“Wages Or Fruit?”

July 15, 2018

I Peter 1:13-20

Please open your Bible with me to the sixth chapter of Romans.

Let’s call him Stan. Stan had been living a life of shame; mostly inward, mostly in his heart and mind. For many years, Stan had been plagued by immoral thoughts and had convinced himself that he could never overcome these thoughts and enjoy the blessing of a pure heart. So he often felt ashamed of himself. Then Stan heard the message of salvation and became a born again Christian. Yet, he found that he was often plagued by the same thoughts he had prior to becoming a Christian. So, again he felt shame. And what compounded the problem was that he didn’t want anyone to know what was going on in his heart and mind. He didn’t want anyone to think that he was struggling with his thought life. So Stan had two strikes against him which very much defeated him. One, he allowed immoral thoughts to run rampant through his mind and so, was ashamed before God for those thoughts. And two, he didn’t want anyone to know that he was struggling with such thoughts. So, ashamed before God and ashamed before others, Stan knew he needed help and yet, he didn’t quite know where to turn.

What would you say to Stan if he came to you with his struggle? As we all know a Christian’s thoughts are the largest percentage of a Christian’s life. And the uncontrolled mind does not and cannot enjoy the peace of God.

So, for help for both Stan and you and I, today’s message from Romans six is titled “Wages Or Gift?” Shall we pray?

One of the Bible’s greatest attributes is this. The Bible is a well with no bottom. Dip your pail down. Pull it up. You drink and you find refreshment. Then back to the well again and again and again; as many times as you’d like, and the water is both pure and refreshing the next time as it was the first. The reason is simple. It’s the Voice of God. Proverbs 30:5 *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”*

Let me show you exactly what I mean. Look with me at the twenty-first verse of this sixth chapter of Romans. Romans 6:21 *“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. (22) But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Fruit is borne even from things that cause shame. Why? Because the end of those things is death. You might recall the words of a man who spent years in the pit of immorality and uncontrolled lust; St. Augustine of Hippo. In the days before Augustine became a saint, he grew up in the home of wonderful, godly, Christian mother, Monica. And Monica watched as her son grew into a life of drunkenness and debauchery. And what was Monica to do? She spent her life and invested her time and energy in prayer for her only son, Augustine.

He tells his story in a book he wrote called “Confessions” which he wrote in 400 A.D. Having sat under the preaching of a godly servant of the LORD, Ambrose of Milan, the same Ambrose who had been the Roman Governor of two Italian cities; one day Augustine became convicted of his sins by the voice of a little child. Here’s what he wrote.

“So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, “Take up and read; Take up and read.” Instantly, my countenance altered . . . I arose;

interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the Book {The New Testament}, and read the first chapter I should find . . . I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: [Romans 13:13] “Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness,

not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh” . . . instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light . . . infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.”

Obviously Augustine had a simple, but unmistakable conversion. So here’s the question Paul asks you and me *“What fruit did you have in those things wherein you are now ashamed?”*

And he then offers an explanation. *“The end of those things is death.”*

And third, he points to reality; verse 22. Romans 6:22 *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”*

Now that you’ve been set free from, and now that you are a servant of God, you are a life-tree. And on your life-tree, you are bearing holy fruit.

Let’s start with the end.

Did you notice how many times Paul uses the word “the end” in this short passage? GTTT

He says it twice.

Romans 6:21 *“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For* ***the end*** *of those things is death. (22) But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and* ***the end*** *everlasting life.*

 “The End.” It’s the last few words of every book. It’s on the screen at the end of a movie. It’s also a play, a song written by Keith Morrison and sung by “The Doors.” Paul uses the phrase six times in the Book of Romans.

And here Paul is arguing from the end back to the present.

The end of shame and shameful things is death. And the end of your having been freed from sin and having become a servant to God is everlasting life.

C. S. Lewis said this about the end. *“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the end.”*

There’s a lot of wisdom in those few words. Stan had a problem with the effects of his thoughts. He was ashamed both before God and before people.

And if you think about the things you once did, the shameful ones, that is, you can easily see that “the end” of those things is not a positive. The word “end” refers to an “outcome” or an “effect.” It’s what happens after you do or do not do something.

Let’s see now if the Bible can help Stan. And if it helps Stan, it can help you and me.

First, the fruit produced by shameful thoughts and shameful actions is death; verse twenty-one. Romans 6:21 *“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”*

Paul is known as a man, just like Jesus, who asked questions. He has now asked four questions in this sixth chapter. And they are all on the topic of sin.

