

# Sin's Wages Versus God's Free Gift

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Date: 05 September 2021

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] A very warm welcome to you all to the service this morning. I'm particularly delighted to welcome any visitors who are with us today, and those who are online as well.

We extend a very warm welcome to everyone who's joining in the service of worship today. You'll find all the information on the bulletin sheet, which is also available for visitors, so please just help yourself from that.

I'm not going to go through all the points that are on it. You'll see the services for the coming week. Also, a notice for the return of 2021 freewill offering envelopes. You'll notice that's going to be available on Saturday, the 11th of September in the hall between 2 and 4, and you can just read through the rest of that yourselves.

For the presentation to mark the retirement of Reverend Kenny I. McLeod, that's been set for Friday, 17th September at 7.30pm. Now, that'll be held here in the church, as you can see from the details of the notice there.

And attendance will be restricted to 250. And for that reason, we will need to take bookings for that particular occasion.

[ 1 : 09 ] It'll also be live streamed, however, so that you can see it also online if not able to be present in the church. So you can see details there for booking a place by contacting Lorraine Shewan by email or phone on the details that are mentioned there.

Also, the WFM conference, that's on Saturday, the 18th of September, and the speaker is Anne Allen. That'll actually be available in the seminary by live stream.

And if you're able to come, just come to the seminary. There is no cost, but if you can donate to this year's projects to support the projects for the WFM, that'll be very welcome indeed.

Saturday course also resumes on 18th of September. And that's from ETS, the Edinburgh Theological Seminary. And these are all the notices I think I need to mention just now.

Just read through the rest yourselves, please. Let's begin our worship. We're beginning our worship today singing in Psalm 84. Psalm 84, that's on page 112 of the Blue Psalm books.

[ 2 : 19 ] And we're singing verses 1 to 7, the first three stanzas. How delightful are your dwellings, O Almighty Lord to me! For your courts my soul is yearning, in your house I long to be.

Heart and flesh cry out aloud for the true and living God. Words that remind us of the preciousness of being together as worshipers of God.

Just as the psalmist here was longing for the dwellings, as he says, of the Lord, where the Lord met with his people in the temple. And how he envied even the birds that found a place to nest near the altars of the Lord.

So we'll sing verses 1 to 7. How delightful are your dwellings, O Almighty Lord to me! How delightful are your dwellings, O Almighty Lord to me!

What pure courts my soul is yearning, in your house I long to be.

[ 3 : 35 ] Heart and flesh cry out aloud for the true and living God.

The evil and spirals find their dwelling, and the swath of the Lord's Son is yearning, The evil and spirals find their dwelling, and the swath of the Lord.

The evil and spirals find their dwelling, and the swath of the Lord. Where the lost you may have rest. Blessed whose home is pure and poor, The evil and ever facing go.

Blessed whose white KNOWS, O Lord, for the mercy of cheering, and the slay may be. Blessed are thy ■ro, O Almighty God in the saints for above, and of action. Christ, Sheldon & Son and Son of Mary, say, that it is our soul for help. The path and forsk not as great! Only Lisa and Son, sing verses 1 to half up, and for the need be.

Who's from autumn rain to thresh them, spring to big and still they find.

[ 4 : 52 ] Strength and pleasing, sigh on board, they go on their way to God.

Now we're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together as we call upon God in prayer. O Lord, almighty and our gracious God, we come before you today to give thanks.

We come before you today to seek your blessing. We appear in your presence, O Lord, as those who need your forgiveness, your restoration, your upholding of us in the ways of peace.

We thank you today for the privilege of being together. And we pray, Lord, that that spirit of the psalmist will be ours today as we come together in this way. We ask for that desire inwardly that would increasingly yearn after you.

And we thank you for the way that you maintain in our hearts a desire to worship you. And not only a desire to worship you, but the conviction that you are worthy of it.

[ 6 : 04 ] O Lord, our God, we pray today that you would meet with us as we come together in this place. We know that this is such a tiny building compared to your presence, which is always a presence that is appreciated by your people as one that is omnipresent everywhere.

We thank you, Lord, today that we come to share in the experience of worship and that we come as we share that experience to reach out to you as our God in the knowledge that you have come toward us in Jesus Christ, that you speak to us yet through your word, and that you provide for us daily by your governorship, by your control of the providence that involves our lives from day to day. We thank you, Lord, today for your care, for the way that your care embraces your people in all that they do. And we give thanks for that care that looks after us on the way through life when we place our trust and confidence in you.

