

James T. Jeremiah
Birthday Presents for the Believer
November 4, 1977

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Thank you, Swordbearers. I like that. Wish I could be here tomorrow to hear the whole presentation and listen to Dr. White, that's going to be a good meeting and you'll enjoy it. We're leaving tomorrow morning for California for a week of meetings. Any of you in the Los Angeles area that wish you were going along, I feel sorry for you, but the best thing I can do is give you greetings. We're going to be at the Los Angeles Baptist college and at a meeting of our fellowship in Southern California and about four different churches in that week. So if you think about it, pray for us. There's an announcement that I want to make on the radio because it has to do with missions and I think others will be interested in this. Just a reminder to those who will be registering here next week, the student missionary project will be providing a place on the registration form for you to donate between one and \$5 next quarter for the missionary project.

James T. Jeremiah:

The actual project will be decided upon by the student body sometime later this month, but we wish to have your contributions marked down during registration. So when that day comes, you do that if you can, because you're interested in reaching people for Christ and you'll want to contribute. Will you open your Bibles to first Peter chapter one, and I want to read for you this morning, the first nine verses, and then we'll go back and discuss as much of it as we can in the time we have. As you find your place, shall we pray? And then we'll read the word of God together.

James T. Jeremiah:

Our Father, we're thankful today for the scriptures given to us, for the promises provided for the people of God. We ask thee this morning hour, as we look into the scriptures, that we might find truth that will encourage us and strengthen us to live for today and tomorrow and the days ahead. Help us to rejoice in what has been provided for us in Christ today. Knowing that as we do the day will be brighter. Our hearts will rejoice and we will be a better witness for the Lord Jesus Christ in a day that needs the witness we can give. We pray in Jesus name, amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith in the salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time wherein you greatly rejoice.

James T. Jeremiah:

Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though would be tried with fire might be found with praise and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love. In whom though now you see him not yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of

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glory receiving the end of your faith. Even the salvation of your souls. The apostle Peter wrote this epistle to believers, probably most of them, Jewish believers, who were scattered in the area now occupied by the country of Turkey. Take your map, you'll find these countries pretty well cover that land. They were strangers. Strangers in the land to which they had gone. Like every Christian today is a stranger. Like you're a stranger in this world for our citizenship is in heaven.

James T. Jeremiah:

And in a very real sense, every one of us is scattered. We are in a world that is not ours. That is, we are not of it. We're in it and we are to be witnesses to it, but we are not of it. We're scattered abroad. You think of what Peter gives in this introduction. And when you consider some of the great truths he uses to introduce this epistle. And you come to the end of it all and you can't rejoice, there's something wrong somewhere. And that needs to be made right. He talks about the strangers scattered abroad in the world who were elect of the Lord. That's a great thing to know that you're chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. And then what God has done in eternity by his electing grace, he does in time by the sanctification of the Spirit. Election by the Father and eternity is made effective by the work of the Spirit in time.

James T. Jeremiah:

Those who have been chosen of God and sanctified by the Spirit are also to be obedient to the truth. This is the result of the experience of grace. This is what happens when we become the children of God. We are obedient to the truth. Having been purged by the blood. Peter says in verse two, that we have been given a position in the Lord Jesus Christ, to the mercy and the grace of God that surpasses anything that we can imagine in the human understanding of it all. When Peter gets through with this introduction, he sings the doxology. He gets really happy. He is rejoicing for he sings what we sing on Sunday mornings. I hope not every time, the same place in the same way, with the same deadness that sometimes it's sung, but we sing the doxology. And here he is singing, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

And then he goes on to tell us what God has done for us. That word 'blessed' is an interesting word. It means God is well-spoken of. God is honored. God is praised. Why shouldn't he be? Why shouldn't we lift our hearts in praise to him? When we think that as strangers scattered throughout the world, living in a godless day, in a world that is antagonistic to truth and to righteousness and to God. He has chosen us to live here and taking care of us by purging us by the blood. If you can't find some source of joy and blessing in that, I feel sorry for you. This morning in our devotions we read a story that you probably read if you read Daily Bread. A very interesting little story about a little boy who went to church with his father. As he went to church, he saw on the wall, a flag and the flag had some stars on it.

James T. Jeremiah:

And the little guy looked up to his daddy. He said, daddy, what do those stars mean? He said, those stars mean that some boys have died in the service. The little fellow was silent for a minute. And then he said, which one? The morning or the evening one? Well, if you don't get really happy about what God has done for you, you can die in any service, not have very much life, or much rejoicing. And you can go through the ritual and go out somewhat the same way you came in. But as I read this text today, there are some things that God gives me that makes me happy. And that is, I'm glad for my birthday gifts.

