

# Beyond Christmas and Birthdays

The Affections of a Godly Man – Part III

Romans 1:11-12

## Introduction

In our last discussion, I said some things about women that I thought were funny. Boy, did I get educated this past week. Not from church members, but from my own three girls. The one I married, and the two we brought home from the hospital. My oldest daughter informed me, as we were riding in the truck along with her little sister, that scientists have discovered that men only use half of their minds. My seven-year-old said, “Yea, Daddy, that’s why we have to call your name three or four times before you finally answer, ’cause you’re only listening with half your brain.”

They thought that was just soooo funny. Frankly, I would like to know who those scientists were.

Then, my wife came home from shopping – finally. She said, “Honey, do you remember last Sunday saying those things about women?”

I said, “I don’t remember anything a week old.”

I am like one of our elders, who told me that he had a memory like a steel bear trap – anything that weighs less than four hundred pounds slips right through.

I said to my wife, “Uh huh, I remember.”

She said, “Well, I saw a saying about men that was really funny. In fact, a lady standing in the store was just laughing too. We were standing their laughing over this saying. Do you want to hear it?”

I said, “Sure.”

She said, “It was a saying, stitched into a pillow, that read, ‘Give a man an inch, and he thinks he’s a ruler.’”

I did not think that was funny either. Who would buy a pillow like that?!

I just want all the women to know that I have paid the price.

## Review

In our current series of studies of Romans, chapter 1, directed primarily to men, we have been uncovering the affections of a godly man.

We have discovered that a godly man has affection, first and foremost, for God Himself. He also has affection for God’s people and for God’s purposes. Furthermore, a godly man is a man who struggles to kneel on behalf of the people in his world and beyond his world of influence.

We have discovered, in the second paragraph of Romans, chapter 1, a godly man who speaks tender words with an affectionate, heartfelt longing toward people he has never met before. And, even though he has never met them, he reveals that he has been praying for them constantly.

We have discovered, in Paul, the truth that a godly man is deeply passionate about leaving behind a spiritual legacy. He is a man who defines success, not in terms of his résumé, but in terms of his relationships.

The average man today, would define success in terms of his financial portfolio. It would include the kind of car he drives, the square footage of his house, the people that fall underneath his line of command.

The average father today, would define successful parenting by the fact that his daughter made it through college without getting pregnant; that

his son made it through school without getting somebody else's daughter pregnant or getting arrested for drunk driving or for taking drugs. He would consider himself successful in that he put clothes on his family's back, gas in their cars, and food in their stomachs.

I have news for you, however. If that is all you have done, my friend, you have, in fact, done little more than arrange the deck chairs on board the Titanic, when you should have been building a life boat. If you think that providing things for your loved ones only involves physical things, you have missed the most important things of life.

If, when you think of giving gifts, you think only of Christmas and birthdays, you have missed the most important gifts of all. The gifts of a godly man go beyond Christmas and birthdays – his most important gifts last forever.

## **The Affections of Our God**

Think for a moment about the gift of God's Son. God's affection for the world is evidenced by His love for the world. The Bible says, in John, chapter 3, verse 16,

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

This verse tells us at least three things about the gift of God.

### **The gift of God was freely supplied**

1. First, the gift of God was freely supplied.

This verse, in John, begins by saying,

*For God so loved the world, that He gave . . .*

Like a present under a Christmas tree or beside a birthday cake, there are no price tags for the receiver; there is no mention of paying later. The gift of eternal life is free!

Paul wrote, in Romans, chapter 6, verse 23,

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I have said to many people, over the years, as I have explained to them the nature of a free gift, "Suppose I told you that my Bible was a free gift to you; that I wanted you to have it and it's yours for the taking. What would you have to do to receive it? You'd simply have to reach out and take it, right? But suppose, when you reached for my Bible, I added, 'You know, my pickup truck could really use

a good wash and wax job, whatdaya say?' Now, if you had to wash and wax my pickup, would this Bible be a free gift to you? No. You'd be my favorite church member, but the Bible would not be a free gift."