We know that you will never fail us. We know that when we fail, you will, as you have promised, uphold us and set us back on our feet. We bless you, Lord, today that we can come with our need of restoration, our need of being once again under the direction of your spirit so that we may come to appreciate increasingly the teaching of your word.

We thank you for your word in its entirety. We pray, Lord, that you would help us with conviction to hold to it, to prize it, to have it as a precious commodity in our lives, even more precious than anything else.

[ 7 : 53 ] We bless you, Lord, that your word still is living and powerful and able to quicken us inwardly and able to conduct us safely on the way through life.

We thank you that in the revelation that your word is to us, you have taken account of our condition as sinners, as sinners needy of your salvation. You have specified so clearly for us those matters that are necessary for us to know and to engage with in the matter of our salvation.

We thank you, Lord, for the way that your word down through the generations has proved itself to be the very word of God. We thank you today for the prospect of meeting with you through the work of your spirit.

Lord, help us, we pray, to know your presence, even though your presence is for your people that which is at one and the same time a matter which fills them with gravity, with a sense of that fear and awe, yet also your presence brings much comfort to your people.

And we pray for both of these and our experience today as we gather that we may do so in the fear of God, but also in seeking and knowing the comfort of your forgiveness, of your presence to support us.

[ 9 : 17 ] We pray that your blessing will be with all the gatherings of your people today. Lord, we ask your blessing for us as a congregation. We continue to plead with you for increased blessing of the gospel among us.

We ask that you bless us in our homes, our family lives. Bless us, we pray, in our activities in the world, whether in school or in places of work or at home.

Lord, we look to you and ask that you would continue to bless us in a way that would enrich our lives, the blessings of salvation especially. Bless our children and young people today.

We thank you for the restarting of the Sunday school. We pray for them, Lord, as they gather today in the hall. We pray that you would bless each and every one of them. We pray that you would bless them in their families.

And we pray that you would bless those who have given of their time and continue to do so so richly for their teaching and for their instruction in the things of the gospel. Bless our teachers, we pray.

[ 10 : 19 ] We thank you for them. We thank you for their dedication. We thank you for their commitment to the work of bringing the teaching of the Bible to our young people. and we, Lord,

continue to ask that you would graciously be with them.

Be with those who are in young adulthood now and ask that you'd bless them as they face the issues that they meet with in the world. We pray that you'd protect them and keep them and we ask that you would give to them, Lord, the resources of your spirit so that they may be guided in the right way.

And help them to continue, Lord, to prize your word and to hold it very precious for themselves. We ask your blessing for Kate as she, Kate McMillan, as she has been chosen to be captain in the secondary school in the Nicholson.

We pray for her and ask that you would bless her as she undertakes this role. We thank you, Lord, for the qualities of her life that have been recognized in this position.

We pray that you would bless this to herself and make her a blessing to her fellow pupils and help her and all like her, Lord, who have places in the school that seek to be leaders and examples to the younger ones.

[ 11 : 36 ] We ask, O Lord, that you would bless them and we pray that the school itself and all our schools will be blessed and all who teach in them and all the headteachers. We ask that you would bless them and keep them and protect them and give them discernment and wisdom and courage, Lord, as they seek to find the right materials to set before our children.

And we ask that you would continue, Lord, to bless us in this way. We ask, too, your blessing for all other agencies that we know of in our community who help us from time to time and are available to us in the resources and the gifts that they provide.

And we pray that you bless the hospital, the care homes, the hospice, the doctor surgeries, and all other agencies, Lord, the emergency services, all who have helped us, especially over this past year and a half.

And graciously, Lord, continue to provide for us in your goodness that we may find your providence providing us with the resources that we need and the way in which we are thankful for them to glorify your name.

And so we ask now your blessing to be with all who can't be with us today. Remember those confined to their homes. Be pleased to bless those who are bereaved and sorrowing over the death of loved ones.

[ 12 : 53 ] We continue to bear them before you and ask that you would continue to bless them. Hear us now, we pray. Continue with us and pardon our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, there are no children present just now. As you know, they've gone to the hall directly, but there may be some online. So I'm going to just keep a short children's address for the moment at least. Just for the benefit of any who are watching online especially.

