

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 6:15-23

Lesson #14

Introduction

In the preceding lessons we've been discussing the first 14 verses of chapter six. We titled them "Dead to Sin and Alive to God." This chapter might be called a cause and effect chapter. Because we were made dead to sin and alive to God in our heart and mind, therefore something else also happened as a direct result. We were changed:

From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:15-23 (NASB)

Verses 15-16:

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

This is a repeat of the same question that Paul asked in verse one. This is a response to the suggestion that we're not necessarily obligated to keep the commandments of God because Jesus has paid the debt of all our disobedience. In the previous verse Paul just said that sin is not our master because we're not under Law but under grace. So, if that's the case then what's the difference, if He's really paid for all of them, and we're under grace not Law, then what difference does it make how many sins we commit? Well, If our spouse has committed adultery, and we've forgiven her/him, then is it okay if they continue to do so? Obviously not, forgiveness of sin has never been a license to perpetuate the practice, but rather a means to recover from it and start anew. And the heartfelt desire to repent of our sin and start again is the foundation for forgiveness. Otherwise absolutely nothing is being accomplished but the absolution of consequences for a perpetual lifestyle of disobedience, and this is not by any stretch of the imagination the definition of biblical repentance nor of biblical forgiveness. (Jn 14:15; 1Jn 2:3-5, 5:3)

In verse 16 Paul continues this thought with the words: *Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?* The point here is that when we present ourselves to someone, or something to obey their instructions, and do what they say, then we are effectively their slaves, at least in so much as our actions and behaviors are concerned. If we willingly follow the dictates of sin then we are sin's slave, and we will eventually reap the ramifications of that course of actions, which is death. But, if we follow the directions of God's commands, then we will reap the benefits of that course of actions, which is sanctification, and the benefit of sanctification is righteousness. Paul isn't speaking in absolutes here, but in general trends of life. We are either prone to live a life of general disobedience, or we are prone to live a life that is in general compliance to God's Laws and God's righteousness. Whose instructions are we following, sin or righteousness, because this is an indicator of what our heart truly desires, and who our Master really is. There are only two options presented, one is sin, that results in death, and the other is obedience, which results in righteousness.

Because there's usually a little good works in every unbeliever, and there's a little sin in every believer, we seem to have a hard time making a clear distinction between those who in these two options, but it shouldn't really be that difficult to figure out. What is the desire of our heart and our general trend of life? That's not really too hard to figure out, is it?

Verse 17:

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

First of all I want to say that this has long been one of my very favorite Bible verses. I've anticipated getting here for some time, and it's now my deepest desire to do justice to this very amazing verse. Every phrase in this verse has immense ramifications. Right from the beginning Paul says *But thanks be to God*. We mustn't ignore the significance of this opening phrase, because everything else that he's going to say is a direct result of something done by God and not by man alone. Paul doesn't say, thanks be to you believers, or thanks be to the angels, or thanks be to anybody but God alone. What's about to be explained in this verse is something for which we thank only God himself. This isn't just rhetoric added for effect, this is important prescriptive teaching. It's there to put everything following afterwards into right perspective.

The next phrase *that though you were slaves of sin* is one on which we could spend a career, and some actually have. There's been much written on this subject. It deals with what actually happened at the original fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. What actually happened, and how does it affect all of us today? Many have said, and I agree, that all theology starts right here. How and what we conclude from the scriptures on redemption, and virtually everything else, literally hinges on how we understand the fall of man and its affect on us today. What exactly happened to Adam, and, by consequence, what happened to us, his offspring? Our whole concept of redemption will be based on our perception of our fallen condition. What do we mean that we are fallen? I would love to go fully into this, but doing so would be far beyond the scope of this lesson. So, lets simplify it by saying that we are of the persuasion that the fall of man caused the total loss of his human ability to respond to God in a saving manner. Because of the nature and extent of the damage sustained to his innate nature at the fall, mankind was rendered helpless against sin, and made a slave to it. A slave both because of his legal obligations incurred, and because of his inability to even desire to be severed from it. The fallen heart of man loves sin, not righteousness, that's what happened at the fall. (Jn 3:19-21; 2Ths 2:10) And that's what makes fallen man a slave to sin, both legally and morally.

Mankind is not humanly capable of securing, or even commencing his own salvation, because he is innately incapable of really wanting to repent of his sins and follow God's commandments. Oh yes, He is capable of discerning the benefits, and capable of desiring to have those benefits, but he is not capable of desiring God's righteousness in the depth of his heart. This is something he cannot rectify by his own resources, hence Paul's opening phrase *But thanks be to God*.

