

James T. Jeremiah  
The Christian's Birthday Gifts  
August 28, 1977

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Probably if most of us were asked to name three disciples or three apostles, we could come up very easily with Peter, James and John. As we think of the list of apostles or disciples, and we include the apostle Paul on this, there is probably no one of them so criticized as Simon Peter. We see him as a impetuous individual, we're told, and we see him denying the Lord. And all of this is true. Peter was an individual and an individualist. He had strange things happen to him. Always speaking, when he should have been silent. On some occasions, Peter spoke well, especially as we think of Caesarea Philippi, when the Lord Jesus was asking, "Who do you say I am?" And Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Then one thing about him that we can remember with joy is that when he had denied the Lord and had made an awful wreck of his testimony, one thing about him that should bring us face-to-face with a real man is he remembered, he remembered what had happened to him and he wept.

James T. Jeremiah:

And you come to the reading of his letters. You stand amazed at the truth that is involved in what he has written. One of the great proofs to me, of the verbal inspiration of the scriptures. And as you look at this letter today and these few verses, we notice that Peter addresses his comments to a group of Christians. Bible-believing people who had been scattered. Peter refers to Christians as the people of God in his letter. And in this particular scripture, he mentions that they were scattered abroad or one way of putting it, they were strangers. They were aliens, aliens scattered throughout Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bethania. You take a map and look at it, your Bible maps, you will discover that these countries cover the territory now known as Turkey. It was Roman empire country. The Romans controlled it, and they had brought up against the Christians, a great deal of suffering.

James T. Jeremiah:

So it's easy to understand when you read this letter, that Peter's comments had somewhat to do with the suffering of the saints. But as he begins the letter, he talks about Christians or the people of God being strangers in the world. And you know, that's true of every one of us born of the spirit of God, if we're saved people, we are strangers in one sense of the word, because our citizenship is in heaven and wherever we are and whatever we may be doing as the people of God, we're not at home in this world, we're just passing through. And one glorious day, our heavenly citizenship will be a reality in a sense that we do not know it today. Peter goes on to suggest that these people were elect of the Lord. They were saved by his fore-ordained son, chosen by God, before the foundation of the world.

James T. Jeremiah:

What a wonderful position and privilege this is to read about the children of God. Sanctified by the spirit, election by the father in eternity and made effectual by the spirit in time. The spirit of the Lord had worked in their hearts. They were obedient to the truth, as we read in verse two. Peter deals a lot with obedience. One could understand why, when we go back in our thinking to the days of his problems and Christ was here in the flesh and you'll notice in his letter, often he refers to obedience. For example, in verse two, he speaks about obedience and sprinkling of the blood. In verse 14, he refers to as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts by your ignorance. Mentions it again in verse 22 of the chapter. You see, Peter believed as the Bible teaches everywhere, that God's grace never leaves a life open to practice sin.

James T. Jeremiah  
The Christian's Birthday Gifts  
August 28, 1977

James T. Jeremiah:

And we talk about the grace of God and the great purposes of his grace. We never find room in God's plan for those who have been the recipients of his grace to walk in or practice sin. He talks about being purged by the blood, in verse two. And of course, this is a wonderful truth. We find all the way through the scriptures, that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. May I point out to you, friend, if you're going to have the comfort of this epistle, you must know the Christ of this epistle. And as you think about this first chapter, you'll see a great deal about him that needs to be put into practice by all of us in these days. As Peter enumerates all of these things, strangers in the world, chosen by God, set apart for the spirit, obedient to the truth, he comes to the conclusion of all of it, and he sings the doxology, blessed be the God and father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

That word blessed means God is well-spoken of, is well honored, is praised. After Peter sings the doxology and my friend, once you grasp the truth of that introduction and you recognize the great truth as it is in Christ about his work for us, in us, and with us, you cannot help but come to the end of it all and sing praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then Peter goes on to enumerate what I like to call the Christian's birthday gifts. Most everybody, I suppose, except those who are beyond 60, like to have birthdays and some who are 39 have been there for a long time, but by the same token, there aren't any birthday gifts in all the world that can compare with the birthday gift that you received, I received, when we were born again.