Like yourselves, I'm sure you'd admit we all make mistakes from time to time. For example, when I send through the details of the services to Lizzie and Marianne, they'll very often pick up mistakes that I've made in the print.

For example, a couple of weeks ago, I put the page number of the psalm instead of the number of the psalm itself. So it was something like Psalm 247 that came up when I sent that on to them. And of course, they're skilled enough to know that they can pick up these mistakes. Sometimes they come back, they check them with me, but more often than not, they know themselves where there is a mistake. And it's the same when you do with your computer when you actually make a mistake.

[ 14 : 10 ] Sometimes, very often, the spell checker, for example, would check your spelling. You can even check your grammar, actually, and correct a lot of these mistakes as you put the spell checker onto your document, whatever it is you've written.

But sometimes, it doesn't pick up a mistake. For example, if I was to say, my car is four years old or whatever, and I'd written, my cat is four years old, well, the spell checker wouldn't pick that up because cat is a perfectly valid word.

No reason why a cat shouldn't be four years old. So it does pick up all the mistakes like that, although it picks up many of them. But I'm thankful that when I go to God and to confess my sins to God, he makes no mistakes.

He makes no mistakes in reading your life and my life. He knows all the things that are wrong there. He knows everything we've done that is not right. And he makes no mistakes as he assesses and reads our lives from day to day.

Same for young ones as well. When you come to God with your sins to confess your sin, asking God to forgive you sin, you can be absolutely sure that God has read every one of them accurately and perfectly.

[ 15 : 25 ] Now, sometimes, that may make me feel uncomfortable that God knows absolutely everything about my life. But on the other hand, the really important thing is that he reads it in such a way that he's able to forgive every sin when we ask him to forgive our sins.

There is never going to be the case that we come before God and say, Lord, you missed out this sin. You didn't take account of this sin or that sin when you provided me with Jesus as a Savior. He took account of all our sins, all our need, and Jesus is his salvation. We're going to see in the sermon today that in Christ that all the blessings that God has for his people are located there. That's where they're put. That's where they're situated. So today, children, be thankful that God is someone who knows you so well that you can go to him at any time, that he knows your need, that he knows the depth of your need, that he knows how to deal with you and how to control your life, how to take you on in the best way.

So when you commit your life to God, you're doing so as to one who knows perfectly and everything about us so that he will deal with us in the best possible way.

[ 16 : 48 ] Now we're going to say the Lord's Prayer as we usually do at this point, so we'll join together in the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. I'm going to read now from God's Word as we find that in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 6. And we'll read right through from the beginning of the chapter. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

[ 17 : 55 ] We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

[ 19 : 16 ] For sin will have no dominion over you. since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

By no means. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness?

But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.

And having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?

[ 20 : 29 ] The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. Our Lord. And I would like us today to consider the words of the final verse of this chapter.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And you can see very easily that that comes really as the climax to the chapter.

It's the summit of the teaching of the apostle in this chapter, which is of course closely tied also to chapter 5, as indeed to chapter 7 too. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Our theology is immensely important. And you can see how important theology is. That's the study of God, of salvation.

[ 21 : 42 ] You can see how important that is as you read through the letters of the apostle Paul to these various churches as they have them in the New Testament. You can see that for the apostle it was critically important what one thought of Jesus, what one thought of the death of Jesus, what one thinks of the relationship of sinful human beings like ourselves to that salvation, to that Jesus, and to God through Christ.

Christ. Virtually everything that Paul sets before us in his letters has to do with our understanding of God, of ourselves, of salvation, and of the various facets of salvation that he sets before us.

And our theology is so important that it's obviously not just for a head knowledge of things in terms of the Bible's teaching, because our theology bears a very, very close and important relation to our way of life.

For example, if I was to say today that we receive the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ, and just imagine you were saying this to the apostle Paul and saying, this is my theology, I receive the new birth through faith in Jesus Christ.

He would turn around to you and say, you have actually turned the grace of God upside down, because when you say it's through faith in Jesus that I receive the new birth and the benefits of new birth, what you're really doing is making salvation by grace, as Paul sets it out, you're turning that into salvation by works.

