

Celebrating God's Gifts:

What Did You Get for Christmas?

Romans 8: 1-11

INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Romans 8:1-11 (NASB)

⁸ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Prayer

What did you get for Christmas?

When we were kids, I am sure that most of us hoped for toys that we could play with. I remember as a kid that I was disappointed when I opened a package with great anticipation of hours of fun to find a shirt, pants, or a pair of socks. As we got older the presents became fewer and fewer. Now, in our senior years, we start to look at presents much differently. Most of us are no longer seeking the most expensive presents. We are thankful for the cards that friends send to us, the pictures that the grandkids draw for us, and the opportunity to be with family once again.

When we buy gifts for our loved ones we try very hard to get presents that they will get hours of enjoyment out of or that they really need. The problem, of course, with many of the presents we give to each other is that those gifts often end up in closets or toy boxes and eventually get sold in garage sales or boxed up and sent to the "Good Will Store."

The ultimate goal is give a gift that is really needed and will be used for a very long time.

There is a perfect gift that was given to everyone of us on the first Christmas over 2000 years ago. It was not wrapped up in fancy Christmas paper with a bow. But, it was a gift that, unlike our Christmas presents here on earth, not only will be used for a long time, but will benefit us for eternity. That gift, of course, was God's Son.

To a non-Christian, this gift would seem quite unusual. "A baby boy, born in a manger in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago? How can I possibly use that gift?"

This gift is different than any gift that we receive from our family and friends. Even their most perfect "thought out" gift to us can, at best, only have a lifetime of value. God's gift is different because it has eternal value AND His gift is not forced upon us. We have the right to accept or reject the gift of His Son.

What an important gift it is! This gift is so valuable, that, if rejected, it means that you have failed to fulfill the very **purpose of your life!** That purpose is to be freed from your bondage to sin.

Back in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve had sinned by taking of the forbidden fruit, they lost their closeness with God, and all of the blessings that God had given them. And as a result of their sin, from that day until this, mankind has been separated from God and His righteousness because of his sin and lived in a constant fear of death.

God sees our life as either black or white. There are no gray areas. This is how Paul describes to two lives we can live from our scripture this morning.

Romans 8:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

We are either serving God or we are slaves to sin. There is NO in between!

Matthew 6:24 (NASB)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

God GAVE us His Son as a GIFT to die on the cross and release us from our bondage of sin. The true purpose of our life is to understand the value of this gift and accept it as our own.

When we accept the gift of God's Son, we are promised three other gifts that I would like to consider this morning.

I. The Gift of the Holy Spirit.

In our scripture this morning, we are told that when we accept God's Son, we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

Romans 8:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He

who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So, the most important question to answer this morning is **How can I receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit?**

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the **gift** of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches that every person that submits to Christ will receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at their conversion. It is not a gift that we can earn. It is a **free gift** from God. We receive it by **accepting** the free gift of God's Son as our Lord and Savior.

Remember, this gift must be accepted. It is not a gift that is forced upon us. To accept this gift, we must obey the commands that He left with us in His Word (The Bible). We are commanded that we must truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, understand that we are in sin and ask for forgiveness, and obey Christ's command to be baptized for the remission of our sin, and live a new life serving Him.

When we accept God's Son in this manner, we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a promise that the Holy Spirit will indwell within us and assist us as we strive to serve the Lord.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift! As long as He is dwelling within us, we are promised that we are not "in the flesh" or still living by worldly standards. When we have the Holy Spirit indwelling within us, we are promised that He frees us from the bondage of sin!

Verse 6 tells us that when we focus our hearts and thoughts on the Spirit we will experience spiritual life and peace.

Romans 8:6 (NASB)

⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

Have you ever wondered how you can continuously focus on the Spirit? Maybe the most powerful way the Holy Spirit works is through the Word. When we read, study and memorize the Scripture we allow the Spirit to use that scripture to direct us in our life. We are able to distinguish between good and evil and make the right decisions in life.

Ephesians 5:17-18 (NASB)

¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

The comparison here between wine and the Spirit helps explain the phrase "filled with the Spirit".

ILLUSTRATION:

If we talk about someone who is filled with liquor we mean that he's lost control and the liquor is controlling his actions. If we talk about someone being filled with love we're talking about someone whose actions are dominated by that love. And when the Bible talks about being filled with the Spirit it means that we are to be dominated by the Spirit.

We allow Him to control us. We read His Word and live by it. The second gift that is given when we accept God's Son is:

II. The Gift of Adoption as a Son of God.

Romans 8:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery ^lleading to fear again, but you have received ^ha spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Who is a "Child of God"?

In one way of thinking, every person is a child of God. God is the creator of life. In that way, we are His children. **Life** is one of the gifts of God.

When the Bible talks about God's children, it is talking about people who have a relationship with God and are His "**True Children**" because of the acceptance of God's gift of His Son.

As Paul put it, ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

God has given life to everyone who lives---but many of them do not have a relationship with God. They do not believe in Him. Many people in the world are seeking worldly pleasures. They choose to reject the Son.

Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

God does not make any one obey Him if they do not want to. If they do not want to have a relationship with Him---He will not make them do it.

Just as we had no part in our natural birth, we cannot cause ourselves to be born into God's family by doing good deeds or conjuring up faith of our own. God is the one who "**gave** the right" according to His gracious will.

1 John 3:1 (NASB)

³ See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

A child grows up to look like his parents. Similarly, God wants His children to become more and more like Jesus Christ. We still live in a world of sin, but as God's children we no longer have the desire to sin. Our goal should be to practice righteousness.

1 John 3:7-10 (NASB)

⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil

has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

The third gift that is given to us when we accept the gift of God's Son is:

III. The Gift as Heir to the Kingdom.

Romans 8:14 (NASB)

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

The gift of God's Son gets better and better.

When we accept Him, we become heirs of His Kingdom.

Some people spend a large portion of their life trying to find the perfect place to live. Maybe a scenic property on a large lake with mountains in the background. There is no place on earth that can match the Kingdom that we inherit as the children of God, because this Kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus was born to rule the Kingdom of God. What kind of kingdom would that be?

Jesus was asked about that. When He was in Pilate's courtroom, the Roman governor was questioning him... and Jesus said:

John 18:36-37 (NASB)

³⁶ "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." ³⁷ Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

When we understand what it means to seek the kingdom of God, we will confidently seek righteousness and eternal life.

ILLUSTRATION:

If people could just understand the importance of this gift! It would be as popular as the cure for cancer would be to anyone who was inflicted with it, if it discovered today. People would be lining up for it. We would want to be a member of God's eternal club, the Kingdom of God.

Matthew tells us that we are to "seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven". This should be our primary desire in life...**to seek the Kingdom.**

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. One day the son died and the father was so grieved that in just a few months times... he also passed on.

There was to be a great auction of his paintings and a great many influential people gathered, hoping for an opportunity to purchase one of the great masters for their collections.

The auction opened with a painting of the rich man's son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this picture of the man's son. Who will bid for this picture?" There was silence. There was muttering in the back of the room, "I wish he would get to the good paintings." But the auctioneer persisted. "Who will start the bidding on the son? \$100, \$200? The son! Who will take the SON?"

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting."

"We have \$10, who will bid \$20?"

The crowd was becoming impatient. They didn't want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10."

A man sitting on the second row shouted, "Now let's get on with the collection!"

The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything!"

So it is with salvation. Many will pass over the gift of the Christ child because something else looks more appealing...but they do so without realizing that in the end, it will only be those who accept the Son that will get everything.

Do you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you? As we read in our scripture, **"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."**

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again,
By His counsels guide uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you,
God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet...Till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet...Till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.