But now the next phrase, the one for which we give thanks to God, Paul says: *you became obedient from the heart*. Of course we must be obedient in our physical behaviors also, that's what Paul just spoke about in the previous verses 8-14, but that's only possible if the heart is truly in it. We will only persist in a course of actions if it's what we really desire in our heart's. This was the glaring example of Israel in the Old Testament. They really wanted God's favor and His blessings, but they didn't really want to obey all His commandments in their heart. So they could not sustain the relationship for very long, because their heart wasn't really in it. One can put up a false front for a while, if they think they have a good reason, but eventually the true desires will begin to manifest themselves. That's simply the way we're wired, as the saying goes.

So then, what has mankind lost, and what does he need to be redeemed? He has lost the innate desire for righteousness because he has lost the innate love of God. His heart isn't in it. To be redeemed mankind needs a new heart and a new mind, and God knows this thoroughly well. Remember His prophetic promise given by the prophet Ezekiel?

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Ezek 36:25-28 (NASB)

Do we see why Paul said that we're not under Law but under grace? Do you see why Paul gives thanks to God as a prelude to this sentence? Because all of this is a work of God alone. Meaning God's choosing and God's implementation. This isn't an offer that's simply put out there for anybody to take or leave any old time they choose. This is describing a positive act of God, whereby He personally puts His Spirit within someone, and He gives them a new heart that desires

righteousness, and **causes** them to walk in His Statutes and His Ordinances. This is the New Covenant that Jesus announced at His last supper when He raised His cup and announced that this was that New Covenant in His blood that had been promised by Ezekiel and Jeremiah, hundreds of years earlier. (1Co 11:25)

In another epistle Paul, speaking of this same New Covenant gift said:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9) This gift of faith, that saves us from sin, is not based one iota on any of our own works, and it's that way specifically so that none may think that they had any part in this gift bestowed by the totally unmerited grace of God. To think that we ourselves had even a small part is to diminish the value of the gift and infringe on the glory of God. We *became obedient from the heart* because we received a whole new heart, the one previously promised as a future gift of God. We can now persist in obedience because God's righteous Laws are written in our hearts, and His Spirit is within us, causing the new desires for righteousness. This is a work of God, through His Holy Spirit, and when we rightly understand our previous condition then we can rightly assess our new condition, and the work that God has done within us to change our whole nature, and restore our previously dead spirit. (Eph 2:1-5) We can rightly understand that this is something that's totally beyond human doing, and for which we owe all the thanks to God.

The missing component that was needed to produce persistent, long term obedience to God, and the true pursuit of righteousness has been provided by the grace of God, and we, who have received that gift, are a new creature, we now walk, meaning live, behave, and think in a whole new way. And we do it because we have the heart to do so, or heart is now truly in it. And just because we can't do it to perfection yet, doesn't mean we don't have the desire of the heart, and that desire manifests itself by the whole direction of our lives, our whole pattern of living. We really want to obey God, we really desire His righteousness from the very depths of our hearts, and that's something we could have never ever done by ourselves. This has freed us from our previous enslavement to sin, both legally and spiritually, meaning that invisible and experiential part of our being that thinks and feels and loves and hates. Our new heart, meaning that invisible spirit, the mind and emotions and will, now works like God intended before we were subjected to the horrific damages of sin. We are free of sin and now in full agreement and accord *to that form of teaching to which you [we] were committed,*

I've heard it said that one who conquers by the sword has only won half a victory. I don't know the source of that reference, but the obvious implication is that force alone can only achieve a partial compliance by the losing party. Only a victory that involves the heart and mind is a true and complete victory. And only that will ensure long term obedience. This would seem to be very true, as history is replete with wars of independence by those who felt themselves to be oppressed by authorities with which they themselves did not agree. And this isn't just rulers who were tyrants but all people will rebel against rules and laws with which they strongly disagree, even if those laws and rules are generally considered righteous. The reason that mankind has never, in his history, been able to establish a long lasting society is that mankind has never had a long lasting and consistent consensus of values and morals. We separate into diverse groups and societies according to our particular preferences. And then within those groups dissenters eventually rise up and rebel and seek to establish their own separate group. What we see is that the problem isn't just that we don't have our heart set on the the effort but that we can't seem to come to lasting agreement on the content of or desires. We don't all agree on what actually is good and what is bad, on what should be allowed and what should be prohibited. Our society is hotly debating several of those issues today.