James T. Jeremiah:

For the remaining moments of our study today, I want to talk about the birthday gifts or the birthrights of the children of God, the family of God, those who have been chosen, sanctified by the spirit who are obedient to the truth. Notice what he says now, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto a living hope, unto a living hope." One of the great birthday gifts you and I received on the day of our birth, our spiritual birth, was a living hope. Peter wanted a literal messianic kingdom when he was here. Unquestionably, he was with the disciples when they said to the Lord Jesus, following the resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?"

James T. Jeremiah:

They wanted a kingdom, a literal kingdom on earth. And let me say to you that one day there will be one on earth, a literal messianic kingdom. But that wasn't the time for it. The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to establish a kingdom of that kind, his first coming. Peter watched them arrest him. Peter listened as they tried him. Peter, with the other disciples forsook him and fled. One reason, possibly why he denied him was because his hopes of a messianic kingdom were dashed to pieces. But now he writes, "Begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The cause of it all is according to his abundant mercy.

James T. Jeremiah:

It is a completed act because the idea of being begotten is completed action. It is something's happened once for all for the child of God. It is a commitment that he's made to us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And the character of it is that it's living, a living hope. There's no reason why the child of God should look on the dark side of life. If life to you is a dark tunnel, if around you, there are

James T. Jeremiah  
The Christian's Birthday Gifts  
August 28, 1977

troubles and trials and testings that seem so impossible to overcome, at least at the end of the tunnel, if you're a child of God, there is a bright, shining, glorious hope. Reminds us of an old Testament scripture, where the Proverbs tell us, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." We have been born children of God with a living hope.

James T. Jeremiah:

You listen today without Christ. You not only have a tunnel through which you're going, but at the end of it, there is the blackness of darkness forever without hope. What a privilege to live in a godless day like ours, sin all around us, disappointments, difficulties, but know why we live. That we have been begotten unto a living hope. Another birthday gift is that we have eternal riches. Some of you who listen today may not have to wonder too much about your investments. You may not need to wonder how you're going to invest all your riches because you have enough to survive, and that may be all. But let me tell you if you've been born again, born of God, you have been begotten unto an inheritance. Notice that in the text. An inheritance. Certain things about this inheritance that intrigue me.

James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, this inheritance is beyond death. It's incorruptible as to its endurance. There is no likelihood of decay. There is no autumn in it. No end of the summer. Beyond death. It's beyond sin. It's undefiled as to its purity. There's nothing here in this world, without flaw. Pictures have flaws. People have flaws. Proof has flaws. Flaws everywhere, but this inheritance is beyond flaw. It's beyond change. It's unfading as to its beauty. Every beautiful thing changes. Everything you can think of in time will change. Some of the things that we enjoy such as beautiful pictures fade. But this inheritance is unfading as to its beauty. It is beyond time. It's reserved in heaven, reserved in heaven as to its security. Born with an inheritance.

James T. Jeremiah:

I may not look like a rich man. And if you had an opportunity to investigate my bank account, you would come close to the same conclusion that I would reach. I am not. But if you will investigate the bank account by the grace of God that I have in heaven, reserved for me, I am wealthy, and so are you, if you've been born of God. What a joy it is to have that kind of riches that are ours. Pat Kern was an Irish window washer. He was up on a ladder washing a window in the city of New York. Pat was an Irishman as you well could understand. Pat Kern couldn't be nothing else. One day as he was washing the windows, a man came to the foot of the ladder and said, "Pat Kern, your uncle died and left you 100,000." Obviously, this took place many years ago, because 100,000 wouldn't be much, but Pat Kern climbed down the ladder, left his bucket of water and all his window washing equipment, walked off, never to wash windows again.