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Now, most everybody, especially kids your age want birthdays. You know, it's great to have a birthday. You're going to be nearer to the day when you graduate.

James T. Jeremiah:

And you're nearer to the day when you're going to be in the business, God's called you to carry on. And you're all right in birthdays until you've come to 39 and after 39 friends you just turn them off. But I'm glad for the birthday gifts I have. The birthday gifts that are listed in this passage of scripture. You notice what he says in the passage, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again. Hath begotten us again. Oh, you say, there goes that doctrine of the new birth again. Well, what better doctrine can we preach? When we think of what God has given us in the new birth? So what did he give you when he saved you? What do you have because you have been begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me name just two or three and we'll never finish this message. I don't finish them anyway. I quit when the time's up, but let's talk about a couple or three, two or three of these gifts. Gift number one, we have been given a living hope when God brought the new birth. Redeemed us, regenerated us, made us His children. He gave to us a living hope. Begotten unto a living hope. Peter, I think like all the disciples was much concerned about a literal messianic kingdom on this earth. You remember the disciples came to the Lord Jesus before he went to glory. And they said, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel? And I want to translate the answer in the Jeremiah version. This has not been printed yet, but I want to give you the Jeremiah version of what the Lord answered.

James T. Jeremiah:

He said, it's none of your business. What's that to you? What's that to you, what I'm going to do? And they were all excited about an earthly messianic kingdom. Now He's going to establish on this earth one day in the future, a messianic kingdom, when He will reign upon the throne of his father, David, literally, and there will be righteousness and peace. Something that the great society has never produced. He's going to do that, but He hasn't done it yet. And so Peter was concerned about this hope. And after all of the experience, following the resurrection and the day of Pentecost and the activities in the book of Acts, Peter writes this: we've been begotten again unto a living hope. It's according to His abundant mercy. And there are other passages in this book that deal with His abundant mercy. It is a completed act because it's something God does once and for all.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's not something He repeats. It is a matter of absolute commitment on the part of God, to his people. It's by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The great central fact, the great central miracle of our Christian faith is the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and that resurrection of our Savior from the dead guaranteed the living hope we have in Him, never forget the importance of that great truth in the scriptures. It's a living hope. We have no right then to look on the dark side of life. Oh, I know there are many problems. One thing I feel conscious of quite often are the problems that you young people have. Some of you have problems at home. Some of you have come from homes where there's not an interest in spiritual things.

James T. Jeremiah:

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You're here because God put you here. And you're here anyway, in spite of everything. Back home there are some problems, even perhaps physical problems with your loved ones and you're distressed. You're here with great responsibilities of how you're going to pay the cost of your education. And day by day these things seem to mount up and it looks as though the whole outside is dark. Well, I don't believe that the Christian life is one that is a dark foreboding thing, in spite of its troubles. It may be a tunnel. Maybe sometimes you think, as you walk down through this life, the tunnel is long and it's difficult, but there's one nice thing about that tunnel. At the end of it, no matter the difficulties that surround you on each side, at the end of the tunnel there is that living hope. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more under the perfect day.

James T. Jeremiah:

Why is that? So because we've been begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ unto a living hope. What a wonderful thing that is to know. The interesting thing about that passage in Proverbs 4:18-19, that I just quoted is that the very next verse after a perfect day is the phrase, "The way of the wicked is darkness." What a contrast, "The way of the wicked is darkness", but the child of God walks down a pathway, maybe surrounded with all his problems, but because he has a birthday, on that day when he was regenerated, he has a living hope and his pathway shines more and more under the perfect day. And we don't need to dwell in the dull rooms. We don't need to go through life with our chin dragging at the tip toes of our feet. We don't need to walk as though God is dead, He's alive.

James T. Jeremiah:

And He has given life to the children of God. And we have a living hope. Another thing that I like about this passage and one of the birthday gifts is He's not only begotten me again unto a living hope, but He has begotten me again unto eternal wealth, eternal riches. Notice verse four, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you. Let's describe that a little bit. Talk about it a little bit. First of all, this inheritance we have in the Lord Jesus Christ is beyond death, it's incorruptible. It's incorruptible as to its endurance. Death cannot touch it. It's beyond the place of decay. Someone put it, there is no autumn in it. A few weeks ago, I was in a pastor's conference at 9000 feet up in the Rocky Mountains. It was difficult to preach because I couldn't breathe, but I had a good time anyhow.