[ 23 : 28 ] Because if my faith is the ground on which I receive God's blessings, rather than the means through which the blessings come to me, I have turned things around so that I'm actually looking at salvation by works.

And for the apostle, as indeed throughout Scripture, salvation by works is something that the apostle denounces vehemently. All you've got to do is read his letter to the Galatians, for example. And the same approach has to be taken with verse 23 of Romans 6. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because there's a very important contrast in the verse between what he calls the wages of sin and what they issue in or result in, and the free gift of God and what that results in.

And that contrast really is in many ways at the heart of our theology of salvation. There is really in the space of one verse a contrast which is so important to our understanding of what salvation is and how we come by it.

[ 24 : 46 ] So let's look at that contrast. First of all, looking at the wages of sin being death. That's the deserved payment that we ought to receive and will receive from sin if we continue to serve sin.

And it's contrasted there with the free gift of God which is eternal life and that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now when he says the wages of sin is death, Paul is probably thinking about the Roman soldier as he often did in his writings because the word used there for wages is something paid by an employer to an employee or in this instance probably what was paid to the Roman soldier for his service in the Roman army in his service as a soldier.

They paid wages. These were the things these wages were earned by the soldier or by whatever employee you think of. When you receive wages you receive something that you have earned that you have worked for.

And that's what he's saying here about sin. Because as we've read through the chapter he's been holding out for us the contrast between two different kinds of employers.

There's the employer sin and there's the employer righteousness or Jesus through righteousness. The righteousness that you have in Jesus and from Jesus.

[ 26 : 16 ] And when you think of what he's saying here about the wages of sin it really means the wages sin pays out. the wages that sin pays out is death.

That's what it results in if we continue in the service of sin because that's how we're born. That's what we're like by nature. That's what a sinner is. Somebody who earns the wages of sin by sinning.

One of the things that you see in the chapter is that sin as an employer is actually a despot or a tyrant. an enslaving power.

A power that keeps us in its grip. And if we remain in that condition the outcome of that will be death. The wages that our tyrant employer sin will pay us is nothing less than death.

You can see verses 16 to 18 here. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves you are slaves of the one whom you obey either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness.

[ 27 : 29 ] So we are all actually tied either to sin or else to righteousness to obedience to Jesus Christ. Christ. And that goes back all the way to Adam and what he is doing in this chapter is really looking at those two foundations if you like.

Our being rooted in Adam which is where our sinfulness comes from or being rooted in Christ which is where our righteousness comes from. And it is so important today that you look at your life and my life and you ask yourself in the light of scripture what is the basis of my life?

What is the basis of my hope? What kind of hope do I have? What am I anchored to? Where is my life truly founded? Where is it set? Where is it rooted?

Is it in Adam or is it in Jesus? If it is in Adam and continues to be as it was since we were born then we are still in the approaches to death to everlasting death if it is in Jesus if it is in righteousness then we have eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And when he talks here about death it is important that we realize what he means. The wages of sin is death. The wages that sin pays out is death.

[ 28 : 58 ] But it is not just death in the physical sense. It is not just death in the sense of our body and soul being separated and that is really the end of the definition.

That is as far as it goes. What Paul is talking about here is separation from God. That is essentially what death is. Because that is what came upon human beings when we sinned against God in Adam.

Remember Adam was the best representative that you could get. He was a perfect human being as he was created by God. So we cannot blame Adam for our sinfulness.

Indeed if you go back to if you go back to chapter 5 and verse 12 it says just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin so death spread to all men because all sinned.

You see the importance of that tense there all sinned in Adam. It is not just saying Adam sinned and in consequence we came to be sinners. What Paul is saying is here is the arrangement that God made.

[ 30 : 11 ] He gave us this representative head of the human race Adam and so when Adam sinned we all sinned. We sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression as the catechism puts it.

So here is if you like this is where we signed the contract and anyway even if we come to blame Adam for our sin which is not really what we should be doing because we all sinned in Adam still the case that until God actually comes powerfully into our lives we're only too glad to serve sin.

You look at yourself and myself as we are we're only too ready and too glad to be enslaved to sin because we have the idea wrongly that if we just keep up the life that we have without this religious stuff without Jesus without a change in our lives then really that's the best life.

You can choose how to go yourself. You can choose your own way of life. Sin is the best the best employer you might think. That's our natural way of thinking because you have what you think of as freedom although of course it isn't.

