The Wages of Unrighteousness

Intro:
- 2 Pet. 2:15 Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness
  - showed Balak how to tempt Israel and cause them to fall as a result of their sin
  - for personal benefit – wages, financial reward

- this lesson: things we should know about the wages of unrighteousness

There are many ways people benefit from sin
- financially:
  - preaching false doctrines, tickling people’s ears, for a paycheck (profit)
  - drugs, pornography, prostitution, gambling
  - stealing, robbing

- social advancement: sinfully manipulating people to put themselves in a better position
  - false accusations to get someone in trouble, to make themselves look better
  - deceiving other people into thinking you’re something you’re not
  - treating someone mean to make other people laugh

- etc.

- anytime a person benefits from sins he commits, it’s the wages of unrighteousness

- What are some things we need to know about the wages of unrighteousness? – lesson below

The wages of unrighteousness is a strong temptation
- illus.: Balaam, tempted with financial gain to curse the Israelites
  - resisted at first
  - gave in, unable to curse them, but showed Balak how to put a stumbling block before them whereby they sinned and God punished Israel

- false teachers are doing the same thing as Balaam today, leading people to hell for personal gain
  - 2 Pet. 2:1-2, 15 sensual, greed, exploit others for personal profit, like Balaam
    - illus.: Perganaum, some held teachings of Balaam, eat things sacrificed to idols and commit acts of immorality (Rev. 2:14)
    - benefit from the sin of leading people away from God and to Satan

- lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16)
  - illus.: temptation, the wages of unrighteousness in everyday life. . .
    - deceive a teacher or boss so not get in trouble – wages of unrighteousness
    - tell a white lie so someone likes you – wages of unrighteousness
  - temptation of the benefits of sin are strong

- Christians: don’t give into the temptation, refuse the wages of unrighteousness
Wages of unrighteousness only last a short time – temporal
- 1 Tim. 6:7-8 wages of unrighteousness can only last till we die – often don’t last that long
  - at death, all we can take is who we are, not what we have
  - wages of unrighteousness = moral and spiritual bankruptcy

- Ja. 4:14 even if wages of unrighteousness last till death, still a short time
  - life is a vapor that is here a short time and vanishes away

- Ja. 5:1-5 people reaping the wages of unrighteousness should weep and howl
  - they’re working for things that will be destroyed
  - they’ll pay a bigger price for their sin one day, that they ever got from it

We hurt other people more than we get from the wages of unrighteousness – Balak, king of Moab
- illus.: Balaam, showed Balak how to tempt Israel and cause them to fall as a result of their sin
  - Num. 24:1-11 God caused a plague to come upon the Israelites and 24k died
- Num. 31:1-18 God had Israel destroy the Midianites, plunder and destroy their cities, kill all the males, and all the women except for girls who hadn’t known a man intimately, killed Balaam

- it would have been better for all parties, if Balaam had been faithful to God, and rejected the wages of unrighteousness

- the best thing we can do for ourselves and others is be faithful to God, and reject the wages of unrighteousness
  - illus.: when tempted to lie for personal gain, better not to, for everyone’s sake
  - illus.: when tempter to deceive someone for personal gain, better not to, for everyone’s sake
  - illus.: when tempted to take something that’s not our’s, better not to, for everyone’s sake
  - illus.: when tempted to gossip, better not to, for everyone’s sake

Wages of unrighteousness are small compared to God’s gift
- Heb. 12:15-17 not come short of God’s grace, by accepting the wages of unrighteousness
  - illus.: not immoral or godless like Esau, who sold birthright for a meal, later couldn’t get it back

- illus.: Judas, betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver – "price of wickedness" (Acts 1:18)
  - 30 pieces of silver in today's S = $30.85 - $.66 each (ISBE) X 30 X annualized inflation of 3%
  - Judas enjoyed the money for about 2 days, then died and eternal lost as the son of perdition (Jn. 17:12)
    - wages of unrighteousness were under $31.00, had it 2 days, didn't get to spend, lost eternally
  - sold soul to Satan for $31.00 - many today doing the same thing

- the benefits we receive from sin are small compared to what we lose
  - the benefits of sin never come close to matching what we lose in exchange

- Satan pays very little for sin, compared to God's gift of eternal life
  - Esau received a swallow of stew, Judas receive about $30.00
  - "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? (Matt. 16:26)
Wages of unrighteousness have eternal consequences – Balaam killed, Israelites died, Midianites decimated

- **Rom. 6:23 wages of sin, death** (hell, eternal damnation)
  - final wages paid for sin (unrighteousness), hell
  - **illus.: Balaam** “loved” the wages of unrightouenness (2 Pet. 2:15), but he certainly doesn’t love the eternal wages

- **Matt. 16:26-27** Jesus returning to repay everyone, according to deeds

  - What will you receive when the Lord returns? – **Rom. 6:23**
    - wages of sin, hell
    - gift of God, eternal life in Christ

**Summary / Inv.**

- to reject the wages of unrighteousness, our love must be in the right place
  - **2 Pet. 2:15** Balaam “loved” the wages of unrighteousness – more than God

- we reject the wages of unrighteousness, because we love God more
  - **illus.: love God more than the benefits from lying** to someone
  - **illus.: love God more than the benefits from deceiving** someone
  - **illus.: love God more than what we receive from stealing**
  - **illus.: love God more than the benefits of gossiping**

- as Christians, we . . .
  - love God with all our heart soul mind strength (Mk. 12:30)
  - serve one master, not two (Matt. 6:24)
  - reject the wages of unrighteousness, to faithfully serve God, and go to heaven

- Is your love in the right place? focused on the right things, doing the right things

- **inv.: love God, obey**