James T. Jeremiah:

I think the trouble with us as Christians sometimes, we are spiritual window washers and we ought to be enjoying the inheritance that God has provided for us and recognize what we have in Christ and what we can impart and tell to others, that they may also have a birthday with a birthday gift of wealth. The third thing as a birthday gift, we have been given a secured position. See, a welcome home to a sailor wouldn't mean very much if he couldn't ride out the sea. God has not only put an inheritance ahead of us, but he has given the assurance that he'll keep us by his power to accept the inheritance. And how's he going to do it? In two ways; by preservation, the word kept is here. That means to be surrounded by an armed force.

James T. Jeremiah  
The Christian's Birthday Gifts  
August 28, 1977

James T. Jeremiah:

FB Meyer, many years ago, illustrated it like this, "Being kept as the eye is kept by the bone and the eyelid in the face. Being kept as the flock is kept by the shepherd against the enemy that would attack it. Being kept as the walls keep a garden. Being kept as a safe keeps the contents thereof." Kept by the power of God. Preservation. Perseverance kept by or through faith. Faith and keeping are interesting. You see, God keeps us by his power, faith, trust that God who keeps the same to trust God. And as we believe God's word and faith comes by hearing, the assurance of this glorious position in Christ is something that will bring satisfaction and assurance, as we think for a little while about one of these great birthday gifts. Born with the keeping power to be kept for the inheritance that he has reserved for us.

James T. Jeremiah:

Out in the West several years ago, Oliver Martin was a degraded, debauched drunken bum, but he worked as a miner and he tried to find a way to make a living. One day he discovered what he thought was an unusually heavy golden nugget. It was heavy. It weighed 80 pounds. He had to find another miner to help him get it to the assayer's office. And when he did, he found the value of it all. When he discovered that he had found a golden nugget that heavy, that valuable, Oliver Martin, according to the story said, "This must be a miracle of the grace of God." And he walked off with those riches, never again to follow the way of drunkenness and liquor and debauchery and defeat. Once you grasp and I grasp what the wealth is we have in Christ, once we recognize that it's more valuable than anything this world can give, we'll walk off from the waves of sin, walk in the ways of the Lord. And we will say of truth, "This indeed must be a miracle of grace for only grace could do it."

James T. Jeremiah:

There's another birthday gift that perhaps we'd like to shun. This is the birthday gift of a tested faith. Verses six and seven, "Wherein..." He said, "We greatly rejoice." What are we rejoice in? The inheritance, the keeping power of the believer. "Wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you're in heaviness through manifold of various kinds of trial or temptation." He talks about the trial faith. Let me suggest to you friend, that if you have faith, God will find it. If you have faith, it'll be tested. If you're going through life as just a professing religious person without any trials, no testing, better re-examine where you stand, because if you have faith, God will find it. And in this passage of scripture, he defines the trials. He talks about them being temporary for a little while. He speaks of them being necessary.

James T. Jeremiah:

If need be. He speaks to them being distressing in heaviness. There's various kinds of them. Some that we cause ourselves perhaps, some that others bring to us, others that God sends to us for a good reason. Valuable, more precious than of gold that perishes. Severe, tried by fire. Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome. This particular time, these believers in the area of Turkey now, were going through severe trials by the Roman government, the Roman empire, and Peter plays upon this and talks about it being fiery trials, but there's a purpose to it all, that the trials are the proof of your faith, the proof of your faith, maybe present. To have the proof come is something that we surely ought to look into and thank God for it and rejoice in it. By the grace of God, there is not a single one of us that will escape trials if we're saved. But every one of us who belongs to God by this great inheritance should think seriously of why they come.

James T. Jeremiah  
The Christian's Birthday Gifts  
August 28, 1977

James T. Jeremiah:

They tell me that one who would work as a purifier of gold, at least in ancient days, would turn on the heat underneath the gold and watch the fire. Would watch the time until he could see his face in the gold when the dross had been removed and when he saw his face, he would turn down the fire. There is no temptation or trial taken you, but such as is common to man, but God is faithful who will not permit you to be tested above that you're able, but will with the temptation or the trial or the testing, make a way to escape that you may be able to bear it. Most everyone has heard about the great English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Few have heard very much about his wife, who was a godly woman who suffered much during the later years of her life.

