

Romans 6:20-23 – The Wages of Sin is Death – but the gift of God is life

We come to the end of Chapter 6

- Wanted to think back at what we had looked at
- Firstly Paul talked about Baptism
- How in Baptism we are unite with Christ in his death
- And also his resurrection
- Our old life dies and a new life begins
- We are set free from the power of sin
- But the Old life often wants to creep back in
- Wants to rob us of our new found freedom
- We forget what we have died too
- And old habits creep back in
- Pauls uses the analogy of slavery to help
- We were slaves to sin
- Sin that lead only to death
- But now we have a new master
- One who allows us to live as free people
- Our debt is paid and awe are redeemed
- We need to stop living as slaves to sin
- But as new creations

Obligations

- Paul carries on with the slave idea
- He points out our ignorance as slaves to sin
- We did not know right from wrong
- We had no obligation to do what was right
- We were blind
- We did not know what was right or wrong

- Now we look back on our lives – are old lives
- We have regrets about the things we did
- And the way we lived
- So many people live in shame
- They live with the shame of what they have done of who they have hurt
- It is why in AA 12 steps there is a need to seek reconciliation with who we have hurt
- The Cross deals with sin, but it is not so good at dealing with reality of shame
- Jesus offers not just forgiveness from sin, but in his resurrection
- Which is why he says we forgive as we have been forgiven
- Often the first person we need to forgive is ourselves
- Offers a new life free from shame
- Replaces the fruit of our past with new good fruit
- Karpos is the Greek word here – which literally means fruit
- What is was your fruit – is the what Paul is saying here
- We were a rotten, dying tree, producing poor fruit
- But now – because of Christ
- That old life dies and we produce good holy fruit

Holy

- Hagiasmos – holy or sanctified
- Essentially – Godly fruit
- Context of the time gods of Rome and Greece
- Were capriccios and malignant

- Clash of the Titans
- Humans were pawns in the games of the god's
- They had created gods in their own image
- But God was different – he was Holy
- The marks of Israel's God was that he was not distant and uncaring
- But personal and engaged
- Nothing more engaging than God becoming man
- That him revealing what holiness looked like in a person
- In himself
- If you want to know what Holiness looks like
- Than Jesus is holiness personified
- He is loving and caring
- He takes time to be with people
- Stood up at injustice
- Taught and acted in love
- He wept over the city he loved
- When people treated him with Violence – he prayed for their forgiveness
- This is not a distant and detached holiness
- But one that is fully engaged with the world around him
- This is holy fruit
- The result of holy fruit is life giving
- When I meet Christians who seems bogged down in doctrinal orthodoxy
- Who prefer law to love
- To be the ungrateful brother when the father chooses to forgive his wayward son

- To be judgmental and ready to condemn anyone who they think is a sinner
- In the same way the Pharisee did when he stood next to the confessing Tax collector
- Who think holiness is having the correct ethics
- Who are humourless and lack a sense of fun
- Or Joie de vivre as the French say – joy of living
- A begin to wonder whether they have missed the point
- When Jesus was with his disciples – eating and drinking, I imagine laughter and banter
- Yes the last supper was a different tone
- But I imagine most of the meals were marked in joy
- After all the first fruits of the Spirit are love and joy
- If Christians do not exhibit love and joy
- But are judgemental and humourless, I begin to wonder whether the Spirit is present in them!

Wages of sin is death – gift of God is life

- I love the contrast here that Paul uses
- He has already used contrasts throughout the chapter
- Life in Adam and Jesus
- Slavery under sin or under God
- There are two roads we can travel on
- One is a wide road that looks great but leads to a giant canyon
- The warning signs are there
- But many of us don't spot them
- Until we hit the edge

- The other road is harder, narrower but leads to a the best adventure you will ever go on
- Yes, there are problems on the way
- But the it is worth it in the end
- So the contrasts
- Wages or gift
- Wages are earnt – they are sweated for
- People who are paid a wage are those who work for other people
- Wage earners are at the bottom of the pile
- Wages are hard work
- Opsonia literally means the pocket money given to soldiers
- But gifts are great
- It is great when you get an unexpected gift
- Something you have always wanted
- A few years back the church bought me, after I had finished my Nams
- A Bible – I really treasure the words written in the front
- this gift is unearned – it is free (Charisma)– it should come with no expectations of a returned favour
- That is the very nature of a gift
- The problem is we live in a cynical world,
- We are looking for the catch
- There is no such thing as a free gift
- The church can be seen as offering the free gift of freedom from sin and shame,
- But in return we get your soul!

