

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 52 (December 24-30, 2017)

We will celebrate Christmas week by looking at the gifts that God has given to us through His Son. (This week of devotions was not edited by Roni, so be nice.)

Sunday, December 24 (read John 4:10-14)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." (John 4:10)

It's Christmas Eve and perhaps you have purchased all the gifts that your loved ones have requested. Now it's time to relax and think about the Reason for the season. The most important Christmas gift ever given is the gift of eternal life. If members of your family have not asked for salvation, beg God to go to them and speak to them in a way that they can understand. The gift is not something tangible; rather, the gift is God Himself living on the inside through the Holy Spirit (v. 10). Once He abides within, the recipient will never thirst again because the source of life is always available (v. 13-14). Most, if not all, of the presents you give this Christmas will soon be broken or obsolete, but the gift of God will last forever.

Monday, December 25 (read John 1:14-18)

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

This is one of the great passages in the Bible, because it clearly proclaims Jesus to be God in the flesh. John 1:1 declares the Word to be God and verse 14 clearly teaches that the Word became flesh visibly on that first Christmas morning. John the Baptist, who is six months older than Jesus by the way we count years, states that Jesus, the pre-existent Christ, was before him giving grace from His throne in Heaven (v. 15-16). As we have recently studied, the 613 laws given through Moses could not save anyone, but Jesus introduces grace and truth into a world lost in sin (v. 17). I know that you have opened His gift of grace when you gave your heart to Him. Are you now ready to open the gift of truth so that you can grow up in your faith? Merry Christmas!

Tuesday, December 26 (read Ephesians 2:8-10)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

It's the day after Christmas so you may be busy returning some of the gifts you received yesterday. There is one gift, however, that you will never want to return and that's the gift of God given to all who come to Him by grace through faith (v. 8-9). Earlier in this chapter of Ephesians, we learn that we were all dead in our sins and transgressions (v. 1). Nothing can be expected from a dead man! Our Father, because of His love, mercy and grace has reached out to offer the gift of God made possible by the death of His Son on Calvary. We who have accepted this generous offer should be working for Him and serving Him, not to be saved, but because we **are** saved (v. 10). Someone loved you enough to give you gifts yesterday, even if they didn't all fit. Let's continue to celebrate the birthday of the One who gives us daily gifts that are designed just for us.

Wednesday, December 27 (read 1 Peter 4:7-11)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

Recently, at the end of our service, an elderly man passed out while singing the last song. The people who rushed to his aid were trained to handle medical emergencies. None of them will be asked to preach a sermon or sing a solo anytime soon, but all of them sprang into action when the gift that they possess was required in the body of Christ. Jesus has distributed special gifts to each member of His family. No one can do all things, but each one can do something. As we approach the end of time (v 7), let us show our love for others by faithfully using our gift package to serve God and His church. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

Thursday, December 28 (read James 1:16-18)

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17)

Our human nature leads us towards seeking the praise and approval of man. We deceive ourselves into thinking that this verbal approval or physical gifts will last a lifetime. By now, we should realize that the gifts of man are fragile and our circumstances can change in a minute (v. 16). God's gifts, however, are forever, because they are good and perfect (v.17). Our Christmas presents from others will soon break or be outdated, but the God who never changes gives us eternal gifts that time will not diminish. The Lord chose to offer us a new birth experience (born again) through His unchanging Word (v. 18). It is time, therefore, for us to follow that same Word to grow up in the faith.

Friday, December 29 (Romans 11:25-32)

. . . for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)

Because of Abraham's faith, the Jews are God's chosen people. For many centuries, their hearts have been hardened while the Lord's main attention is on the Gentiles through His Church (v. 25-28). Following the rapture when His Church will be called into Heaven, during the tribulation, God will turn His attention back to the Jews, because God's gifts and His call are irrevocable (v. 29). We, who are Gentile sinners, have accepted the mercy and grace of God during the Church Age, also known as the Day of Grace. When our days are completed, the Lord will offer that same mercy and grace to the Jews so that, His gift of eternal life can be enjoyed by all. What should our response be to this truth? We will answer that question tomorrow.

Saturday, December 30 (read Romans 11:33-36)

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:36)

Could you think of a better passage for the final weekend of 2017? When we understand the mercy and grace and love that go into the plan of salvation for all nationalities, all we can do is praise the Creator. His love and His judgments are too great for our finite minds to fully comprehend (v. 33). God did not seek our advice when He created the universe; therefore, He does not have to repay us for any of our good deeds done by His grace alone (v. 34-35). Begin 2018 the same way you are ending 2017 by acknowledging, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen." (v. 36)