Grace is Life Sin is Destruction

Romans 5:20—*Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

6:1—*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* 23*—For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

1. Sin
   1. Offence
      1. Purposely and willfully Missing the Mark
      2. Transgressing against the Law of God
      3. Offending the Nature of God
   2. Wages earned
2. Grace
   1. Divine unmerited favor
      1. Divine influence upon the heart
      2. Acceptable, benefit, favour
      3. Joy, liberality, pleasure,
   2. The Gift of God
      1. Deliverance
      2. Endowment
      3. Free Gift, and a gift of freedom, liberality
3. Sin and Grace
   1. Sin has abounded

2Ch 28:9 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.

Ezr 9:6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

Ps 38:2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. 4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

* 1. Grace has much more abounded

There can be no statement more clear in this regard than that of the text.

* *“The offence might abound” (might be made known how much we are offending God)*
* *“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”*

1. Sin and God

In these words we have the revelation of the unusual which is offered to every soul who has heard the gospel of the grace which abounds more exceedingly than all the multiplying of sin. To many men, that alternative has never been presented.

There are those who sit in darkness and under the shadow of death. Sin is abounding more and more as we preach. This alternative must be in view.

Portland can be evangelized with the message sin offends God but an offended God can turn your life completely around.

There are people who know nothing of the gospel. The alternative of the text is that which must be offered to a soul, know the gospel, know its terms, be familiar with its message. Such a soul will either yield to sin, serve it, and earn its wages; or it will yield to God, receive His gift, and live.

No soul can escape from sin. Sin is inherited. One of the first emphases of the gospel is the emphasis it lays upon the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and where this Lordship is truly understood, it becomes the revelation of sin in the life of the soul.

A man could stand, by reason of his early education and training by the priests, under Mount Sinai without trembling like a Saul of Tarsus thinking he is doing God’s service. No man can come consciously into the presence of Jesus Christ without finding his own guilt and his own unworthiness.

But if this soul who knows the gospel cannot escape from sin, it is equally true that it cannot escape from the gift which is placed at its disposal in the gospel. The gospel is the announcement of the fact that God has placed at the disposal of every soul the gift of eternal life. A man can ultimately escape from either sin or grace, but not from both. He can escape from sin by yielding to grace, or he can put himself outside the operation of grace by yielding to sin.

23*—For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Sin is the problem

**G**race is the cure

* Discovered from first to last.
  + The Divine compassion is its supreme message;

The Spirit of God moving over the chaos; the wealth of the love of the Eternal, demanding: "... Adam,... where art thou?" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?..." God is the God Who makes a way by which His banished ones may return; He is the God Who so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.

In the first part of the text we have three terms: wages, sin, death. In the second part we have three terms: a gift, God, eternal life. They stand over against each other in each case. Wages—a gift; Sin—God; death—eternal life.

What are **wages**? Wages are earnings. A man has a right to wages. Wages are the equivalent of work, or at least they ought to be. When a man takes his wages by common courtesy he will say, "Thank you." He really need not do so. He has nothing to thank any one for when he gets his wages. He has earned them. They are the answer in equity and justice to what he has already given in toil and in effort. Wages lie within the realm of law, or order, of accuracy, of justice.

What is a **gift**? The revisers have accurately translated the one Greek word by two words, for it is a word that emphasizes the freedom of the gift. What then is a free gift? Something that cannot be earned. That which no man can claim as his right. That which cannot be bought. A free gift must be received of grace, of favor, of love. A free gift is in the realm of grace.

The next contrast: sin and God. In our text the term sin is qualified by the term wages. Its appeal is made personal and direct by that word. Sin is considered here as an individual act. It is the act of a free agent. It is not merely the missing of the mark; it is willfully missing of the mark. It is not merely failure; it is the choosing of failure. If wages be the payment for work, sin is the work that earns the payment. Here sin is considered as definite volitional choosing of the wrong with all which that involves of guilt, loss, damage or danger.

God is set over against sin? The term sin doesn’t fit with God. That is a very arresting fact. Even in the inspired writings in which the words were chosen under the direction of the Spirit of God we always find that when they are dealing with the things of God and Christ, language breaks down. Grace is bigger than literature; grace is mightier than language! In order to make this contrast complete, the lower level of perfect rhetoric and balance and proportion must be violated. It was easy to set the free gift over against the wages, but when we come to sin, the course of action demanding wages, what can be put over against it? No course of action is equal to dealing with sin. Then God is immediately placed in contrast with sin.

