

Articles and Sermons :: God's Greatest Gift

God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/21 6:45

God's Greatest Gift to Man

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The celebrated evangelist of a little before Moody's time, Sam Jones, said that the average preacher taking a text reminded him of an insect trying to carry a bale of cotton. The best I can do is to take this text and do what I can and trust God to bless it to somebody.

Paul said he was made a minister according to God's dispensation, given to him to fulfill the Word of God and to preach the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations—a mystery which not even Abraham or David or Isaiah knew. The riches of the glory of this mystery are now made manifest to His saints.

What was this mystery? Simply this: Christ in you, the hope of glory—Christ, whom we preach, "admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). And Paul said he labored and worked at it according to the powerful working of God in him (see 1:29).

I am attempting to show what happens to people who are converted to Christ. That's all I'm interested in. Anybody else can preach on birth control, capital punishment and nuclear physics if he wants to. But I am trying to tell what happens to people when they are converted to Christ—that is, what they don't have that they used to have before they were converted, and what they do have that they didn't have before they were converted, and what they may expect that they could not expect before they were converted.

What they do not have that they used to have are the sin and the record of their past offenses. The police say that a person "has no record"—nothing they can pin on him. Truly converted Christians have no record. They have been justified. Then, what they do have that they didn't have before are eternal life and a perfect standing before God. What they may expect that they couldn't expect before are heaven and the presence of God at last.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/22 2:08

2.

The Supreme Gift

But these things are not the most precious treasure that God gives to a converted person. What is the supreme benefaction, the gift and treasure above all others which even God can give?

A little child gives you a gift. Maybe it's a homemade potholder or some little thing. It's not worth much, but it's worth a lot to you. That's all a child can give. Or suppose you get a present from a relative. You evaluate that present according to two things: the love which the person feels for you and the person's ability to give. We give according to our ability.

Now when the great God Almighty, who owns heaven and earth, wants to bestow upon one of His creatures that which is above all other gifts, a gift worthy of its source, a gift worthy of the One who gives it, He gives Christ to be in our nature forever. If you are false Christians, then Christ is not in you; but "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

This is God's supreme and final gift. Not the pearly gates, not the golden streets, not heaven, not even the forgiveness of sin, although these are God's gifts too, such as a king might give to his queen—a dozen gifts, and then the supreme, final gift worthy of royalty. So, not a dozen or two dozen or a thousand, but countless hundreds of thousands of gifts God lays before His happy people, and then He bestows this supreme gift. He makes us the repository of the nature and Person of the Lord Jesus.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/22 10:56

3.

Who He Is

Now, who is this that God gives to His people as the best that He can do? Nothing in heaven is higher than this. All the earth scraped together and all its riches would not be as high as this. All the celestial heavens and the astronomic heavens rolled together would not be as much as this. Not all those strange and mysterious beauties we read about in heaven and see by the eye of faith—not all of these things together would be as much as Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Who is this that He gives us? The answer, of course, is found in the Scriptures. It is He of whom Moses and all the prophets wrote. It is He of whom God Almighty spoke in the third chapter of Genesis when He said to the serpent that the seed of the woman should bruise his head. And through all the Scriptures we find Him coming forth and looking through the lattice at us.

Christ appears as the Passover Lamb. In Exodus 12:1-15 the Jews were told there in the darkness of Egypt and under the frightful bondage of the slave drivers that deliverance was coming, that the terrible wrath of God was to be poured out upon Egypt but that there was a little group that was to be saved. The Passover Lamb is the One we are talking about—another facet of this One.

And then we go still further and we find that this One of whom we speak is the Prophet of destiny (Deuteronomy 18). Moses, the man of God, the prophet, said to Israel, "I'll be going one of these times but there's Another coming. He's coming and He will have the ultimate, plenary authority of the great God Almighty, Jehovah. And you can kick me around and refuse to obey me, but when this One comes it shall come to pass that whoever resists Him and refuses to obey Him shall perish from among the people." He is the Prophet of destiny; He is the Passover Lamb; He is the Seed of the woman.

In Isaiah 9 He is the golden Child which the prophet saw. He said, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, ... and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6).

He is the Shepherd of Israel of whom Ezekiel wrote (chapter 34). He said Israel would be scattered like sheep throughout all the world, but there would be a Shepherd who would speak His word of invitation. Then Israel would come from where they had been scattered in all the corners of the earth, and they would come to the Holy Land, to the Shepherd of Israel.

And He is earth's King of Righteousness, as we read in that beautiful 72nd Psalm: "Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness" (72:1-3).

