

The “Free Gift” of Eternal Life – Conditional or Unconditional?

Introduction:

1. Romans 6:23: “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,*” NASB.
2. In the last part of this verse the apostle Paul described “*eternal life*” as “*the free gift of God.*” From that language many conclude that “*eternal life*” is unconditional. They say if it is a “*free gift*” there can be **no conditions** attached.
 - a. They may also cite Eph. 2:8 to further bolster their claim.
3. Note how one person expressed it:
 - a. “May I say, you don’t have to qualify to receive ‘a gift.’ There are no obligations before, during, nor after receiving ‘a gift.’ You don’t have to live a certain way to authenticate if you’ve really received ‘a gift.’ A gift is a gift! Eternal life and forgiveness of sins is a free gift offered to us, but it cost God His only begotten Son.” John 3:16
 - b.”A gift cannot be earned. You don’t have to be water baptized nor attend church services to go to heaven. You simply have to believe on the Savior that He is the Christ Who died upon the cross for our sins, was buried, and then resurrected from the dead after three days.”
 - (1) It is a fact, salvation or the “*gift*” of “*eternal life cannot be earned.*” It is the “*grace of God*” that brings Salvation, Titus 2:11. And grace is unmerited favor.
 - (2) Note also if you “have to believe on the Savior that He is the Christ...,” that within itself is a condition.
4. But what does the Bible say? Is “*the free gift of God,*” which “*is eternal life*” conditional or unconditional?

Discussion:

I. Some Conditional Gifts of God.

- A. The Fall of Jericho, Joshua 6:1-20.
 1. God said “*I have given into thine hand Jericho...*,” v. 2.
 2. Then He gave the instructions they were to follow, v. 3-5.
 3. They followed God’s instructions, v. 6-20
 4. Upon completing the instructions, “*the wall fell down flat,*” v. 20.
 5. Question:
 - a. Was Jericho a gift from God?
 - b. Did they earn that gift.
 - c. Would they have received it if they had refused to obey God’s instructions?
- B. The Case of Naaman the leper, 2 Kings 5:9-14.
 1. Being miraculously healed of the dreaded disease leprosy was certainly a gift from God.
 2. Did Naaman really earn that blessing by simply dipping seven times in the river Jordan?
 3. Would he have been cured if he had refused to follow the prophet’s instructions?
- C. Noah’s Salvation from the Flood.
 1. God said “*I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth...*,” Gen. 6:7.
 2. However, “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*” Gen. 6:8.
 3. However, conditions were attached, Gen. 6:14-6.
 4. Noah did as God commanded, Gen. 6:22; 7:5.
 5. He was delivered, Heb. 11:7.
 6. Would Noah and his family have survived the flood if he had refused to heed God’s instructions.
- D. There are many “iffy” Scriptures!
 1. Gen. 4:7; Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:27-31; Matt. 6:14-15; John 8:31; John 15:7,10; Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:17.

II. If God’s “free gift” of eternal life is Unconditional, then:

- A. All People everywhere will be saved!
 1. But this contradicts such passages as Matt. 7:13-14, 21-23; 25:41-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9, etc.
- B. Or God is a Respector of Persons!
 1. Many Calvinists believe in a “limited atonement,” that Jesus died only for the “elect,” or those foreordained from the foundation of the world to eternal life, and that that number cannot be changed.
 2. But this contradicts Hebrews 2:9 and Acts 10:34-35.

III. Consider Romans, chapter Six, the chapter from which our text was taken.

- A. Written to those were “*Dead to Sin,*” Rom. 6:1-2, but “*alive unto God,*” v. 11.
 1. They became “*dead to sin*” and alive in Christ, when they were “*baptized into Jesus Christ,*” Rom. 6:3-4,.
 2. Had they refused to be baptized they would have remained dead in sin! Rom. 6:23

3. When one becomes “*dead to sin*,” verse 2, by being “*baptized into Jesus Christ*,” v. 3-4, then the “*old man*” of sin “*is crucified with him*,” v. 6.
- B. Written to those who had become “*servants of righteousness*,” v. 18.
 1. Note their former condition, Rom. 6:17.
 2. When they “*obeyed from the heart*” that form of doctrine, they were “*then made free from sin*,” v. 18.
 3. Through this process they had become “*dead to sin*,” v. 2, and “*alive unto God*,” v. 11.
 4. But What if they had refused to obey “*that form of doctrine*?”
- C. Written to those who were “*now*” able to yield the fruits of holiness.
 1. Note Rom. 6:19-22.
 2. Having become “*servants of righteousness*,” v. 18, they were now able to bear “*fruit unto holiness*,” v. 22.
 3. But what if they, by refusing to obey that form of doctrine, had remained “*the servants of sin*?” v. 17.
Would they have received “*the free gift*” of eternal life?

IV. Now Consider our Opening Text, Rom. 6:23.

- A. “*The wages of sin*..”
 1. “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*,” NASB .
 - a. Sin pays “*wages*,” the lost receive what they deserve, what they have earned. This illustrates the exceeding sinfulness of sin!
- B. “*But the free gift of God is eternal life*...”
 1. It is a “*gift*,” we cannot earn it.
 - a. It is a “*gift*” in that it involves the “*rich*” mercy, the “*great love*,” and “*the exceeding riches of his grace*,” Eph. 2:4,7-8. Cf. Titus 3:4-7.
 - b. Grace is unmerited favor. Mercy is from “*eleos*,” which is “*the outward manifestation of pity*; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it,” Vine.
 - (1) That which cannot exist apart from the grace, mercy and love of God cannot be earned; it is unmerited; it is in every sense of the word a “*gift*.”
 2. But “*free gifts*” are often conditional.
 - a. Illus. Commercial: “*The first ten people to call this number will receive a free gift*.” But what if one does not make the call.
 - b. Many people include others in their will; including great gifts that they can receive from their estate, but there may be conditions, including being physically present at the reading of the will, etc.
- C. “*..The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*...,” Rom. 6:23.
 1. If one is not “*in Christ Jesus our Lord*,” he is not eligible for the “*free gift*.” Cf. 2 Tim. 2:10.
 2. But how does one enter into Jesus Christ? Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27.

Conclusion:

1. We have all sinned, Rom. 3:23; the “*wages of sin is death*,” Rom. 6:23.
 2. Hence, we should be ever so thankful that “*the free gift of God*,” which is “*eternal life*” is available to us all.
 3. But there are conditions to be met. The gospel must be obeyed! Rom. 1:16; I Peter 4:17; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- Bobby Witherington, July 10, 2016