

God's Free Gift

Rom 5:12-17

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned — 13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. 16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) NKJV

We all like gifts. But our attitude toward gifts betrays our innermost beings.

There's an old legend about a greedy man and an envious man who were walking along when they were overtaken by a stranger who got to know them. And after a bit he said, as he departed from them, that he would give each of them a gift. Whoever made a wish first would get what he wanted, and the other would get a double portion of what the first had asked for. The greedy man knew what he wanted, but he was afraid to make his wish because he wanted the double portion for himself and didn't want the other to get it. And the envious man felt the same way, and he was also unwilling to wish first. After a while the stronger of the two grabbed the other by the throat and said he would choke him to death unless he made his wish. And at that the other man said, "Very well. I make my wish - I wish to be made blind in one eye." Immediately he lost the sight of one eye, and his companion went blind in both. In this coming year, be careful of greed and envy.

But let us look at God's free gift. And let us look at what it means to us.

- I. A gift is free
 - A. Many suppose that God's gift must be earned, deserved.
 - 1. But twice in this passage Paul uses the term "free gift" to emphasize that it is free.
 - a. 15 But the free gift is not like the offense.
 - b. 16 . . . but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification
 - B. Although we could never deserve Him, yet we can live worthy of His calling.
 - 1. Eph 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and

gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3
endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. NKJV

II. Not all gifts are sincere

III. Each gift has various values

A. The two words were in large letters in a shop window, and drew a crowd. As they came near, they found the conditions were, that each buyer of a pound of tea, got a pound of sugar for nothing. God's free gift (Rom. 6:23) has no such conditions. The two words were in large letters in a shop window, and drew a crowd. As they came near, they found the conditions were, that each buyer of a pound of tea, got a pound of sugar for nothing. God's free gift (Rom. 6:23) has no such conditions.

B. John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." NKJV

IV. Not all gifts are equally appreciated

A. A son had become estranged from his parents, and ceased to correspond with, or recognize them. His mother, according to her custom, had a little gift sent to him on the anniversary of his birth. But instead of accepting it, and returning thanks, he packed it up, and sent it back to her without a word. That was the greatest grief of all to his mother; it broke her heart. God's love despised, and His love-gift rejected, is the greatest sin, and will bring the heaviest judgment. A son had become estranged from his parents, and ceased to correspond with, or recognize them. His mother, according to her custom, had a little gift sent to him on the anniversary of his birth. But instead of accepting it, and returning thanks, he packed it up, and sent it back to her without a word. That was the greatest grief of all to his mother; it broke her heart. God's love despised, and His love-gift rejected, is the greatest sin, and will bring the heaviest judgment.

B. We live in the now and people look for what benefits them now.

1. Man can give medicine when sickness comes, food when hunger comes, help when weakness comes, love when loneliness comes. But when death comes, man can give only sympathy, only compassion, Never the gift of life. Only God can do that.

V. What was involved in God's gift.

A. His Son humility.

1. The Long Walk - A woman missionary in the South Pacific Islands was explaining to a group of children the custom and significance of giving gifts at Christmas. "Giving gifts," she said, "expresses love and reminds us of the perfect gift of love we received from God...Jesus." Later that week, a young native boy came to the missionary's side and said, "I love you and

want you to have this." He pulled from a straw basket the most beautiful shell the missionary had ever seen. As she admired its beauty, she recognized it as a special shell only found on the far side of the island, a half day's walk from the village. When confronted by this, the boy smiled and said, "Long walk part of gift!" God "walked" 2000 years with his people before sending the gift of Jesus. And he has walked 2000 more years expressing the significance of Him

B. But His Son's humiliation.

1. He suffered and died in our place.
2. This was the view of heaven.
3. When God gave the gift of His Son it was not simply to Mary & Joseph or even to the world, but He gave him to die for us, in our place, for our sin.
4. Does that mean something to you today?
5. Do we appreciate the significance of the Christmas story?

VI. A gift must be received.

A. Captain Barclay, an eccentric Londoner, declared to a friend, that he could not sell twenty golden sovereigns in an hour at a penny each, on London Bridge. To test it, he took his stand with a few sovereigns in his hand, crying, "Genuine gold, a penny each." The crowd passed, some laughing, others hurrying. At last a poorly dressed man invested, and discovering his purchase was real, he went back for more. But the hour was past, and the captain was gone. Few believe that God gives eternal life as a free gift (Rom. 6:23).

B. The Strange Case of George Wilson

1. In 1829 two men -- Wilson and Porter -- were convicted of robbing the U.S. mails, and sentenced to death by hanging.
2. Three weeks before the time set for Wilson's execution, he was pardoned by President Andrew Jackson.
3. Strangely enough, Wilson refused the pardon. The case went to the Supreme Court (United States vs. George Wilson, 7 Peters' Report, page 150) and the court finally handed down its decision:
4. "A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential, and delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if it is rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him."
5. Most people would agree that Wilson was a fool for refusing to accept a pardon.

6. Yet these same people daily reject the pardon which God has provided for them. Because God is just, he must punish our sins. But because God is merciful, he himself suffered the awful penalty when Jesus Christ his Son, suffered all the wrath of God against our sins as He died on the cross of Calvary. Your pardon has been signed by God himself. All you need to do is accept it by telling God in prayer that you are guilty of sin; ask him to pardon you, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Unless you accept the pardon, you remain condemned. "He that believeth not is condemned" (John 3:18). Wilson's was a strange case. But then, Wilson was a fool.