But He is more than all this. This One is He who exhausted all metaphors. Look in the Old Testament and you will find every metaphor, every figure of speech, every image and every type and every symbol, everything the human mind could understand. Everything that God could say to make the mind understand was exhausted to set forth the glories of this One whom we are considering, the One that we call by the simple, six-letter name, Christ. And the Scripture says that the prophets of old times sought to look into these things and were not able (1 Peter 1:10-12)

They looked at the sun and said, "He will be the Star of the morning to tell of the coming day." They looked at the mountains and said, "He will be the great Mountain in Israel and unto Him shall all nations come." They looked at the rock and they said, "He is the Rock in the midst of a weary land." They saw the bold, raging lion and they said, "He is the Lion of Judah." And they saw the lamb yielding himself and they said, "He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world."

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/22 15:35

What He Is

But that isn't enough yet. What is this One who was promised? Why should any man be made so glorious as all this? Why should God place Him above Abraham? Why should He place Him above Moses or above Melchizedek or above Aaron or above angels? Why is He the central One in the midst of the beasts and the elders and the living creatures before the sea of God? Why? And why does He hold the fate of all men in His hand, and why must the universe finally kneel before Him and not some other?

The answer is so simple you can tell it to a child, yet so profound that no human mind can understand it. It is so simple that you can teach it to two-year-olds, and so profound that Paul said it was the mystery of godliness and gave up trying to understand. The answer to these questions—What is this? Who is this? Why does He have the place that He has?—I say it's an obscure sea of sacred mystery but yet can be grasped by any humble heart. What is the answer? Well, you go back to God, as everything goes back to God. God, the one true God, exists in three Persons; this is what the Bible reveals. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is one—He is one in nature, one in substance, one God in His unitary being, but He exists in three Persons—if I might use the word, all rooted in this one Being; so there are not three Gods, but one God. There are not three substances, but one, Not three divine nature, but one divine nature—only one God.

This is the God who was before any creature was, the God who existed in Himself and leans on nobody, the One to whom nothing can be added and from whom nothing can be taken away. This One is the Fountain of all created streams and the Origin of all created things.

This one God is in three Persons. The first Person is the eternal Father, out of whose heart the eternal Son, the second Person, was begotten—not created, for God did not create the Son out of anything external to Himself. He was born out of the heart of God, equal to God, Himself God, never having had a beginning. The third Person is the Holy Spirit.

Now a step further. This second Person of the Trinity, Himself God, never created, who has all the attributes of the Godhead dwelling in Him fully—this second Person of the Trinity assumed human nature in the incarnation. Assumed human nature, I repeat.

Now, how could this be? How could the uncreated God assume to Himself a nature that was created? (The nature Jesus assumed to Himself at one time was not and later it was.) It was by the fiat of God. When God said, "Let it be," it was, and man was created, and man's nature was created.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/23 0:47

How Can This Be?

Now how could it be that this eternal God who had no creation, no beginning, no origin—this mighty God—how could it be that He could assume to Himself the nature that He had created? It is simply this: Human nature was originally made in the image of God. Because human nature was made in the image of God, it is therefore appropriate and consistent that the divine nature could assume the human nature, because the human nature was made like the divine nature.

Now when God decides to do it, the second Person of the Trinity can take to Himself human nature once made in His image and He can be born of a woman, be a human being, a man, and lose nothing of His deity. His deity gains nothing, for deity can't gain anything. But what deity did in Jesus, in the eternal Son, was to take our human nature into itself. He retained all of His uncreated attributes, and yet He was a normal and true man.

This is the Man of Glory of whom the prophets wrote. That's why this One can bruise forever the devil's head. That is why He can be the Passover Lamb to redeem humans, That is why He can be the Child the prophets saw whose name is Wonderful. That's why He can be the Shepherd of Israel to call God's ancient people home. That's why He can be earth's King of Righteousness and that's why He can be and will be and is the Lord of the new heaven and the new earth.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/23 11:50

The Meaning of Christmas

Christ can enter a regenerated man's nature because man's nature entered God and was taken up to God and united to God in the incarnation. Do you see what this means? Do you see what we celebrate at Christmas, and do you see why some of us are heartsick at the carnality and sin and hypocrisy that surround Christmas?

What is God trying to say to the world at Christmastime! He is trying to say, "I honored you above all angels and seraphim and cherubim and principalities and powers, for I did through you what I never did through them. I took your nature up into Myself. I took your nature up into the second Person of the Trinity and united it there forever and ever, world without end."

So that's where man is honored—the nature of man has been joined to the nature of God in the second Person of the Trinity, and because human nature entered the divine nature, now the divine nature can enter human nature. When the Scripture says, "Christ in you," it doesn't mean Christ in your head; it doesn't mean Christ in your rib cage; it doesn't mean Christ in your bloodstream; it means Christ in your nature.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/24 1:57

Man's Nature Redeemed

It is the nature, the human nature, He came to save. Because God took the nature of man into Himself, He can now give the nature of God to man. This is the supreme gift of God in mankind.