- We need to preach the Good news that there is no catch
- Any obligations we gain – we gain because we choose them
- Not because they are forced upon us
- The first contrast is a wage or a gift
- When you get a wage you get what your deserve
- But a gift is undeserved

Sin or God

- Sin means to miss the mark
- You can miss by a millimetre or a mile
- You have still missed
- But when Paul talks about sin here
- I don't think he is talking just of our individual sins
- Bit the power of Sin
- The power of this world – he could have said evil, the Devil, but he uses the word sin
- Sin is the power behind so much of our world
- Self-centred, destructive, heartless living
- It can be broken down into the induvial things we do
- Greed, lying, hedonistic living
- It is more than just what individuals do
- It is found it political systems – the heartlessness of Capitalism, the bondage of Communism
- In corporations, social groups, in all parts of our world
- It is insipid and ever present
- Which is why it's contrast is not Holiness or Godly living

- But God himself
- He is the true power of this world
- Don't believe otherwise
- And in Jesus – God defeats and destroys the powers of this world
- They live like a wounded tiger lashing out
- Until the moment when all those powers – the devil, the beast and the false prophet – as Revelation calls them
- Are finally thrown into the lake of fire and destroyed forever
- In Revelation 20
- The powers of this world – the kings of this world
- Have a powerful but limited reign
- But God is supreme
- He knows the Deep Magic that CS Lewis calls it in The Chronicles of Narnia
- That is the basis on which the world is created on
- Jesus in his life, death and resurrection defeats the powers
- His final coming will complete the victory
- Where there will be no more sin and no more death

Death and Life

- How can Paul say that sin brings death
- And God brings life
- When people still die
- Death is all around us, even when we don't see it
- Death is a constant reality for all of us
- We will all die

- So how can pay say that God brings life?
- Hell on Earth – been through hell
- Many people who bear the scars of sin on them
- Whether through their own selfishness, stupidity or naivete
- Or through the actions of others
- Or in a world were sin is the power of this world
- A world that bears the scars of our greed
- Or our sin
- Ultimately though the death that Paul is talking about is a final death – a final separation from God
- God gives us in death what we chose in life
- If we wanted nothing to do with God – why would we want to spend eternity with him?
- Choose that path and God will give us the desires of our heart
- But God gives us life
- In two ways
- Today – the new life begins the moment we follow Christ
- John 3:15 – everyone who believes has eternal life
- That life is happening now
- Yes we live in the now and not yet
- Sin still lashed out like a wounded Tiger
- But we need to live in the fruits of the Spirit
- If people see you as Joyless – why would they want to follow the Jesus you follow
- Joy is not happiness – it does not mean being happy clappy
- But learning to find joy even in the hardest of times

- To rejoice with those that rejoice and mourn with those that mourn
- Joy is so much deeper than Happiness
- The vision for this year is to be a generous, hospitable and joyful community
- One of our prayer goals is “That through generosity and hospitality we are shaped into a joyful community”
- Take a moment – where is your joy?
- Cynicism, bad life experiences, hurt, sickness and pain – if we let them can rob us of joy
- {Pause to pray for joy}
- So the life begins today
- But the promise is for the future as well
- That one day we will be resurrected with Christ
- Death is not the end
- The tomb is not the end of Jesus’ story
- He rose – as a first fruit
- As a promise – that one day too we will rise with him
- Not just us – but when the powers of this world are finally defeated
- There will be a renewed heaven and Earth
- Jesus will return and the city of God will come to Earth
- We will with God
- Heaven will meet Earth
- The whole of creation will be resurrected
- The power of sin will have no more control
- Revelation 21:4

- He (Jesus) will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever
- No more Death
- The wages of sin is death
- But when sin is finally defeated – once and for all
- A process that began on the cross and in the resurrection – will be made complete on his return
- There will be no more wages for sin
- There will be no sin
- What will be left if the gift of God – that is eternal life
- If you want to quickly and easily define what the Good news is – this is it
- The Gift of God that is life
- Life that is already breaking out
- Through the Spirit of God
- Through the Fruits of the Spirit
- Through you
- And will one day be made complete – when Jesus comes to make all things new
- Let's pray