James T. Jeremiah:

And as we looked out on the beautiful scenery of the Rocky Mountains and saw the fading Aspen trees and saw some of the beauty. But we were told by all the natives, of course that a week or so before, it was much beautiful. I drove through West Virginia a week or so ago down the turnpike and saw the beautiful picture that God paints on the landscape as we come into the Fall months. And I want to tell you friend, when December comes and January comes the Aspen trees in the Rockies and the trees down in the land of West Virginia will all have faded. It's beautiful while it lasts. But the idea here is that the inheritance we have is incorruptible. It does not have any autumn with it. And I like that. I like to know there is some wealth or some riches that are mine that cannot fade.

James T. Jeremiah:

They're beyond the power of death. It's beyond sin. It's undefiled as to its purity. There's nothing in this world without flaw. Flowers are beautiful. You see, in the fall months, the fruit that comes on the trees and what a beautiful thing it is to see what God produces. But every one of them has flaws. I grew some

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tomatoes this summer, and something put flaws in them. That bugs or something in the things. There's always flaws in this creation because it's groaning for that day until the day of redemption when the bodies of the saints will be redeemed and creation will be redeemed. It's filled with flaws, but not this inheritance. It's beyond that. It's beyond change. It's unfading as to its beauty. Now some of you girls are beautiful girls, and you anticipate as you look in the mirror every morning, that from now on until you're 67, you're going to look just like that. Someone said to a young man who was thinking about being married. If you want to know what your wife is going to look like when you're married 25 years, take a look at her mother.

James T. Jeremiah:

All beauty has a possibility of fading and you're handsome. Your handsome look on your face will not be as handsome eventually as it is now. It's going to fade. One of the more brilliant fellows on this campus, walking down the campus, he had a, I won't tell you who he is, but he has a head full of curly hair. I said, where have you been, to the hairdressers? He looked at me and he said, no, sir. I have hair like you had when you were my age. He was right. You go over in the library that somebody put a picture out there. That's been there about seven months too long. And you'll see that once there was hair on the top of this bald head, and it wasn't gray, it was curly. Oh, it was beautiful.

James T. Jeremiah:

But in case you haven't noticed it's pretty much gone, but I want to tell you, friend of mine, young people, faculty members, anybody listening, the wealth that I have in Jesus Christ, doesn't fade like that. It's beyond anything that change can make. You see because the Lord Jesus Christ himself has guaranteed it. He has given us this inheritance and guaranteed it because He is unchanging in His person. He is unchanging in His power, unchanging in His purpose. He will see to it that that wealth inheritance is kept for me. It's beyond time. It's reserved as to its security. This inheritance is mine, reserved.

James T. Jeremiah:

Pat Kern was an Irish window washer according to one of the stories. Pat lived in New York City and he worked many years ago, the great profession of washing windows. One day as he was up on his ladder with his squeegee and his bucket of water and his sponge and washing the windows up as high as the ladder would reach. To the foot of the ladder, came a man and looked up at him and he said, is your name Pat Kern? He said, yes, it is. And he shouted you're a rich man, Pat Kern. Your uncle in Ireland died and he left you a hundred thousand. That was before the days of inflation. But Pat Kern looked at the window. He looked at the squeegee. He looked at the lawyer. He climbed down the ladder, put the bucket, the squeegee and the sponge at the bottom of it, walked off, never to wash windows again. He had an inheritance. You know what I think about a lot of us as Christians, we're just a bunch of weak window washers.

James T. Jeremiah:

We're involved in things in life. It's ritual, it's regulation, it's going through something, but we ought to be living in the joy and the power and the blessing of our inheritance. We have been begotten again unto eternal wealth. I'd have time for one more and next time we finish it. We have been begotten again also unto a secured position. You see, it's one thing to have an inheritance, it's another thing to know that the inheritance is going to be inherited. And some of you say, well, I have an Uncle Joe, that's

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very rich. I don't know if you do or not, but let's suppose you do. Uncle Joe is a very rich man and he's in his late eighties.

James T. Jeremiah:

And uncle Joe is not likely to live long. And so every morning you get the hometown paper. And the first thing you look is not what's going on in Egypt or Israel or Europe or the United States. You look at the obituaries column because you know when uncle Joe dies, every bill will be paid and you can live in glory for a while until you spend it all. But you see there's something about that, that, that isn't so secure as it may appear. Number one, uncle Joe may spend it all before he dies. That leaves you in a bad way. And maybe you haven't thought of this, but possibly, even though he is in his late eighties, you might die before uncle Joe. Now in either case you've missed it, can't inherit it. He doesn't have it. You aren't there to get it. So you're in deep trouble. Might as well quit reading the obituary column anyway, it won't do you any good. But the one I'm talking about is different.