Romans 6:1 *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”* This is a question to those who think there is no law against anything and that God will always forgive because, after all, He’s a God of grace. And His grace is abounding.

And he follows it this question. Romans 6:3 *“Don’t you* ***understand*** *that so many of us as were baptized [immersed] into Jesus Christ were baptized [immersed] into His death?”*

Then the question in Romans 6:15 is this. *“What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”*

Then he follows that with Romans 6:16 *“Know ye not [don’t you see], that to whom ye yield [present] yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”*

First, should we continue to sin so that we can get more grace from the LORD? God forbid.

Second, should we sin because we aren’t under that law anymore, but under grace? Again, God forbid.

In the first case, you think that, because where sin abounds, God’s grace abounds even more that you can sin and presume upon the LORD’s grace. That’s not correct thinking.

And in the second case, you think that, because you are no longer under the law that you can sin as much as you’d like, as though there are no more rules to follow. That’s incorrect thinking as well.

And maybe Stan was thinking this way. But, as Stan discovered and as you and I have discovered, all sin is shameful and living in shame is not God’s plan at all. Do you remember the first time shame appeared in the human race? Immediately upon the eating of the fruit in the Garden of Eden.

Now, here’s Paul’s next question. Romans 6:21 *“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”*

Folks, it doesn’t have to be the sin of immorality. It could just as easily be an uncontrolled tongue. It’s doesn’t have to be an uncontrolled tongue, it could just as easily be the sin of retaliation or the sin of anger or the sin of theft or the sin of unbelief. It’s all the same. The wages of sin is shame. And shame is a feeling we get when we know we’ve been caught. And thank God every day that He is the One you have to deal with because the eyes and thoughts of men about you and me are almost never accurate. But God sees. And He’s the One we have to deal with.

By the way, Adam didn’t commit these sins Paul speaks about here. All he did was to eat. He ate from a tree. But it was from a tree about which God had said *“Don’t eat from this tree.”* And how did Adam feel after he’d eaten? After he’d sinned? He felt ashamed.

Your sins and my sins are equal in this sense. Sin offends God and sin brings shame, no matter which sin it is. And if you’re good at covering up your sin, you’ve got an even bigger problem. You’re trying to hide from the LORD; the omniscient LORD, the One Who sees and knows every single thing there is to know.

The fruit produced by shameful thoughts and shameful actions is death.

Death came to Adam and Eve at the very moment they chose to eat the forbidden fruit. Yes, eventually physical death did overtake them. But, as soon as they had disobeyed the LORD, death entered the human race. The fruit of eating the forbidden fruit was shame. Repeat: The fruit of eating the forbidden fruit was shame.

And when you and I think that our sins are only seen and only known by ourselves and our little minds, we convince ourselves that we’re OK. And all the while, we’ve lost the LORD’s presence and we’ve broken our fellowship with Him.

You know shame is an effect. And shame is God’s gift. It’s one of the things He uses to get us to come back to Him. So, Paul says, what fruit had ye in those things wherein ye are now ashamed? The end, the effect, the outcome of those things is death. And God does not want any of us to live in this condition called death.

First, the fruit produced by shameful thoughts and shameful actions is death.

Second, two things happens to those who are delivered shame and death; Romans 6:22 *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”*

Those two things are these. You become a servant to God and you have your fruit unto holiness.

Whenever someone repents and believes on Christ, the most amazing and the greatest things possible happens to them. You are joined together with Christ. He comes to live in you and you are now are alive in Him. This is the Christian’s union with Christ. You are now a “little Christ.” That’s what the word “Christian” means. You are no longer your own. You’ve been bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ, and you now live unto Him and not to yourself.

And being united to Christ brings these. You are now freed from sin. You are now a servant to God. And as His servant, you are producing holy fruit with your life.

Before Christ became your Savior and LORD; before you came to Him for forgiveness and cleansing, you were something. And after your forgiveness and cleansing, you became something else. II Corinthians 5:17 puts it this way *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

You are forgiven of all your sins. And you are now complete in Christ. Colossians 2:10 *“And ye are complete in him…”*

The only way Stan can deal with his sin and deal with his shame is to receive the Light of the Truth. What truth is that? That one, he’s been set free from sin. And two, he’s now a servant to God.