So, we don't just need a truly enthusiastic heart attitude, we also need a solid and unwavering consensus on the content of that enthusiasm. What do we love, and what do we desire and approve? Everybody loves and desires something, that's nothing new. Paul says that when we were freed from sin we *became obedient from the heart* to something very specific. *To that form of teaching to which you were committed.* Now we have it all. We have the heart attitude and we have the righteous content of the teachings of scriptures. In our heart's we are in complete agreement with the teachings to which we have been committed, meaning all of scriptures, not just the New Testament, but the whole counsel God. Everything that Jesus taught is what we believe and truly and earnestly desire in our new heart that God has given us. Our obedience is **from the heart** and it is **to that body of teaching to which we were committed.** Again, Our obedience is **from the heart** and it is **to that body of teaching to which we were committed.** This establishes some very specific conditions that authenticate a genuine gift by God of a new heart, and a new mind, and a new spirit.

This describes a whole new person, in both attitudes and behaviors, not just a change of names or terminology. This last phrase makes it clear that we weren't made free simply to devise our own ways, we were made free to follow God's ways. That form of teaching that Jesus has provided in His New Covenant. Our new freedom from sin, and the master of sin, Satan, was at the expense of enslavement to a new Master. One of righteousness. Our ownership was transferred to a new Master, we weren't just let loose on our own without any Master. We are as obligated to righteousness now, as we were before to sin. Paul goes on with this thought in the next verse:

Verse 18:

18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Speaking now for just a moment to the unbelievers, this verse clearly indicates that there are no free agents here on this planet, only slaves. Either of sin or of righteousness. Concerning our ownership, these are the only two options made available to humans by the design of God. You can quote from *Invictus* until you're blue in the face, you are not the master of your fate and you are not the captain of your soul. You're a flea riding on the back of an elephant and arrogantly proclaiming that you're in control of everything. On the contrary my friend, you're a pitiful slave with illusions of grandeur, who will inevitably fall on your knees pleading for mercy as you give answer to the real Master of fates, and true Captain of souls, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phi 2:9-11)

Now, to us Christians, you might say to me, oh how you wish to God that you were a slave to righteousness, and I reply that you are such a slave, you just don't fully recognize it. Because of sin you doubt your status, but you need not, and you should not. Do you have remorse when you sin and feel heartbroken over it? Why is this so? Is it not because you're a slave to righteousness, and when you sin your conscience makes you suffer for it? I submit that you can't change that because you really are a slave to righteousness, and any violation of that will cause you grief. Do you wonder why you suffer from your conscience over things that others think are perfectly normal and acceptable by today's society? Why do you think that is? There's a reason that Christians can't do all the things that sinners do instinctively and joyfully. There's an aversion and discomfort in Christians over the things that go on every day all around us. Righteousness has a hold on us that it won't relinquish, and this is from within our deepest innermost part. Our new heart and new spirit has made us a slave to righteousness every bit as much as our old one made us a slave of sin. Righteousness wants our affections and our attention and we're only content when we're providing it. We don't want to contemplate the old things, we desire to think of the things of God and meditate on them. We have quite literally been made slaves to our desire for holiness and righteousness, and even more so because we can't completely achieve it just yet. And this makes our longing and anticipation all the greater. This is why we cry "Come quickly Lord Jesus" because as slaves of righteousness we live in constant anticipation of the return of that One who is the embodiment of righteousness, and will impart it to us, in a new glorified body of sinless perfection. We are not hostile slaves, we are willing slaves, who love our Master and seek to be united with Him face to face. We don't seek relief from righteousness we seek perfect fulfillment of it.

So, our being freed from sin is first judicial, in as much as our debt to sin has been fully satisfied, and second we are freed from sin in our mind (our spirit) in that the love that we had for sin has been put to death, and we have been given a new heart and a new mind, and God has put His Spirit within us. If this has happened to you then know it, if it hasn't then you think these are just pretty words that have no real substance, and you try to pretend that you do. But when it's real, when it's an act of God, performed through the Holy Spirit, you know it as clearly as you know anything in this world. As further evidence you now have a desire for righteousness that you previously thought was foolish and antiquated, maybe even unfair and intolerant. God's demands for righteousness are always considered unfair by those who are slaves of sin, because they're contrary to what they love and desire, but the born again Christian now shares God's love for righteousness, and loves His Laws and agrees with them all, and earnestly desires in their heart to keep them. This is the best description that I can make of the intention of these verses, and I hope you understand. If you think these verses mean that you will never be tempted again to sin then you will be at a complete loss as to what to do with them, but if you rightly understand them, they are an immense encouragement to your faith and comfort to your heart. You will never lose or outgrow your new innate desire for obedience and righteousness because a work of God has been performed in your heart, and the Holy Spirit sustains and matures that love until the day of completion. You are a slave of righteousness, because righteousness now owns your heart, forever. Now, moving on to the next verse:

Verse 19:

19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

When Paul wrote these epistles the practice of slavery was commonplace. Slavery was an accepted way of life, and there were rules that determined how they could or could not be treated. Paul is simply using that present day situation, with which everybody was familiar, as an example to teach spiritual truths. In his analogy, Satan was one master and his domain was sin, and God was the other, and His domain was righteousness. Paul says he's using *human terms because of the weakness of your flesh*, by which he apparently meant their inability to comprehend invisible spiritual concepts without a more earthly visible example, so he provides one. After just saying that they have been freed from sin and made slaves of righteousness Paul proceeds to discuss some practical applications of that divine transaction. He says that just as they had formerly presented themselves, the members of their bodies, to impurity and to lawlessness, which resulted in even more of the same as they carried out these deeds; so, (in like manner) now they should present themselves, the members of their bodies, as slaves to righteousness, and this will result in sanctification as they carry these deed out in practice.

Following the dictates of sin with our bodily parts will multiply our physical acts of impurity and lawlessness. Of course it will, we know that all too well don't we? But on the contrary, following the dictates of righteousness, that is written on our new heart's, will result in bodily acts of righteousness, and acts of righteousness is what sanctification is in its visible and tangible form. Slaves of sin are expected to perform acts of impurity and lawlessness, that's what their master has ordered and what their heart desires, but slaves of righteousness are expected to perform acts of righteousness with their bodies, because that's what their Master has ordered and what their heart desires, and the benefit of following those orders is sanctification. In this specific context sanctification is separating ourselves from the bodily practices of impurity and lawlessness in our daily lives. Sanctification is a requirement for several things, one of which is the acceptable worship of God, another is entry into His eternal kingdom, so the benefits of sanctification are enormous for sure. God desires to have acceptable worshipers, and we desire to be those worshipers, but neither will get their desires apart from sanctification, it's that important. A billion bodies sitting in churches all over the world, singing beautiful hymns, will not put one worshiper into the kingdom of God apart from sanctification. (Mat 7:21-23) Sanctification is that process of putting to death, in our flesh and blood bodies, the perpetual practices of impurity and lawlessness, and learning to actually practice righteousness of living as the pattern of our life, this is sanctification. If you or I are ignoring this, the direct teaching of Jesus Christ, then we do so at our own peril, great peril. (Mat 7:24-27)

Verses 20-21:

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

When we were the property of Satan, and sin was our master, we were free of any perceived obligations, or any real desires in our heart, to live in lawful obedience to the commandments of God. We disagreed with those commandments and felt no obligations to fulfil them. Righteousness had not perceptible hold over us, or influence on our decisions or behaviors. We perceived ourselves to be completely free in regard to the demands of righteousness. Many of us even held contempt for those who felt otherwise.

So Paul asks us, the believers, just what benefit we thought we were deriving from this perceived freedom from the righteous demands of God? At the time we thought there was great benefit, because we were free to pursue our heartfelt desires for impurity and lawlessness, and it was fun. Like the person who runs up an impossible debt on their credit card, we chose to simply ignore the eventual consequences. But just like the credit card company won't ignore the debt, neither will God ignore forever the consequences of perpetual sin. Sooner or later both will demand their dues. Now we're ashamed of those things we used to love and practice, because we know that *the outcome of those things is death*. Not only is the inescapable outcome death in the eternal Lake of Fire, but our new heart and mind now rightly perceives the shame of those behaviors, and the uselessness of those pursuits. Paul isn't just speaking of our current bodily death, but that second death that lasts for eternity, and is fully conscious and aware of its situation, but utterly unable to do anything about it, ever! (Rev 20:14, 21:8) What did we think we were accomplishing with that shameful style of life?