You just do your own thing and you just follow your own inclination and you have that freedom so called. But of course when God comes into your life and God shows you what you're really like and God shows you what it means that you're a sinner that you need Jesus you then come to realize this is not freedom at all actually this is enslavement because freedom is not doing what you like but freedom in Jesus Christ is doing what you ought to be doing living the life we ought to be living.

[ 31 : 49 ] So here is the contrast this deserved payment of wages which is what we deserve we've brought this upon ourselves we sinned in Adam and now we have the wages of sin being paid out

as death and when he says death and death meaning separation from God some people some people have the idea that if only the likes of Paul had left things the way Jesus put them if only we didn't have the theology of Paul and we just go back to the theology of Jesus then things would be a whole lot better and a whole lot more simple for us to follow and actually much more acceptable well if you go back to Jesus and just to one example in Mark chapter 9 verses 47 to 48 you'll find Jesus talking about death there and the way he speaks about hell Mark chapter 9 verses 47 to 48 remember Jesus there is actually dealing with temptations to sin and so on and he's saying if your fruit causes you to sin cut it off better for you to enter into life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell and if your eye causes you to sin tear it out it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched and the idea that it's actually

Paul that somehow invented this idea of hell and really distorted the teaching of Jesus is nonsense because you'll find that in the New Testament the one person who spoke more about hell than anyone else was Jesus it was Christ himself and when he spoke about hell he didn't actually mince his words where the worm does not die where the fire does not quench an imagery really of terrible conditions and an imagery that is so awful that it makes you just squirm as you think about it but it's Christ who's saying it it's Jesus who's defining it it's Jesus who knows the reality of hell that's saying this is hell you know sometimes very often indeed nowadays as you know the word hell itself is trivialized by and large certainly minimized but very often even trivialized if you go for example some of the tabloids will speak ludicrously about things from hell my neighbor from hell my cat from hell my dog from hell see that's taking the word hell and just trivializing it it doesn't mean we trivialize certain terrible conditions that exist in the world as they undoubtedly are and in people's lives personally and individually as these conditions undoubtedly do but when you look at the word hell itself and what it means in the Bible and that's really where it gets its meaning from you cannot apply the word hell to anything less than hell itself to the way that Jesus and Paul and all the other writers that speak about it in the Bible actually define it for us hell is indescribably awful there is no comfort there is no prospect of rescue from hell there is no hope in hell it is utter separation from God and therefore from all the things that you would value in this life that's what hell is like and even when you've said that it's very difficult really then to say well

I understand it fully now it's just so awful we cannot understand it all but we know that that's what God says about it and we know that God says that about it so that we on the other hand accept not the wages of sin but actually accept the free gift of God which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord because you see it's not just a matter of God telling us what hell is like that's important and it's important to have that in your mind and in your understanding in contrast to the way that hell may be trivialized and the way that death may be thought of as just the end of everything in this life if you come to die that's it there's nothing else after that that's what the world likes to think but when you take your point of departure from the Bible from Scripture it's a very deliberate contrast because he is telling us about the wages of sin and that being death and that being eternal everlasting death and hell but it's in order that we will come to see the sheer grace of God the wonderful love of God the majesty of that grace that would take a hell deserving sinner like you and I and say look I have a free gift for you instead of looking to being paid the wages of sin that you deserve here is something that

I have provided for you it's not what you deserve it's not what you earned it's not something in any way that you are deserving of that you have merited but by my grace I have provided it for you I have created it for you and it's freely offered to you in the gospel so that's the undeserved gift in contrast to the deserved payment but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord when it says eternal life word eternal you might think is really describing the length of something that it goes on forever more than any other part of the definition of course eternal does have that sense but when it uses the word eternal here to describe eternal life it's really the quality of that life that's being described rather than the duration of it it's not the fact that it goes on forever though that's true it's the kind of life it is it's the substance of that life that's meant because eternal life has such qualities about it that it's only then you come to appreciate it in contrast to what you deserve that's when you break out in praise to God because unless we realize what it is we've been saved from what it is