I’m convinced that the main reason so many Christians live in fear and worry and shame and whatever else keeps them from close fellowship with Christ is this. They don’t know who they are and they don’t know what happened to them on the day they were saved.

If you’d like to get rid of your sin and your shame as a Christian, get the Light of 6:22 into your soul. Let’s do it this way. Romans 6:22 *“But now I’ve been made free from sin and I’ve become a servant to God and I now have my fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.”*

That’s what has happened to you. That’s what God says. That’s what you are. And, according to God, you now have holy fruit and the end of your fruit-life is everlasting life.

Who here believes the Bible? Who here believes that you’ve been set free from sin? Who here believes that you are no longer a servant of self and sin, but a servant of God?

The key is the Truth. And that’s because the only thing that can set a man or a woman free is the Truth.

Romans 6:22 *“But now I’ve been made free from sin and I’ve become a servant to God and I now have my fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.”*

First, the fruit produced by shameful thoughts and actions is death.

Second, two things have happened to you to deliver you from shame and death.

Now, third, will it be wages or a free gift? Romans 6:23 “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

We all know what wages are. Wages are effects, outcomes; an end. It’s what we get paid for what *we* do. And wages are the right thing to receive after we work.

Possibly the greatest chapter in the Book of Romans has been this sixth chapter. I know it’s been the most helpful to my life. And the end of this great chapter is this question of “Will it be wages or the gift?”

If you’ve been with us over the past two months to see the wonders of this chapter, you know the power of the gift. But here, Paul puts it up against wages.

Romans 6:21 *“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. (22) But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

You see; the end of the shameful things is death. The wages of the shameful things is death. And, now that you’ve been set free from sin and become God’s servants with holy fruit on your life-tree, the end is this wonderful gift; eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD.

Again, Paul is just like Jesus in this way. He brings you the Truth and, no, you don’t fully understand it. But you do gain some Light, some insight, some deeper understanding of yourself before Almighty God. Then you hear Him say, “You have a choice. What will it be? Will you build your life on the Rock of my Word or will you build it on the sand of your word? Will you stay on Broadway or will you go through the Narrow Gate? Will you choose the wages for sin? Or will it be the gift of eternal life?”

God is always out to get you to Himself. And what better way than to constantly extend a gift to you and me. Gifts are free. Yes, they cost the giver. But gifts, true gifts are offered to the receiver without charge or obligation. God has never offered eternal life for a charge. Why? Because, as Oswald Chambers once wrote, *“eternal life is not a gift from God. It is the gift of God.”* It’s His own life. It’s Himself. It’s life unlike physical life which will culminate in death. It’s life exactly like Him. So, how could God charge you for His own life? He’s giving that life, that eternal life away; no charge.

And folks, wages and gifts couldn’t be farther apart than Mars and Venus are from Old Saybrook. They poles apart; complete opposites. [Found in “Romans: Exposition of Chapter six by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones].

So, you see, there are two roads. Here they are. “Wage Road” and “Gift Road.” It’s, as one man puts it, “My way or the High Way.” God’s way, the High Way, is the “Gift Road.” Man’s way, the other way, is the “Wages Road.” Both lead somewhere and both end up in totally opposite places. So, what will it be? Will it be, as my Mom used to say “In on ear and out the other”? Or will you let the Light of the Truth keep shining into your spirit? Will you choose the Gift or the Wages? It’s really that simple.

“So, Stan, has Romans six helped you today? You had every right to feel ashamed because sin causes shame every time. So, what will you do?”

Here’s what you must do Stan. Come in confession. Come back to the LORD. When you confess, you admit exactly what you sin is. And in confession, you are cleansed, immediately. Then, you say this to the LORD. Romans 6:22 *“LORD, I thank you that I’ve been made free from sin and I’ve become Your servant. I now have my fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.”*

Now, don’t be fooled. It’s much easier than you think. Remember this, God knows the heart. He knows you inside and out. And when you come to Him, He receives you as His child. And He knows what you are dealing with. But, He’s already dealt with it. He gave you His Son to pay your sin’s penalty and He’s taken you to the Cross with His Son.

So, yes, it’s simple. Don’t live the life of an unbelieving Christian. You are a Believer. So, live the life of the Bible. Go with the Gift. Don’t go with the wages. Romans 6:23 “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Remember Paul wrote these words to the Christian. And remember, it’s only through Jesus Christ your LORD. It’s His life in you that really matters.

So Stan has found his answer in the Bible. Have you found your answer?

Hymn # \_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”