The answer is, we didn't care what we were accomplishing as long as we were having fun in the process. We didn't care what the ultimate cost would be, we were living for the moment, and any consequences seemed far away and unreal. And even if we admitted there could be some, we didn't care, so long as it wasn't today. As frivolous as this way of thinking is, we have to confess that it's very popular, among all cultures of the world. Everywhere there are those who hold the "Live for today" mindset. Get yours while you can because tomorrow is uncertain. But for the believer, tomorrow is not at all uncertain, speaking of the ultimate "tomorrow" that catches us all. There will be a tomorrow, and what we believe about it will affect how we think and behave today. And this leads us to Paul's next verse:

Verses 22-23:

22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

By this point in this study we have to know and rightly understand what Paul means by his words *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God*. We've said over and over that he means first judicially by the vicarious death of Jesus, and then experientially by the new heart and new mind that God has placed within us. This is despite the lingering temptations of the old flesh that still awaits the final removal and replacement. We must understand that these are not just words without content. Words have meaning, and apart from the right meaning words are just noise. Paul is not just making noise, he's explaining divine facts, and to understand those divine truths, those facts, is a blessing beyond valuation. We are totally and forever outside the legal grasp of sin and its consequence, death. And, ***we are totally and forever freed from our old innate nature that loves to sin***, because we have ***been given a new heart*** by God Himself, and He has put His Spirit into us. This is not just words, this is divine truth. If we really understand this, how can we not rejoice and give glory to God?

But now, let's look at the next words: *you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life*.

It's so common to skip the chain of events and jump right to the outcome, but this verse describes a sequence that must be followed to get from one point to the other. Our being freed from sin and enslaved to God has an immediate *benefit*. And what is that benefit? Well, whatever it is it results in sanctification, so it must be repentance of perpetual sin in our lives, because this is what sanctification means. It means being separated from acts of impurity and lawlessness and becoming enslaved to acts of righteousness through obedience to God. This is the immediate visible benefit of being freed from sin and enslaved to God. So we see a *benefit*, and that benefit has a result called *sanctification*.

But there's more. This *sanctification*, which is a *benefit* of having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, has an *outcome*. Something else is made accessible through this divine process. The final outcome of having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, and then being progressively sanctified by the Holy Spirit is - *eternal life*. One reaches the outcome by traveling the divine path. Now I can hear the critics already asking "but what about the thief on the cross" he didn't have time to follow this process. I say, oh didn't he? Even though God only allocated him moments or hours, he certainly made the most of that brief period, with his testimony of confession and acceptance of the sinless perfection of Jesus Christ. That's all that the Lord demanded of him, that brief moment of history where he got to acknowledge Jesus Christ from right beside Him on a cross. It has nothing to do with how long we're destined to live, but whether or not we do that for which we were intended to do in the plan of God while we were here.

Like the verse says, The final outcome is eternal life, but the immediate benefit, that leads to that final outcome, is sanctification, and this step cannot be overlooked or skipped. The immediate benefit, sanctification, is the mandatory narrow path to the final outcome of eternal life. (Mat 7:13-14) One does not obtain the end result without implementation of the means afforded. ***Simply stated, you cannot skip sanctification and end up with eternal life in the kingdom of God.*** (Repeat that) I'm not the one saying this, the holy scriptures are saying this, and there's nothing whatsoever confusing or obscure about the way that it's being said. Surely the cause is God's gracious gift, and the final result is eternal life, but we sometimes overlook that God has intentionally chosen to use various ***means*** to implement His eternal plan. And sanctification is clearly part of those means. In His sermon on the Mount, Jesus used various examples, as recorded in Matthew chapter 7, verses 13-14, and then in verses 21-23, and again in verses 24-27. And all of these examples were teaching, and warning, that words alone are not the sign of authenticity of redemption, but rather sanctification of life was the true indicator, in every example that He made.

Sanctification is one of the essential means by which God produces worshipers and populates His eternal kingdom. There are no side or back doors, metaphorically speaking. The benefit is sanctification, and the outcome is eternal life, this is God's chosen means to accomplish the end that He's planned from before creation, and it is this for which Jesus Christ died, and for which the Holy Spirit works continually in the hearts of God's elect. This is the divine and eternal will of God the Father, made possible by the work of Jesus Christ the Son, and then implemented upon humanity by the working of the Holy Spirit. Anything less, or different than this, is not true salvation, it's deception, and these various deceptions and false religions are rampant throughout the earth. It's been this way since the Tower of Babel, and will continue until the bodily return of Jesus Christ. Do not be deceived beloved, sanctification of heart, and mind, and actions is your means to recognize the true from the myriad of imposters.