This is what The Christian and Missionary Alliance grew up on. When A.B. Simpson was an old man and about to give up his pulpit in New York, an old gentleman who had been an usher for twenty years in Dr. Simpson's church said, "Well, Brother Simpson has only had one sermon in twenty years. Wherever Brother Simpson began, he always ended up in this: 'Christ Jesus in you, the hope of glory.'"

That's what it means to be a Christian—that Christ can dwell in your nature. It doesn't mean to be saved from cigarettes, though that will drop off. It doesn't mean to be saved from beating your wife and playing cards, but no Christian does either—it means infinitely more than that. And that's why I get sick to my stomach when I find whole groups of Christians who never get beyond the simple matter of "I used to be a bad boy and now I've quit it." Of course. But what's important is that God made you a Christian, and when He made you a Christian He honored you above angels and seraphim and cherubim and archangels.

He honored you above Abraham and David and Isaiah and Melchizedek and Aaron. He honored you by giving you of His own nature.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/24 5:30

God's Nature in Man's

Peter said it in simple language: "has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). This is the greatest benefaction God gives to man. The greatest gift that salvation bestows is the nature of God in the nature of man: Christ in you, the hope of glory. This is the Christian's hope of glory: You are united with Him.

But you say, "I don't feel it." He didn't say that you would feel it. He said it was so. But you'll feel it all right, after a little while, because the same Peter who said we had the nature of God also said it was joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, we're united to Jesus Christ not as a husband is united to the wife, for it says the two shall be one flesh; and if one of them dies the other is free to marry again, for the union was physical. But we are united to Him with our natures. He is in us and we in Him: "I in them and you in me" John 17:23—oh, those wonderful words of John 17. We are joined to Him forever and He is ours and all that He has is ours. It's a shame that we Christians sit around in poverty the way we do. Why should the children of a king go mourning all the day? Why should the princes and princesses of the royal palace sit in the corner and suck their thumbs? Why should we, because the devil peeks in the window and frowns, hide under the bed and say, "I'm afraid, I'm scared"?

I'm not afraid of the devil. The devil can handle me—he's got judo I never heard of. But he can't handle the One to whom I'm joined; he can't handle the One to whom I'm united; he can't handle the One whose nature dwells in my nature. If he hears me say it, I remind him that when that One walked about, the devil saw him and fled. But Christ went up to the right hand of God and took captivity captive and gave gifts to men, and from His high throne of God He is ours and all that He has is ours.

Some of you are in the depths of gloom. Things have happened and you wonder if you can ever get out. Jesus Christ is God and God took humanity into His heart and then He gave that Man back to us as ours forever. He has given His nature to us and all that He has is ours. He made Him to be heir of all things, then you are heir of all things. Everything the Father has, the household has, and everything that Jesus Christ our Head has, we have.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/24 14:33

Our Privilege

Some of you have trouble in your home. And because Christianity to some of you is that peculiar, degenerate kind of Christianity that never knows a thing about what I'm talking about here, you wonder if you can get along. Sure, you can get along. There isn't anybody in the world that cannot live for Christ anywhere. As Dr. Leon Tucker said, "If you can't live for Christ anywhere, you can't live for Him anywhere."

You say, "But Mr. Tozer, I live with a grindstone. That wife of mine just grinds me raw." Brother, Jesus Christ endured the cross and the shame and the spitting, and they plucked out His beard, but for the joy set before Him He endured it. Jesus Christ is able, and if you are united to Him and He to you, you are too. He that was Victor in Joseph's new tomb can be Victor in your home. God never made you to be a posy under glass. He made you to be a soldier and sent you out there and said, "Now I'm joining Myself to your nature."

Suppose I came up against a man who weighed 200 pounds and every inch—what wasn't bone and ligament—was muscle, and he just came out of training, and he threatened me on the sidewalk. Would I run? Yes, I would run—unless the nature of Sonny Liston could come into me and I could take on his attributes right there on the sidewalk. Then I'd say to him, "You and who else? You bother me, and I'll dust you off"—because I could do it. If I had in me the nature of Sonny Liston, I'd be another Sonny Liston.

Re: God's Greatest Gift - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/7/25 3:36

What This Means to You

Now let's get that silly illustration down and turn it over and see what it means. In that home of yours you've got an adversary. The devil says to you, "Now, listen, that adversary will get you; you can't be a Christian and live there." You can't if you have to do it. But suppose the nature of God should enter into you by the Holy Ghost—you could do it then, couldn't you? Exactly, sir. Well, He is ours and all that He has is ours.

Some of you have personal bad habits and you've fought them for years. You don't have to have them. They can be broken instantly and forever because of Christ in you.

Now, do we know this in experience? That is all I'm asking in closing. Do we know this in experience? Christ in you, the hope of glory. If I did not want to be filled with the Holy Spirit for any other reason, I'd want to be for this reason—that I might know more of what it means to be converted, to have the nature of God in Christ Jesus in my heart, joined to my nature forever. "The Son abideth ever" John 8:35, KJV).

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