While going to the assembly or church is commanded in Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 25; while giving money to the cause of Christ is commanded in I Corinthians, chapter 16, verse 2; while getting baptized with water is a command for the church to fulfill in Matthew, chapter 28, verse 19; while these are all things that you do for God because you are commanded to do them, if you want to be obedient, salvation is offered not to those who first fulfill the demands of a holy God, but to those who cannot. They are all wonderful things you do for God because you love Him and want to obey Him. They are evidences of salvation. However, do not confuse the evidences of salvation as being requirements for salvation.

The gift of God is free of any work on the part of man, because of the finished work on the part of Christ.

### **The gift of God was personally self-sacrificing**

2. Secondly, the gift of God was personally self-sacrificing.

Eternal life is free to you because Jesus Christ paid everything for it. He took your place on the cross and paid the penalty for your covetousness, your lust, your infidelities, your selfishness, your pride, your dishonesty, your rebellion, your hypocrisy.

Peter wrote, in I Peter, chapter 2, verse 24,

*And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross . . .*

The fact that Jesus Christ was born on earth as God in the flesh, was a statement that mankind was inadequate. He came, the angel informed Joseph, according to Matthew, chapter 1, verse 21b,

*. . . [to] save His people from their sins.*

In other words, mankind could not save itself from its sins.

The birth of baby Jesus was another way of announcing the absolute inability of man. While it announced that man is unable, it also announced that God has intervened. He would personally give Himself on our behalf.

## The gift of God was eternally significant

3. The third thing about God's gift was that it was eternally significant.

John, chapter 3, verse 16, ends by saying,

*... whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

This is the way in which God gives gifts. For the man who desires to be godly, or Godlike, his gift giving will mirror these characteristics.

## The Affections of a Godly Man

In the book of Romans, chapter 1, we discover this same kind, or concept, of gift giving in the life of the apostle Paul, as he continues to model, for us, the affections of a godly man. He writes to the Roman believers, in verses 11 and 12,

*For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.*

### An Affection for Spiritual Contact

Just as God desired to connect with those whom He loved, so a godly man will desire to make spiritual contact with others through the gifts that he gives.

### The longing

You noticed, perhaps, Paul's affectionate words, in verse 11a,

*For I long to see you . . .*

That is another way of saying, "I am homesick for you."

One author wrote that Paul did not long to come to Rome so that he could visit the imperial city; so that he could see the forum and the Coliseum; so that he could take in a chariot race or two. No, he longed to be with the believers there.

### The lesson

Why? He writes, in verse 11,

*... so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you . . .*

You could translate that, "some gift pertaining to your spirit."

The Greek word for "gift" is "charisma". It is the same word that is used by Paul in chapter 6, verse 23, which I have already quoted,

*For the wages of sin is death, but the [charisma] the free gift of God is eternal life*

...

The "charisma" of God is used in the New Testament to speak of the gifts of Christ, such as eternal life. "Charisma" is used to refer to general blessings given by God to his children. It is also used to refer to specific ways, or gifts, that God's people serve one another and bring advancement to the church and glory to the name of Christ.

Paul says, "I have a free gift that I want to give to you."

We do not really know which kind he is referring to. I agree with one commentator who said that Paul is probably using the word "... in it's largest possible sense."

Paul may, in effect, be saying, "For some of you, I'd like you to receive Christ Himself [and the gift of salvation]; for others, I'd like you to receive the blessings of God, and for still others, I'd like to minister my spiritual gifts among you." What Paul wanted to impart to them was not physical, but spiritual.<sup>1</sup>

### The lasting impact

And what would the lasting impact of Paul's gifts be upon them? He says, in the last part of verse 11,

*... that you may be established*

"Established" is a favorite word of Paul's. It is from the Greek word "sterizo," which gives us our word "steroids". It means, "to strengthen, to build up, and to fortify". At times, a medical doctor will prescribe steroids to help someone struggling with a disease or weakness, but, obviously, steroids have been dangerously misused by some, who want to gain bulk quickly. Paul, in effect, was telling them he wanted to put them on a spiritual weight program to add spiritual muscle to their faith.