Verse 23:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This sentence starts with the word "for." Meaning that it's a result, or conclusion, of that which was just previously explained. We have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, and that divine act had the benefit of breaking the hold that sin had over us both legally and mentally, so that a new way of living might be pursued. This new way of living, that's in obedience to the commandments of God is called sanctification, and this has a marvelous outcome called eternal life, and everything that term includes. It's interesting to note that one is called a wage for works performed, but the other is called a free gift that's in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Even though this verse follows after the preceding descriptions, it nevertheless speaks of the causative forces that preceded the results spoken of in those verses. There are two distinct forces, or powers, being discussed in this verse, and each of them has its own means and each has its own outcome. Everything that has ever been created by God is divided up between these two forces alone. And these two are mutually exclusive, and cannot ever be reconciled. They cannot, and will not, share belongings, so everything is either entirely the property of one or entirely the property of the other. We can't help but notice that the first situation is called a wage, implying that it's the result of something, or some things that were performed. It's the appropriate compensation duly earned for works performed. We're told that sin is a recognized work that may be performed by mankind and will certainly earn an appropriate wage for its efforts. The wage that sin earns is called death. Death is the paycheck for practicing sin as the pattern of one's life. It's not a gift, and it's not really a curse in the sense that it's the known outcome of a life of disobedience to the commandments of God. It is a curse in one sense, but it's not a surprise to any who knew the inevitable consequences and chose to perform the actions anyway. On payday they know exactly what they have coming, and who it is who made the choices that determined the wages - themselves.

But how come eternal life is called a gift and not a wage? If death is the wages of sin, then why isn't eternal life the wages of righteousness, doesn't this make more sense? There has to be a reason for the major difference. Well, in actuality, eternal life is the wages of righteousness, just not our own righteousness. Because no human has the capability to be as righteous as it requires to earn eternal life by their own actions. There is none righteous, no not one, Paul quoted from the Old Testament scriptures. (Rom 3:10) So, if eternal life is the wages of our own lives, then there will be none who ever attain it, not even one. This is why the statement *but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* It's the *in Christ Jesus our Lord* that's the key phrase of this sentence. The *free gift* is that the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to our account through saving faith, which is God's chosen means of implementation. That's what the *gift* is that's being spoken of in this verse. The *In Christ Jesus* means our being directly adopted into the person of Jesus Christ in regards to His perfect righteousness. This most certainly is a gift, and there's no other way in heaven or earth to get that level of righteousness. So, the wages of righteousness is eternal life, and the *free gift* is that we are afforded the benefit of someone else's rather than having to depend on our own. This is "in Christ Jesus" and the gift is that it's imputed toward our account, when we really didn't even come close to earning it ourselves. And thus we have the inevitable wages, the final results of all lives created by God, and His predestined means of determination of the final outcomes of all. If one is not "in Christ Jesus" they are on their own, and depending on their own righteousness, which God has said must be absolutely perfect. (Mat 5:48) What do you expect to find in your final pay envelope? Death, or eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord? There's no reason for anyone to be surprised, the means are made perfectly clear, and the wages will always match the works. Either our works, or Christ's works.

Conclusion:

In the process of closing out this chapter I'd like to do a quick recap. The first 12 verses of this chapter speak of something that has happened to us that changes everything. We're said to have died with Christ, in that we were baptized into His death. Baptism is a symbolic act, publically proclaiming our faith and belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. This symbolic gesture says that we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death. (v.5) And continues saying that we shall also be united in the likeness of His resurrection. Then it says that this is so, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (v.6) Please note that it doesn't say that we'll no longer be tempted by sin, but that we are no longer slaves to sin. We have the innate capacity, and the legal authority to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness. *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* (vv.12-13) We're told to put this new association, this new life in Christ, to practical use, which is to cease using our bodies as the instrument of sin.

This is impossible for any human to do who has a heart and mind that loves impurity and lawlessness. That element of our nature had to be put to death, and this is precisely what happened when God made good on His promise recorded in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 to cleanse us from our sins and put a new heart within us and write His laws and statutes into our mind. Meaning making us love, and desire, and agree with them. It is precisely this that is being referred to when Paul says: *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.* (vv.17-18)

We are forever freed (in our heart and mind) from our love for sin and made to love righteousness in the depth of this new heart that God has given us. We're told straight out to put this new heart to good use, by ceasing to use our bodies for sin, but rather now to use them for righteousness. We received the new heart in order to control these old bodies until they're replaced as well. The benefit of our association with Christ, and the new heart and spirit is that our lives are now sanctified, meaning made to conform to righteousness, and the outcome of that sanctification is eternal life. (v.22) For if we continue in sin the wages we'll receive is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life, through the means of sanctification and the imputed perfection of Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

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