

THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

The season of giving is upon us once again and those who celebrate Christmas or other holidays at this “most wonderful time of the year” are busily purchasing gifts for family, friends, and coworkers. These acts of kindness and love help make the holiday season the favorite of many people, especially young children who eagerly anticipate the presents that await them.

Fortunately for all of us, God gives gifts each and every day of the year. James 1:17 says that, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” Some today may take those innumerable gifts for granted, but our American forefathers did not. In fact, the Declaration of Independence begins with an acknowledgement of God’s benevolence stating that all men “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” But there is another gift that is infinitely greater than God’s endowment of unalienable rights, which cannot be properly understood without a basic knowledge of God, His laws, and the

consequences of violating His laws.

First, God describes Himself as a holy God, that is, having no sin whatsoever (Psalm 99:9). Because of God’s nature, He cannot abide sinfulness in His presence. “Be holy, for I am holy,” (I Peter 1:16). Psalm 15 says that those who may abide in God’s presence walk uprightly, work righteousness, speak the truth and demonstrate other attributes of holiness.

God’s first law for mankind was given to the first man and his wife, Adam and Eve, who lived in the garden paradise of Eden. These two enjoyed such a close, personal relationship with their Creator that He spoke directly to them and walked in the garden with them. Adam and Eve were created as eternal beings and would remain such, unless they violated the one law that God established for them, which was to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die,” (Genesis 2:17). Of course, we know that Adam and Eve did violate that law and thereby committed the first sin, which is defined as lawlessness (I John 3:4). From that moment on, they needed a means to be forgiven of their sins to re-establish their precious covenant relationship with God. However, the problem wasn’t theirs alone, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23). The consequence of violating God’s commands, absent

forgiveness of sins, is the death of the soul.

In order to save from death those who would accept and do His will, God created sacrifice-based laws for Adam and Eve and their descendants, then for the patriarchs including Abraham and his progeny, and later for Moses, to whom He gave the Ten Commandments and other related laws. However, none of these laws or their associated, imperfect sacrifices could take sins away (Hebrews 10:1-4).

Because of God’s demands, only a perfect sacrifice could remove the sins of the world and provide a way for mankind to once again be sinless in His sight and in a covenant relationship with God, as Adam and Eve were before they sinned. The most famous passage in the Bible explains the greatest gift that ever has been or ever will be: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” (John 3:16). God sent His innocent and obedient Son to hang on a wooden cross and ultimately die, after being maliciously tortured and viciously whipped, a short distance from the city of Jerusalem. It is by His stripes that we are healed from our sins (Isaiah 53:5) and by His blood that we shall be saved (Romans 5:9).

One of the most amazing things about this greatest of all gifts is that it

was given while mankind was still in sin (Romans 5:8). Jesus didn’t die just for “good” people; he died for all, including murderers, rapists, the sexually immoral, God-haters, and other wicked people of all types. God’s gift should be of the greatest comfort to those who have sinned the most; regardless of what an individual has done in his or her life, it is still possible to repent of past sins and establish a perfect relationship with God. Even the Jews who had urged the Roman government to kill the Lord asked later what they needed to do to obtain forgiveness of sins, and “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,’” and about 3,000 individuals gladly received his word and were baptized that same day (Acts 2:38, 41).

Friends, we would be honored to help you learn more about the greatest of all gifts, so that your sins can be forgiven, a relationship with God can be created, and so that you can live with Him eternally.

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