James T. Jeremiah:

One day in great pain, she was in a room on the couch, wondering why all these things had come to her, all these trials of pain in body and the sorrows that come through life. And all of a sudden she heard a note as if a bird were singing. It was dark and no birds were singing. And she finally discovered, she looked around the room that in the fireplace there was an old log that was burning and as the fire hit it, there would be a note that would come from the log as it burned, as the fire burned the log. There was a note that sounded like music. This became a comfort to this woman in trial. And she discovered that as the log had grown through the years as a tree, the winter blast and the opposition of the elements, the trials that may have been the reason for the song in the fire. This became a source of comfort to one in great trouble.

James T. Jeremiah:

Yes, we have tested faith. It's part of our birthday inheritance. To have a living hope, to have a secured position, to know the reality of eternal riches, these are gifts that have been given through the birth into the family of God, because you see, God has given this, begotten us again unto a living hope. Now, the question that I want to leave with you in just a moment is this, do you know this position? Have you come to realize the wonderful inheritance, the guarantee that one day you will get it? You see, you may be the son of a wealthy father and mother, you may have a rich uncle somewhere. Most everybody I talk to may hope they do, but you may have it all written in the will and never get the inheritance. You see, the father or mother you think is rich may lose it with a bad investment and you may die before you get it anyway.

James T. Jeremiah:

But when you have been begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, there isn't anything in this world or in eternity or time or anywhere that can rob you of these riches. As we come to the closing part of this, we see also that we have in the light of all of this an assured future. Whom having not seen you love, in whom though, now you see him not yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul. Now, the best way I can explain that is to illustrate it. And I'm going to use an illustration taken out of the experience of a little child. I guess this is the grandfather in me, but I like to think about this story.

James T. Jeremiah:

There was a young lady, a little girl, say five or six years old, who came to her daddy one day and she said, "Daddy, tell me, please, what is faith?" And being unable to answer it right then like a college

James T. Jeremiah  
The Christian's Birthday Gifts  
August 28, 1977

professor, I guess he said, "That's a good question, dear. At an appropriate time, I'll explain it." That gave him time to think it through, see. The next day or so, he was working out in the yard. They lived out in the country and this father built a root cellar out in the yard that was entered by a hole through the earth and a ladder. He was down there working with the lights on and this little gal came to the entrance of the root cellar and she said, "Daddy, I like to come and be with you." And he thought to himself, "This is my opportune hour to tell this little girl what faith is." He turned off the light. He removed the ladder and looked up in the face of this little lass and said, "Honey, jump and daddy will catch you."

James T. Jeremiah:

Whom having not seen, she loved. Having not seen him, she believed. Having not seen him, she rejoiced. And she jumped into the arms of her father. Whenever I think of this story, I always imagine somebody saying, "Yes, yes, you preachers are telling this story of faith and what you're really telling us is that faith is a jump in the dark." My friend, faith is not a jump in the dark. Faith is a jump through the dark, into the arms of a God who's promised to receive you, give you salvation. She couldn't see her father, but she believed him. She couldn't see through that darkness, but she knew that there were waiting arms to grasp her as she jumped.

James T. Jeremiah:

My friend, I cannot see the Lord Jesus and I haven't had any visions of him. And I don't intend to have any until I see him face to face. I like to think his will be the first face I see when I leave this world, but I know that I rest in him. That's faith. "All that the father giveth me shall come to me," the Lord Jesus said. "And him that cometh to me, I will no wise cast out." There is a life of sin and darkness in which you're living. You cannot see him by faith, but you can believe his word. And as you trust him, rest in him, he will save you. This will be the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul. Trust him today.