.W.P. Wolston, Editor) 209048

The Gospel Messenger: Volume 12, Wages of Sin, and the Gift of God., The (6:23)

(Rom. 6:23.)

ON a kind friend's pressing invitation, the wife of a working man was induced to attend some special gospel services that were being held in the neighborhood. As she listened to the earnest pleadings of the evangelist, his stirring appeals went, in the power of the Spirit, to her heart, with the encouraging result that she was brought to the Lord, and found rest and peace in Christ. Amid much tribulation and persecution she went on her way rejoicing; for alas! she was greatly tried by her unconverted husband, who was not only harsh and cruel, but said very bitter and cutting things, which were by no means easy for flesh and blood to stand. Nevertheless she was, through grace, enabled to manifest the Spirit of Christ, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, and to exhibit a walk and conversation becoming His gospel. The consequence happily was that, in spite of himself, that ungodly man had to take knowledge of her that she had been with Jesus.

The change was evident, for he found that she prayed and read the Word of God, yet attended to all his wants, and looked after him with an unwearied care and consideration that left him nothing with which he could justly find fault. Still all this only seemed to exasperate him the more, and call forth volleys of unprovoked abuse, most hard for his wife to bear.

When going out one morning early to work he very emphatically declared that he would be home at a certain time, and vowed, if his dinner was not ready, he would do something too terrible to mention. Having completed the tidying of her house, and after having got through her work, she sat down to read a portion out of her now well-thumbed Bible, presuming, as she thought, that she had plenty of time to spare. While thus engaged in quiet meditation, to her great surprise she observed a figure pass the window, and could not help giving an involuntary shudder. It was her husband, and though he had returned much earlier than the hour agreed upon, she knew that would be no excuse, so she devoutly lifted up her heart to God for guidance and protection.

He called out, "Is my dinner ready?"

The soft reply was— "Sit down there for a minute or two, and it soon will be. I won't be long." He sat down on the very chair from which she had risen, and, remarkably enough, at the little table whereon lay the Bible which she in her haste had happened to leave open. His eye caught the last verse of Romans 6, and he began to spell the words, for he could scarcely read, and the whole scene and circumstances became extremely interesting. He scanned "For the," and spelling w-a-g-e-s, asked, "Wife, what is that?"

She replied, "Wages."

He continued: "of," and then s-i-n, saying, "Wife, what is that?"

She answered, "Sin."

He tried once more: i-s "is"; then d-e-a-t-h, and again added, "Wife, what is that?"

She rejoined, "Death."

Then he read the sentence slowly over, "For the wages of sin is death," and after a solemn pause, he said with a deep sigh, "If that is true, I am a lost man." The arrow of conviction went straight to his conscience, and all at once he felt what a sinner he was. By this time the meal was prepared and served up, so he drew in his chair and partook of it in silence. When finished, he rose, troubled and distressed, and as it seemed just staggered along to his work. His fellow-laborers did not know what to make of him, his entire demeanor was so completely altered. His rough, profane, and unbecoming language had stopped, while his rude, boisterous manner had given place to subdued evident concern. Nor could he find any pleasure in his former company and habits. Do what he would, and be where he might, the words, "For the wages of sin is death," kept ringing in his ears. He was haunted night and day.

This went on till he found himself wholly miserable, and thoroughly convinced of sin before God, so that on coming home one evening to tea, he no sooner entered the house than, he said, "Wife, I am going to the preaching with you tonight." She was, of course, delighted, for she had been crying to the Lord for him without ceasing. They went both of them together, and seated themselves in the meeting room. A hymn was given out and heartily sung. Prayer was then fervently offered up for a blessing on the message. The preacher gave out Romans 6. They both looked at each other, and wondered what was coming. To their astonishment he read, "For the wages of sin is death," which had by this time been burned into the man's very being. When, however, he came to the words, "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord," the husband seized hold of his wife's arm and audibly said—

"Ah, wife! you did not tell me that. That is the other side of the story."

He was just ripe for the next half of the verse, and there and then the Lord blessed it to the salvation of his soul. His load was removed. He got rid of his trouble. His burden rolled off. His distress was gone. He accepted the offer without delay. He had eternal life as a gift, and all in and through Christ as he sat on the seat. With breathless attention he followed every word uttered by the speaker as he told out with unction and power the old, old story of the gospel of God's grace.