Paul used the word in:

- Romans 16:25 of the believer being established by the gospel;
- I Thessalonians 3:13 of Christ establishing their hearts in holiness;
- II Thessalonians 2:17 of the believer who is comforted and established in their hearts for every good work.

Peter used the same word in:

- I Peter 5:10 of the believer who was suffering for Christ but who, in light of their coming future in heaven, had their hearts strengthened and established;
- II Peter 1:12 of the believer who is established in the truth and thus, not deceived.

The Roman believers were famous for their faith, which we have already learned from Romans, chapter 1, verse 8. However, their faith, while famous, was not firm; that is, it was not strong enough to handle persecution and to stand against deception, in addition to maintaining spiritual strength for the hardships and the challenges of life. Paul knew they were in danger of slipping.

In 1988, Steve Farrar wrote, in his book to men,

*Jim Hayhurst and his twenty-year-old son, Jimmy, were part of the Canadian team that was making the long ascent up Mount Everest. As they were trekking across the Himalayas on the first stage of the climb, they had to cross one of the many rivers flowing down the lower part of the Everest. That's when Jimmy slipped on a rock and fell into the fast-rushing river. He feverishly twisted and tumbled as the river played with him like a rag doll. He tried to grab on to a rock, but the river was simply moving too fast. Suddenly, he stopped; his backpack had caught on a rock in the middle of the river. And just four feet away, the river tumbled over a cliff and dropped one thousand feet to the valley below.*

*Jim wrote, "If I started toward him, I might dislodge another rock, I might change the direction or pressure of the water and he might slip off the rock that was holding him above the waterfall. I had to stand, twenty feet away from my son, and watch him hang at the edge of a 1,000-foot cliff."*

*Jim recounts how Jimmy was able to shift his weight and reach for the rope they threw him – he was eventually pulled to safety by the rope.<sup>ii</sup>*

That is what Paul is doing here. He knows the Roman believers will face great danger and that he cannot personally reach them yet. So, until he can come to them, he throws a rope – in the form of a letter, called Romans. Paul knew that slippery rocks were directly in the path of these early believers.

You might say, "Man, weren't they lucky. It sure would be wonderful if I had the apostle Paul come and throw a rope to me to keep me from slipping on the rocks and plunging into trouble."

The truth is, my friends, he has come to you. If you have a Bible, you have his rope in your hands right now. That letter was thrown to them, and, by God's gracious design, it has been thrown to you as well.

I suggest that you tie it around your waist, if need be, or put it on your desk, but keep it near you at all times. And, do not just keep it near you, read it! Then, meditate on it and memorize parts of it.

It will have the same affect on you that it had on the Romans who were living in Italy over two thousand years ago. You will be "sterizo" (στηριζωδ), or "strengthened". You will add bulk to your beliefs and spiritual muscle to your manhood.

### **An Affection for Spiritual Communication**

Paul goes on to say to them in verse 12 of Romans, chapter 1,

*that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.*

### **The benefit of mutual encouragement**

Can you imagine what this meant to the Romans? Let me put it into contemporary context for you. Imagine getting a letter from a spiritual leader whom you look up to. Perhaps it is someone you have listened to on the radio; like, David Jeremiah, Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, or Tony Evans. Imagine getting a personal letter from them, saying to you, "I want to come and spend time with you because I need to be encouraged by your faith."

What a compliment. And what incredible encouragement.

When the Duke of Wellington, the military leader who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, was nearing the end of his life, he was invited to a friend's home for dinner. In the midst of their conversation, the friend asked the Duke of Wellington, who was known as a great and demanding leader, what he would do differently if he had life to live over again. The Duke pondered that for a minute, and then responded, "I would have given more praise."<sup>iii</sup>

### **The blessing of meaningful edification**

A recent *USA Today* poll indicated that when teens are under stress or in a crisis, they turn first for comfort to their music, second to their friends, and third to television. Fathers barely showed up on the list, down at number forty-eight.<sup>iv</sup>

Perhaps that is because we are prone to communicate with the attitude that we know everything and they do not know anything.