James T. Jeremiah:

God has an inheritance to which I have been begotten. And he has also begotten every believer to be kept by the power of God to claim the inheritance. Welcome to a sailor. Not much help if he cannot outright the storm. Our earthly inheritance isn't much if we can't make it to claim it. But this text says we're kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. And I think we ought to connect with this so we get the proper perspective that this begotten again is also related to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. That is, there is a provision made by the blood of Christ and there is a responsibility of obedience. So this is not talking about something that says, if you get saved, God saved you forever and you can live like you're please. The Bible doesn't teach that kind of nonsense, but it does teach that we have a position that's guaranteed and secure. How? Why we're preserved, kept.

James T. Jeremiah:

That's a great word. It literally has the idea of being surrounded by armed forces. You think of the security that the Bible gives to the child of God. We are the possessors of eternal life. We are indwelt by God's Holy Spirit and God's Son and God, the Father. We have life that is eternal. This idea of protection here may be illustrated a little bit by the eyelids, and the bone of the eye that protects the eye. That bone has a great deal to do with the protection of the eye and its sight. If you think that the eyelids are not important, just pull them back in the Noonday sun and you'll discover they're very important. And so the idea is here, we're kept as the eye is kept by the eyelids and the bone that protects it.

James T. Jeremiah:

It is as a shepherd takes care of this flock. He'd give his life for the sheep, protecting the flock, like a wall around a garden. You ever seen some of the mansions, some of the city's ancient as we think of them, walls. High walls, to keep everybody out of the beauty of the garden. God has put a wall around his people, and it's like your spiritual life was in a safe and the safe makes the contents safe indeed. Now there's another aspect of this through faith. Now, you'll say, do you mean to tell me we have to keep ourselves? No.

James T. Jeremiah:

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You see, It's sort of a wonderful circle and cycle here. Kept by the power of God through faith until the day of salvation, until the day of revelation when he comes again. You see faith trusts in God who keeps the saint to trust in God who keeps the saint to trust in God. We are kept for the inheritance that he has reserved for us. It's a wonderful thing to know that and to rest in it. And when you look down through that tunnel, that hope yonder helps us today to live for tomorrow. Be what we ought to be in our lives. Lewis Albert Banks tells of a decrepit, degenerate, inebriated man, Oliver Martin was a sort of a prospector and out in the west, he was looking for gold and he finally came upon a nugget. I can conceive of a nugget so big, he couldn't lift it, but the story goes, he found one like that.

James T. Jeremiah:

He was unable to lift it and bring it into the assaying office to find out its value. And so he brought a friend with him and they took it into the assaying office. And when Oliver Martin, this drunken man, this man who spent all of his life almost in alcohol, when he finally found from the assayer's office, the true value of the golden nugget he had discovered, he looked at the man and he looked at his friend and he said, truly, this is a miracle. He didn't know anything about miracles, he didn't know anything about grace, didn't know anything about salvation. But he couldn't get away from the fact that after all of these years and searching and working and suffering, he found a nugget that made him a rich man. And according to the report, Oliver Martin, the one-time drunk, walked away from the scene, never again to be intoxicated.

James T. Jeremiah:

Why did he do that? Because he was so impressed with the wealth that was his and that it was not deserved. And it was a miracle that he walked away to be a different man. We can have rules in college and we have to have them. We can talk about the regulations of the scripture and we ought to, but there's nothing in this wide world that will motivate us to live for God anymore than to know who we are and what God's done for us and what he's promised to us. And to recognize as we walk with him day by day through this old world of tears and sin and difficulty that we have the riches of grace in Christ Jesus, and we have some birthday gifts. There are others in the chapter I'd like to talk about. Birthday gifts that are ours and that we ought to live in the light of our birthright. You say, well, I don't understand that. Could it be you haven't been born again? Could it be, you've never had a birthday?

James T. Jeremiah:

Could it be possibly that even though you're a member of the church and in a Christian school, your whole attitude demonstrates by your indifference and your unconcern and your lackadaisical attitude to spiritual things that you've never been born again? If it is so I wouldn't wait beyond today to have a birthday and enjoy the living hope. Enjoy the eternal riches, enjoy the secured position. Gifts of our heavenly Father to His children on their birthday. Father, we pray this morning, take Thy word and make it live in our hearts and give us a challenge from the scriptures today to help us to rejoice and be glad in the Lord and praise him for what he has done, but more than that, for who he is. Speak to any who listened today, who haven't had a birthday, may they have one before the day's over. In Jesus name. Amen.