

God's Love Is a Gift

Westlake VBS 2017

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

Background: The word *for* (Gr *gar*) implies an explanation to follow, but this demands an understanding of the preceding context – Rom 6:23.

1. The theme of Romans is the good news about God's righteousness that saves and justifies all people (Jews and Gentiles) who put their trust in Jesus – Rom 1:16–17.
2. The argument of Romans begins with a discussion of the problem of sin and the wrath of God on all sinners, regardless of their background – Rom 1:18–3:20.
3. But, the essence of the good news (gospel) is that sin and wrath are taken away by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ – Rom 3:21–5:21; see Eph 2:8–9.
4. Yet, salvation by faith, not by works of the Law, does not imply the absence of divine commands but expects continued obedience and sanctification – Rom 6:1–8:39.
5. The immediate context of Rom 6:23 contrasts slavery to sin with slavery to righteousness, highlighting the differences in their natures and outcomes – Rom 6:1–22.
6. This study is organized around the theme that “God's love is a gift,” a concept that is emphasized by the contrast between our sin and God's grace – Rom 6:23.

The Wages of Sin: The phrase *the wages of sin* highlights the terrible consequences of our sin, especially the final, eternal end, that is, death – Rom 6:23.

1. The word rendered *wage* (Gr *opsonion*) was used of “money paid to soldiers” but later came to connote “fitting compensation” or even “divine retribution” – Luke 3:14; 2 Cor 11:8; Rom 6:23.
2. The idea of “fitting compensation” illustrates well the biblical concept of “action and consequence,” especially as it relates to our sinful deeds – see Gal 6:7–8.
3. The Bible categorizes sin as either a sin of commission or a sin of omission, and even a single infraction against the Holy God deserves death – Jas 1:13–15; 4:17; Rom 6:23; see Isa 59:2.
4. *Death* can describe either the physical or spiritual consequence (penalty) of sin, but it seems that Romans blends these aspects – Rom 5:12; 6:23; see Eph 2:1.
5. We die physically because Adam, the representative of humanity, sinned and brought physical death to all people—even the innocent – Rom 5:12–19; see 1 Cor 15:21–22.
6. We die spiritually, however, because each of us has sinned and experienced the individual consequence of sin—spiritual death, that is, separation from God – Rom 3:23; see Jas 2:26; Isa 59:2.
7. But *death* in Rom 6:23 may have a more frightening application—eternal, physical-spiritual death that the Bible calls “the second death” – Rev 21:8.

8. The expressions *the wages of sin* and *death* are meant to highlight the travesty of sin so that the contrast with “the gift of God” and “eternal life” can be fully appreciated.

The Gift of God: The phrase *the gift of God* emphasizes the reality of divine grace and its amazing benefits to us, especially the hope of “eternal life” – Rom 6:23.

1. The word translated *gift* (Gr *charisma*) is different from the more generic words (Gr *doron* and *dorea*) in that it directly emphasizes the concept of grace.

2. This word (*charisma*) is used 17x in the NT (6x in Romans) and is defined as “a free gift” or “a gift of grace” or “undeserved favor” from God – Rom 1:11; 5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6.

3. Moving from the generic to the specific, this word (*charisma*) refers to spiritual blessings, God-enabled vocations, and even miraculous powers – Rom 6:23; 1 Cor 7:7; 12:4.

4. In all cases, it is God who freely gives the gifts, implicitly denying the possibility of sinners meriting them, explicitly recognizing his grace – see Eph 2:8-9.

5. The specific gift described in Rom 6:23 seems to be eternal life, which contrasts with the wages of sin, and is a present and future reality for believers – John 3:16; 5:24; 1 John 5:13.

6. Life is the gift of God, but this does not mean that it is universal and unconditional; it demands faith in Christ and continued obedience to him – Rom 6:4, 22; see Heb 5:9.

Conclusion: The focus in Rom 6:23 is that the gift of God, eternal life, can only be found “in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The important question is this, *Are you in Christ?* – Eph 1:3; Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-5.

Amazing Grace
John Newton
G-3-Sol

1. Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.
3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Twas grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.
4. The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.
5. When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.