

Romans 6:23

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

Scripture reading: John 10: 27-30 / Hymns: 373 and 207

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

Do you know why people die? I know there are many opinions about this and even some religious ideas about death. I know statisticians tell us that people must die because of disease. Eventually everyone will die because of advanced age - the body wears out, sickens and dies.

But this is not the real reason people have to die – they die because of sin. That is the reason your loved one died. This is the reason that my own voice will some day be stilled in death. That is the reason that loved ones will some day stand at your casket and follow you to your last resting place.

I am not just one person telling another that they must die – but rather, God has said this. And you and I know that when God says it, it is said in certainty. God says: **“For the wages of sin is**

death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

“The wages of sin is death.” You know what a wage is. It is something you earn. And whether the things we do are good or bad, there is some kind of payment made to us.

Usually people like to put it the other way around and say that God is surely going to pay me for the good I have done. I try to be good and I know that God is going to take care of me.

No one likes to admit that they are a sinner. But God says: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” **Romans 3:23** There is not a just person upon earth that can do only good and live without sin. “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

Romans 3:12

The Bible tells us that there was only one that was perfect – Jesus who was holy, separate from sinners, harmless, undefiled, and made higher than the heavens. “Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.” **Hebrews 7:26** This perfect one is God’s only Son, Jesus, who was our Substitute and fulfilled the Law for us by his death on the cross for our sins.

Your loved one had to die. Oscar knew that he was a sinner and that he could not live here forever. He knew that death is the

wage of sin and that as a sinner he had come short of the glory of God.

But if this were all that God told us then this would be a day of real mourning and despair. Then you would wait for the day of death with fear and trembling – but there is something more that makes all the difference in the world and which gives people hope and forgiveness and finally a glorious moment to see Christ face to face.

This is true: **“The wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23** - but God also says: **“...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23**

What a difference that makes - a difference like that between night and day, sin and forgiveness, life and death. The wages for everything I do, all the things that I would bring to God, is death. Death is what I deserve. But God says: I love you and have given myself for you. I am going to make you a gift and with the hand of faith you can reach out and make this gift of forgiveness your own.

Your loved one by God's grace in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit heard this Word of life and truth. By faith he beheld the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He believed that Christ was his Savior. Though he confessed himself to be a sinner, he also believed and confessed: *“I have been redeemed by the holy precious blood of Christ.”* This is also your comfort and hope.

God says to you: Comfort one another with these words.

What about you - do you have this gift of God? What will you offer to God - your good name and the things which you think are good? Or by telling God you are not as bad as some other people?

No, you know what God says about all this. By the deeds of the Law no human will be saved. Your eyes must be focused on one thing – the cross of Calvary.

A man leaves this world in the same manner in which he enters. Every infant born into this world enters with fists tightened into a clench and quite often, that is the way a person leaves. I have never heard of anyone paying his way to heaven. *“Nothing in my hand I bring, only to Christ I cling”* – this is a Christian hymn that was spoken in truth.

Nothing but faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world can give you forgiveness and salvation.

And so, whoever you are, and wherever you have come from, if you remember nothing else that was said or done here this afternoon, you must remember this: Salvation and heaven are not the product of man’s doing. Heaven is rather a gift of God and given through faith in Christ Jesus the Redeemer.

You now stand without excuse. From this moment on you will never be able to say to God: *“No one ever told me that the only way to heaven and salvation is through faith in Christ.”* You have heard it today. Amen