God has done to save us from what we deserve it's only as we come more and more to realize that that our soul bursts out in praise to God thankfulness to God so here is this wonderful gift this

eternal life why is it what is it that makes it so wonderful what are its qualities well first of all it's a life that's entirely separated from death that's important in the context in the contrast that he's actually setting out in the verse the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is the life that is separate from death the life that death can never again invade death cannot touch it death cannot actually have any access to it why is that because Christ took the wages that you and I deserved from sin the wages of sin is death that's what

[ 39 : 56 ] Jesus did he died the death that is nothing less than the wages of sin some people and we're not going to at all suggest that the physical or mental sufferings and torment of Jesus on the cross were small that they were just minimal they were not but as Hugh Martin puts it in his famous book on the atonement the sufferings of Jesus soul were the soul of his sufferings the sufferings that he experienced as the bearer of sin of the sin of his people and as he bore the sin of his people what he was really doing was saying to us as sinners look I have come into this world so that instead of you coming to be paid the wages of sin in your death in your hell

I have come to die that death and he did so he died that death the death of the cross the death that is God's condemnation against him as the bearer of his people's sins Christ took the wages that are mentioned in the chapter the wages of sin is death and he took that so that the free gift of God this eternal life separate entirely from death would become a free gift to us in Jesus Christ Christ so why then does a Christian die why is there such a thing as a physical death even for the Christian well there's many ways in which we can answer that but there is that physical aspect of death which we undergo as we come to the end of life in this world every

Christian too dies in that sense of soul and body being separate except those who are alive as 1 Corinthians 15 says at the coming of the Lord they shall be changed and have an experience and transformation similar to what you undergo in the resurrection from the dead and some theologians are of the view or aware of the view that death is necessary in the part of a Christian physical death so that it can be demonstrated that the body that rises from the dust is entirely free from sin from what it was previously when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that's really just saying to us that the body of the Christian although it goes to be buried it's still united to

Christ it's not separate from Christ and therefore continues to participate in the benefits of his redemption in the sense that it's waiting for the resurrection waiting for as Paul puts it the redemption of our bodies even the resurrection of our bodies and that will be demonstrated when Jesus returns you remember how 1 Corinthians puts it these verses that we sometimes quote at a grave side when we come to that point in the ceremony where we can quote these verses very aptly where he says what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 for this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality when the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written death is swallowed up in victory oh death where is your victory oh death where is your sting the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to

God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ you see death can never again invade the experience the life of the person that has eternal life because even the physical death is something that you take account of under your union with Christ and it's also this eternal life secure from condemnation it's not something simply separated from death but because of that it's secure from condemnation look at Romans 8 how it begins there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death now the word law there means really basically the same as power or principle and you could read it quite quite easily in that way for the power of the spirit of life that's the holy spirit notice it's called the spirit of life the power of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ

[ 45 : 24 ] Jesus from the power of sin and death there's no condemnation because there's no death there's no sin to be held against the person that is in Christ Jesus because in Christ is eternal life so they're secure from condemnation I think there's a great illustration of that as you go back in the Old Testament to the book of Numbers you might think there's not much in the book of Numbers to do with atonement with salvation with the kind of things that Paul is dealing with but you remember in Numbers chapter 23 you find Balak this king of Moab he hired this evil man Balaam to come and curse Israel they were going through that region at the time and this is what Balaak sent a message to Balaam this evil soothsayer this kind of magician this practitioner of magic he said come and curse these people for me so Balaak took him up to the heights of a mountain and he could see the

people of

Israel down below him and God then intervened and put a word of blessing in the mouth of this evil man more than once actually and when Balak in his annoyance turned to Balaam and said why have you done this I took you here to curse these people and yet you've blessed them what's this about why have you done this what was his response how can I curse those that God has not cursed and how can I bless those whom God has not blessed see what that is saying here is the evil one if you like Satan through this evil man this evil confederacy really between Balaam and Balak seeking to get at God's people they could only see them down below that's what's happening today as Satan looks down upon this world and sees the Lord's people and wants to have access to them these people who have eternal life who believe in Christ

Jesus whose lives are in Christ Jesus he wants access to them he wants access to your life he wants access to destroying you to actually overturn this eternal life that God has given you he cannot do it he can harass you and will harass you he can tempt you and will tempt you he can make life really tough for you and will at times with God's permission but he has no access to your status to your sonship in Christ to your righteousness in Christ to the eternal life that you have in Christ you are absolutely secure in that secure from condemnation secure in an eternal life that can never be reversed and you notice it's in Christ Jesus our Lord and the word in there is important because it's really emphasizing that this eternal life for God's people where is it situated where is the location of this eternal life it is in

