

# God the Giver

Romans 8:32

NOTES

Advent is the season anticipating the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, four weeks of preparation for Christmas. We are getting ready to celebrate the greatest miracle ever accomplished or even conceivable, the gift of God Himself.

## Overview of the Text

This verse follows an argument in Romans 8 where Paul describes what God is for those who have been forgiven for their sins, but are still suffering: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (8:18). Not only will the Lord sustain His people through trials, the trials themselves work for good *and glory* to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (v28). We believe this, but how do we know it’s true? Is it just a word, an abstract decree from the void? Where do we look when things are beyond our control (which they are by definition) and it seems impossible to imagine that God is working in it? To the cross: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (v32). If God gave the greatest thing He could give—the life of Jesus Christ—why wouldn’t He give us lesser things? At the first Christmas, the fact that God was giving something great was evident, but we now know what “Jesus” meant—what it would cost for God to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21; cf. Lk. 2:35).

## The Season of Advent

The word *advent* comes from the Latin *adventus*, and means *coming* or *arrival*. There’s a threefold aspect to this: celebrating Christ’s birth, anticipating His return (*parousia*), and hastening His sanctifying work in us, as the hymn says, “be born in us today.” The month of December became a time to prepare for Christmas in parts of the church by at least the end of the fifth century. At the Council of Tours in 567AD monks were commanded to fast before Christmas, and this practice came and went throughout church history. Thankfully, Christians today generally do not fast during Advent, but neither do we understand the potency of this season. It’s important to remember that we are not in bondage to any holiday or festive calendar—we don’t *have to* celebrate Christmas (Gal. 4:3-11). But we are certainly free to do so: “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5). In the old covenant, God required certain feasts and one fast, and Israel established the holiday of Purim (Lev. 23, 16; Est. 9:18-32). How much more are we free to celebrate in good conscience? We should do so purposefully, imitating and enjoying what the Lord has done.

## What God Gave

When you look at the cross you see who God is: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). The Father gave the Son, which was a gift from Himself since the Son proceeds from the Father. Good earthly fathers would much rather die than see a child taken to die, how much greater is sacrifice of God the Father to give His Son? The Son gave Himself in order to bring us to the Father, that is, to give us His Father: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to

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the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). The Spirit who descended on Jesus, empowered Him throughout His ministry, sustained Him, and raised Him in power did all this so that the love of God would be poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 5:5). God always gave and provided—Jehovah Jireh—for His people before Jesus came (Gen. 22:14). But the incarnation matchlessly reveals the boundless love of the triune God. He was made flesh and born to die for us. This is why Christmas is the foundation of everything, the hopes and fears of all the years met in one baby boy that night. That baby would grow up as a normal and true human. He loved God and His neighbor without sin, and then took all the sins of His people, the just punishment for them, upon Himself. Because He never gave in to sin, even as it crushed Him, death couldn’t hold Him: “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Rev. 1:18). He rose, ascended, sent the Spirit, and continues giving Himself to us continually and completely. Knowing what God did for you on the cross is the key to knowing what He is doing today in your life. If He has given Himself to you, you know He won’t withhold what you need today and tomorrow.

## How We Give

We are getting ready to celebrate this indescribable gift. We are not reenacting the event or trying to recapture the surprise element. Christmas is not “for the kids” but for every child of God. The first time you read a great story is not the best reading. If it’s an excellent story, you know you’ll enjoy it more next time, and again after that. Christ is coming in His kingdom, which means we are still receiving from Him. Can you see it? The parties, singing, writing, calling, visiting, meeting, planning, cooking, baking and buying are all ways to give. Some of these are small and some great, but they all are gifts that lead to getting and then to more giving: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Lk. 6:38). Jesus is not talking about random acts of kindness, but love from the heart. Just before this, He says “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (v37). So giving must come with the gift of love—believing the best, hoping the best, forgiving and extending grace. Notice that giving is the first thing, and then you get: “Give, and it will be given to you.” You give and then get, and what you get doesn’t get locked up in your vault of treasures; it runs over and out of your heart. So you give again, and then God out-gives you even more. You can’t quit giving without walking away from something better. Jesus gave everything and received the name above all names. How do you know if you are giving like Christ, and therefore receiving Him? When you overflow as a result. We need this time of advent to get ready for Christmas. There are too many songs, too much food, too many new people meet, too many friends and family, too many cards to write, lights to hang, and gifts to buy. Some people complain about retailers promoting Christmas too soon, and so respond by humbugging earlier than usual. At least the stores are erring in the right direction. How do you know if you’re receiving the way Jesus does? If you’re even more motivated to give. Freely you have received from the Lord; freely give.