

**What Do You Want for Christmas?****1. Endurance    2. Encouragement    3. Loving Humility    4. Joy    5. Peace    6. Hope**

- Xmas only 17 days away; so, what want? What hoping under tree, or receive as gift from fam/fr? We never want focus of Xmas on gift giving/getting. Xmas: birth JC, came heavn, Sav – greatest gift ever. As Xians, guard hearts vs greed & loving things. But gift giving is okay. Remem kid, made Xmas list? Sears, JCP – circle toys wanted. Get older, gifts want change; you put on list things from TV coms: Zales, Chevy. Or maybe point in life: can't be purchased: fam with you, warm embrace. You: what want? This Adv, as prep for birth J, let's ask God for Xmas gifts that don't come from cat/com. Let's put tog a list of spiritual gifts we want this Xmas. And in our Adv reading from Rom 15, we find excellent list of spiritual gifts we can ask Lord for – gifts that Lord loves give.
- **Vs. 4.** Right there, first 2 Xmas gifts on list: **endurance & encouragement**. When running race, need strength/stamina keep going, even though hard – that's endrnc. End implies enduring something hard, trying get through. What you enduring now? What diff life situation are you just trying get through? Watching loved one's health slowly/quickly deteriorate? Are you in poor health self? Have job that overwhelms you or responsibilities just pressing you down? Living thru some deep sorrow, broken heart; just trying get through? What enduring right now? Whatever: ask Lord for endrnc; ask him for strength/stamina keep going, even though hard. And God will provide! He will give you the endrnc to help you run your diff race. And tog w/ endrnc God will give you enc. Think re crowds people clapping, cheering you along as run your diff race: "Keep up good work; you're going make it; doing great job!" That's enc. **Vs. 4b.** God encs us: thru people around us who love us (fam, fr, colleagues, fellow ch mems, prs). But also encs us thru his Word, thru proms he speaks in Scripture. Adv is season of proms. God promd send J; kept his prom. God is prom keeper. He proms you: always with, never leave; all sins forgiven, loves you; home in heaven. God encs us thru proms in Word. So these first 2 gifts, endrnc & enc, we should ask God for this Xmas. And can trust he will give them.
- **Vs. 5.** So next gift on our list: having same mindset/attitude as Xp. We want God help us think re people, act toward them, in same loving/humble way J does. Really, asking God help us be more Christ-like, imitate his **loving humility**.
- How do that? Paul: **vs. 7a.** LH means we accept oa in Xian love! When Paul wrote, some Jewish Xians having hard time accepting Gent Xians. That's why so many verses emph Gents. Look **vs. 9ff.** Jewish Xians needed to accept Gent Xians in LH, just like we need accept oa in LH.
- That word "accept," however, unfortntly misunderstood by many people. Accepting oa does not mean ignoring sin; and does not mean ignoring false doc. It's never Christ-like to dismiss someone's sin as own personal lifestyle choice, or brush under rug false teachings that undermine what J taught. This is big deal today! If you tell someone their behaviors or beliefs are wrong bec don't line up with Scripture, today that's considered unloving, even hateful.
- So what this psg mean: **vs. 5b, 7ab?** Means: imitate J's LH. J never said sin and false doctrine are okay; in fact spoke sharply vs them. But did love people! Did serve people! **Mt 20:28.** J came serve us! And: **vs. 8a.** Think J healing people, helping; curing their diseases, driving out their demons – came to serve! Think J carrying cross, dying on cross – J came to die for us, to forgive all our sins! Did that in love for you/me! And, don't miss how **vs.7b.** He saw you, hell-bound & covered in sin, said no, I love/accept you! Washed you clean in baptism, made child God, gave you faith, inheritance in heaven – all bec loves/accepted you. This Xmas let's ask God to help us be more Christ-like, to help us love/serve each other in Xian kindness/humility, just like J loved/served us. That may take place here in own cong; may take place in our interactions with unbelievers, as we share gospel with them, never compromising truth but just being kind. Lord give us all LH, so that we do **vs. 7ab.**
- Next gifts on list: **joy and peace. Vs. 13a.** So when we trust in J as Sav, we have joy & peace. Joy is not same as being happy. Lot things in life that can make us sad: death, sickness, sin makes us sad. J

was sad; it's ok for us be sad. But even during times of sadness, we have joy! Christ is risen; Satan is defeated; we have home in heaven; we are forgiven – these are objective facts that sad days cannot change. Trusting in J gives us deep joy; also peace. Peace is when our heart free from fear/worry. Bec of Xp, we never have be afraid God's judgment or worry re God forsaking us. On cross, J said it is finished; our salv accomd; sins forgiven, forever. We may be surrounded by chaos of sin/death; but in hearts we have peace of God. We are children of God, redeemed by J. No matter what happens around us, inside us, by faith in J, we have peace. J, this Xmas please increase our joy and peace.

- And finally, LJ, also give us **hope**. **Vs. 13a** – he's God of hope: our hope comes from him; we put hope in him. **Vs. 13**. Hope is looking forward with confidence to what God's promised in future. He's promised us heaven; that's our hope. And in Bible, hope is certainty. We tend say: I hope get this for Xmas; hope have good year – but we don't know if our hopes will actually come true. Xian hope is a certainty, bec God keeps promises. Remem how God promised Abraham a son, even though old man? Earlier in Rom: **“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations” (4:18)**. Abraham trusted God. Really, those words: hope/trust/faith/believe – basically all same: when God makes promise, we know he'll keep it; that's Xian hope. And what blessing it is when we **vs. 13b**.
- So this Dec, these next 2½ weeks really, as you finish your Xmas shopping, and as finish your own Xmas list, keep in mind the greater gifts; gifts cannot purchase; gifts you will not find in catlg or on comcl. This Xmas, ask Lord to increase your end, enc, lh, joy, peace, hope. Ask and it shall be given to you! These are gifts you really want! These are gifts God loves to give.

### **Romans 15:4-13**

<sup>4</sup> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

<sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. <sup>8</sup> For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed <sup>9</sup> and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name.” <sup>10</sup> Again, it says, “Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.” <sup>11</sup> And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him.” <sup>12</sup> And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope.”

<sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.