Christ Jesus you can read through it yourselves later but I want to just point out briefly Ephesians chapter 1 and give you a wee exercise to do maybe this afternoon or whenever you've got time from verse 3 of Ephesians 1 down as far as verse 14 count the number of times when Paul uses these words in Christ or in Christ Jesus or in him blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him he predestined us for adoption through him beloved in him we have redemption through his blood all the way through you find in him we have obtained an inheritance in him in him in him where is our blessing located where is eternal life located in

Jesus Christ there's no eternal life separate from him there's no eternal life out with him and out with being united with him and today if you're united to Christ if you have come through faith to place to deposit your trust in him to give yourself to him you have eternal life not on the basis of that faith your faith is the means by which you've received this eternal life which is in Christ Jesus and is for his sake that you have it not for your own for your own doing or production so today if you don't have this eternal life if you've not yet come to Jesus Christ and placed your trust in him and accepted him as your saviour well God is saying to you today through this text here's my gift to you it's a free gift it's been paid for by the blood of

[ 50 : 58 ] Jesus my son now every gift as you receive a gift whether it's Christmas time birthdays anniversaries whatever very often the gift will be packaged and saying whoever gives it to you here this is my gift this is to mark the occasion or whatever and you say thank you but then you don't leave the gift wrapped up it only becomes your gift a gift to you it only becomes in your possession properly in the meaning of the word when you unwrap it when you then look at it and say I accept thank you so it is with eternal life it comes if you like packaged or wrapped up in the message of the gospel and you take that and you say I have to take this to myself and make it mine I accept it Lord thank you for it have you done that have you really done that is anyone here today without having unwrapped this gift for themselves is there anyone here today who knows about this gift but has not yet made it personal has not personalized it by accepting it gratefully for themselves well if that's the case with you please don't leave it a moment longer it's God's gift it's God's free gift it's available freely

Christ died to procure it for you to purchase it for you he's paid the price all that you're required to do is to receive it gladly to take it to yourself and if you have already received this gift if you've taken it as your own then and I say this to myself too look at it very often look at it at least daily and as you look at it daily look at its brilliance look at what it's worth contrast it with what you deserve put it beside the wages of sin and it led to your thankfulness that God has given you this gift that he's given you the grace to receive it that is now yours you've inscribed it with your name it's yours forever as John

Newton wrote in his hymn let us love and sing and wonder let us wonder he has suffered see what God in Christ has done debts are paid and mercy offered love and justice meet as one he who freed

us by his blood has secured our peace with God let us praise and join the chorus of the saints enthroned on high here they trusted him before us now their praises fill the sky you have freed us by your blood you are worthy Lamb of God the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord let's pray Almighty God we give thanks although our thanks we know is so often inadequate and so infrequent compared to what it should be we do give thanks for your free gift for this eternal life that has come at such great cost to us that has held out to us in the gospel we thank you Lord for the freedom we have to hear the gospel to have the offer of this gift extended to us we thank you for the grace oh Lord that enables us to receive it we would seek now oh Lord to receive it for ourselves

Lord even if we have received it already we pray for grace to renew our thoughts and our thankfulness and our vision of it we pray that you would continue with us throughout this day to help us to continue to adore you for the grace that has brought us this gift and for the one in whom the gift is located for us at all times your own dear son our Lord Jesus Christ hear us we pray for his namesake amen we're going to now conclude by singing in Psalm 103 this time in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 103 we're singing verses 1 to 4 O thou my soul bless God the Lord and all that in me is be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless O my soul the Lord thy God and not forgetful be of all his gracious benefits he hath bestowed on thee

Psalm 103 page 369 and that's verses 1 to 4 O thou my soul bless God the Lord O thou my soul bless all the Lord and all that him he is be free to share United Him to Johnny to M For me, of all his precious benefits, he hath his shoulder be.

[ 57 : 32 ] All thine inequities, who thou most graciously forgive, Who thy deceit, soul, and grace, doth heal and be relieved.

Who doth redeem thy life, the love, to death is not your love.

Who he with loving kindness doth, and tender mercies come.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and evermore. Amen. Amen.