

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The first thought that is suggested ~~to~~ to me by the verse, is one which is ~~per~~ perhaps not the most obvious, and which I think is nevertheless ~~related~~ latent in the verse, ~~and~~ and is very important for us to think about. I might summarize it this way, "the nature of the freedom of man." "The nature of the freedom of man." We have alternatives here. We have two things put opposite each other, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God ~~is~~ eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have alternatives, we have a choice. When St. Augustine was doing his great work there were many in Italy who were reputed to have said, "What's the use of my trying to believe in the Lord?" I am not predestined to be saved. I can't help myself. I might as well go on in sin." Of course, that is an utter misinterpretation of that teaching. Augustine never thought of saying anything that could properly lead to that conclusion. It is true that God has ordained before the foundation of the world who is to be saved. He has ordained all of us that come to Christ. It is true that we are so lost in sin, so dead in sin that nothing but the grace of God can save us. But it is also true that at every point in our lives before we are saved, and after we are saved, and at every point, there is a power and a responsibility of making choices. And no man can appear before the throne of God, and say, I couldn't be saved, there was nothing I could do about it. God says call upon me, and I will answer. There is not one who from his heart will look to the Lord and ask for salvation that will be denied. Every man has a choice before him between the wages of sin, and the gift of God, and every man is responsible for what choice he makes, and that is true at every point in our lives. There is a measure of choice which we have. But I think the verse brings out clearly that we do not have a power of absolute choice, the nature of the freedom of man. There is no man who can stand up and say I am the master of my ~~fixed~~ fate, I am the captain of my soul. Because no man is. Every one of us is conditioned by many circumstances. And every one of us