J. Paul Getty Jr. had a father who was the richest man in the world, but he rarely saw him. Paul was raised in California by his mother and saw his father only on rare occasions. When Paul was in high school, he wrote a very special letter to his father. He had wanted to say some things to his dad that were very important to him. A few weeks later, he received, back from his father, that same letter, only his father had marked all the grammatical and spelling errors with a red pencil. There was absolutely no personal response attached from his father. Paul Getty said, on one occasion, "I have never gotten over that letter."

Paul, the one who probably knew almost everything related to faith and the gospel; the one who could have pulled out a big red pen and marked up everything about the Romans, as deficient, immature, and needy, made it clear that he was going to come and teach them. He also, however, made it clear that he was going to come and learn from them.

Paul promised them this wonderful benefit of mutual encouragement and the special blessing of meaningful edification.

## **Application: The Gifts of Paul . . . As Well As Other Godly Men**

Let us apply this by taking a look at the gifts of Paul, as well as other godly men.

### **Their gifts will support the cause of Christ**

- The gifts of a godly man will support the cause of Christ. This has a way of overcoming stinginess.

What have you given to something you do not control? And, what does your giving reveal about your heart?

Americans, in the past year, will have spent more than one billion dollars on their pets. As you look over your checkbook for the past year, I wonder if you gave less to the cause of Christ than you spent on your cats and dogs. I dare you to find out.

### **Their gifts will strengthen the spiritual walk of others**

- The gift giving of a godly man will strengthen the spiritual walk of others. This has a way of overcoming self-centeredness.

### **Their gifts will speak encouragement to the hearts of others**

- The gifts of a godly man will speak encouragement to the hearts of others. This will overcome self-adulation.

You cannot talk about yourself and, at the same time, talk about someone else. You cannot praise yourself, while truly praising someone else.

### **Their gifts will stretch the faith of others**

- Finally, the gifts of a godly man will stretch the faith of others. This will overcome shortsightedness, or the temptation to live only for the here and now.

A shortsighted man sees only Christmas and birthdays; only heating bills, school expenses, and mortgage payments. His gifts are temporary and impersonal; they do not personally connect with the recipient.

The affections of a godly man create a desire for him to carve his name, not on marble, but on hearts; not on brass doorplates and lucrative bank accounts, but on lives. That was Paul, as he wrote, in Romans, chapter 1, verses 11 and 12,

*For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.*

Louis Pasteur, the French chemist and microbiologist who died in 1895, was responsible for discovering the vaccines for several diseases, including the dreaded rabies. During his day, thousands of people died annually from rabies. At one point, he was so convinced that he had successfully formulated the vaccine for rabies that he was going to experiment on himself. But a young boy, by the name of Joseph Meisner, was bitten by a rabid dog and his mother convinced Pasteur to try his vaccine on the boy without delay. For ten days, Pasteur gave injections to young Joseph. Joseph survived and was completely cured of rabies.

Many years later, as he prepared for his own death, Pasteur was asked what he would like carved on his headstone. Pasteur had accumulated a lifetime of great accomplishments – many things could have identified him as a great scientist, a noble advancer of medicine. However, he replied that he only wanted three words for his epitaph. Those three words were indeed inscribed on his headstone. They were the words, “Joseph Meisner Lived”.

What kind of gifts are you giving, my friend?

The gifts of a godly man ultimately, seek to impact lives; to advance the cause of Christ; to strengthen and encourage others in their faith and walk for Christ. That goes way beyond Christmas and birthdays. Gifts that are born out of the affections of a godly man, will truly last forever.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/24/2000 by Stephen Davey.

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i John MacArthur, Jr. Romans Study Guide, p. 92.

ii Steve Farrar, Anchor Man (Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 225.

iii Ibid., p. 209.

iv Ibid., p.215.