That night they both returned to their humble cottage with their souls filled with joy, and their hearts overflowing with gratitude. Heirs together now of the same life and glory, their home was as happy as their hearth was cheerful, while they waited for God's Son from heaven, and looked for the blessed hope, Christ Himself.

THE WAGES OF SIN,

my reader, is a fact that cannot be gainsaid. But it is consequent on another equally undoubted fact, and what is that? Sin. Nor is it a question of what you or anyone else think of it, but what God thinks of it. How does He estimate sin? Man may try to extenuate or excuse it, but it is all without avail as long as God cannot. He measures sin by the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, and that is infinite, hence the desert is infinite, and if you or any sinner got what he deserved it would be the pains of hell forever. You cannot deny that you have sinned, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and having sinned, you have earned sin's wages. You may not have gone the length before men that the husband we have been referring to went, but what does that mean? Simply that you have not been in the circumstances to bring it out, but the sin in you would do just the same or worse, had it the opportunity. There is no doubt whatever that you are a sinner, and the "soul that sinneth it shall die."

But what, dear friend, let me ask in seriousness, is death? Does it mean ceasing to exist? Ah, no. Let not Satan deceive you by that lie. With respect to the body, it is dissolution, that is, the separation of the soul from the body, but that does not mean cessation of existence. We read of a certain rich man who "died and was buried, and in hell lift up his eyes being in torments," so that the death and burial of his body was not the end of him, no, nor of any other man or woman. Then, if we regard the soul, it is death spiritually, which means the separation of the soul from God, as it was said to Adam, "for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was spiritual death that took place that day. In respect of both soul and body eternally, it is separation and banishment from God forever in the lake of fire, and is called in Scripture "the second death." How terrible the full wages of sin! Now, as a sinner, you have wrought for the wages, and thus rendered yourself liable to be paid the whole amount to the uttermost farthing. Indeed for this very reason the awful fact remains that the wrath of God abideth on you, nor can anything you could do avert it. One outside you alone can meet the case. You have destroyed yourself. Have you realized your lost and sinful condition? Do you see that you are undone? A sinner with nothing but the wages of sin before you? Then stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. He has blessing for you. Do you ask, What is it? And how is it to be got?

The divine answer is,

THE GIFT OF GOD.

But you say, "There must be some mistake." Excuse me, dear reader, God makes no mistakes. You reply: "I do not understand this reasoning. If the wages of sin be death, surely it follows that the wages of righteousness—my own righteousness—must be life." Such no doubt is the natural thought of every natural man, but it is just the opposite of the gospel. Eternal life is not the wages of anything. It is a gift; and a gift is a gift, not something that you work for, or pay for. You earned the wages of sin, but you could never earn this. Blessed be God, Another has taken the wages of your sin, and been made sin for you, One who knew no sin. Yes, Christ has taken your place. He was made a curse for you. He was forsaken of God in your room. He died in your stead. The judgment due to you as the wages of sin has fallen on His devoted head. The death has taken place, and now He lives for evermore. Hence salvation is a matter of gift. Eternal life is the gift of God. Nor can it be had in any other way. It is all a question of receiving, or not receiving, eternal life as God's free gift, and this is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life. That eternal life is in Christ Jesus our Lord, for He is the true God and eternal life. God presses His unspeakable gift on your immediate acceptance He is the giver and you the receiver. The greatest sin you ever could commit is to refuse. You may have it this moment. Will you take it, take it for nothing. It is God's unmerited favor for those who do not deserve it. Do not miss such a blessing.

Nor is this all. A gift is the receiver's forever, If it is true that eternal life is God's gift, it is just as true that the gift is eternal life. It is given as a free undeserved present, and when given and accepted it is the taker's forever and ever. God will never take it back. Christ says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." He does not give as the world gives. He has a way of giving all His own. When the world gives anything, it gives it away. But when Christ gives, it is not merely clearing off all the old scores, which He does, but His way of giving is to bring you into association with Himself that you may enjoy all along with Him. Be sure the gift is yours, dear reader, I beseech you make no mistake about it. W. S. F.

clickbible.org