It would be possible to say, the wages of sin is death, but the wages of holiness is life. That is a perfectly balanced contrast in its entirety. But therein is no reference to a gift; the first set of terms do not constitute a contrast, but a similarity. The contrast in that statement is between sin and holiness and between death and life. That, however, is not the text. If we go back to man in the garden, we may say that the alternative before him may thus have been stated: the wages of sin is death, but the wages of holiness is life. That is the alternative before a sinless being. It was so in the case of God's second Man, the last Adam, Jesus. In His case the wages of sin would have been death and the wages of holiness life. The text was not written for the sinless; it was written for sinning men. In their case we can understand the declaration, "... the wages of sin is death,..." But what alternative is offered to sinning men? The answer of grace is: "... the... gift of God is eternal life...." God puts Himself over against sin. In a man's new endeavor He does not say: the wages of sin is death, and the outcome of reformation shall be life. He does not say: the wages of sin is death, and the outcome of religious observance shall be life. These things are of no use. The man who is in the thought of God is a man who is incapable of reformation and whose religious observances would in themselves be sinful. Therefore, God put Himself over against sin. Sin—God. We are only looking at the terms, but mark the arresting grandeur of the contrast.

The last contrast in the text: death and eternal life. What is death? It is the end of sin, the righteous end. It is that which makes sin musical. It maintains the harmony of the universe. If in the universe of God, the breaking of a law could be permitted without check or hindrance, then all music would cease, the beauty missed, and the last victory never be won! Death is the necessary end of sin, the only answer to it, the only final harvest that men can reap who sow in sin. Death is that which every man chooses in the moment when he yields himself to sin. By that yielding, he chooses death, disintegration, corruption, ruin. To break law is to create anarchy; to create anarchy is to make hell necessary.

Eternal life is placed over against death, Death is an end; life is a beginning. But life is more than a beginning; it is the energy for the development of that which is begun; it is the potentiality for the full realization of everything which is begun. The final contrast does not refer to the end only, but to the beginning also; not to the beginning and the end alone, but to the whole process of development.

The free gift of God is eternal life.... In our understanding of that, we shall find a new definition of sin which qualifies the first part of the text giving it a new meaning in view of God and His free gift. Sin, when the gospel is known no longer, consists of certain actions; it consists in the attitude of soul which results in these actions. If he perish, it will be because he has refused God's gift, the reception of which would have made him master over the sins that he has committed.

God is concerned of as One perfectly knowing the soul; as One Who is unutterably holy so that He cannot overlook sin or clear the guilty while the guilt remains; as One Who is unchangeably loving so that His love alters not when it alteration finds.

God offers a free gift to the sinning man. That is to say, He offers a gift of His own will, a gift which is the result of His own operation, of His own passion.

He offers this gift as a free gift without any condition as to character in the person who is to receive it, without any pledge on the part of that person as to the future. God bestows His gift freely upon all such as will receive it. God does not ask that men bring a certificate of character with them. Neither does He ask us to make a pledge and a promise that we will always be good. He asks no such pledge; He asks no such promise. That is the grace of God. I speak in soberness of truth and under emotion when I say I would to God I knew just how to say "grace" as it ought to be said! Out of the very grace of His heart which in operation has involved His own unutterable pain and sorrow, God offers a free gift, and He offers it to a man

What, then, is this gift? It is the gift of life, -abiding life. Our word "eternal," great and wonderful as it is,

This gift is that life won out of death, and therefore in its reception the soul is pardoned and cleansed. It is the life of the risen Lord and ascended Lord, and therefore it is the life of power equal to all the demands that can be made upon it in this and every succeeding age. It is life in fellowship with God; ultimately, therefore, it must prove itself to be a life of complete realization; the perfection of the individual instrument in spirit, mind and body, and the accomplishment of the purposes of God, not merely in the instrument, but through the instrument.

brought by it into the realization of the eternal purpose of God. That is one course open to every soul who knows the gospel.

What is the other? Here we begin at the point where the soul begins. The beginning is sin. Sin is rejection of the gift. I halt to remind you of the careful emphasis which I laid at the beginning on the fact that we are dealing only with those who know the gospel. To such, sin is rejection of God's gift. That is what our Lord meant when in His Paschal discourse He said to His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came He would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. Concerning conviction of sin, He said: "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." For the man who has heard the gospel, that is the whole heart of sin, it is the whole reach of it. Included in it are the desires that inspire the rejection. Why do men reject the Lord Christ? Because there are certain desires in their lives which they wish to satisfy and which they know they could not if they yielded to Him. The things thus done in answer to desire are done at last under compulsion. Men cannot cease if they would. All this multiplying of sin grows out of the central sin of the rejection of Christ. Let us state this from the positive side. If this gospel means anything, it means that if a man will yield to God, there is power in the gift of life which He bestows sufficient to break the power of canceled sin. Consequently, sin is the rejection of the remedy.

Where this sin is committed wages follow as the necessary results of the things we decided to do; the harvest that must come from our own sowing; that which is righteously due to us by reason of our choice; that which must come to us as the result of the false effort we are putting into life.

The wages are described by the one word, death. The only wages that sin ever pays are the wages of death. They are paid immediately and continuously. Do not confuse, I pray you, appearances with facts. Someone may say, "Sin pays more than that. Sin pays some men wonderfully!" Sin does pay some men wonderfully to all appearances, but the gains of sin are the destruction of the sinner, always, and that not ultimately merely, but immediately.