

Title: FIRST  
Text: Romans 11: 35  
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**Romans 11: 35:...who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**

Is there anyone here who has given anything to God? If we profess to believe on Christ, scripture declares that there are things we must give to God. Let's consider just three things:

1) One, we must give God a willing reception—by receiving Christ by believing on him.

John 1: 11: He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12: But as many as received him, to them gave he power [privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

2) Two we must give God our heart. Christ, speaking as Wisdom, says,

Proverbs 23: 26: My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

3) Three, we must give God our life. By life, we are talking about a righteousness and holiness that God will receive.

Romans 12:1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

It is very common to hear professing believers speak of some past experience and say: "At such and such time, I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior."; "I gave my heart to Jesus."; "I gave my life to the Lord."

What does that mean? Some vain preacher tells the sinner, "God has done all he can, now it is up to you." The sinner is made to feel so sorry for God, made to feel like the sinner must do something for God so that God can have his way. Finally the sinner decides, "I will let God save me. I will let Jesus have his way."

Be sure you hear the question that God the Holy Spirit asks through Paul in our text,

**Romans 11: 35:...who hath FIRST given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**

The question is asked directly by God in

Job 41: 11: Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.

The meaning of the word "prevented" is given in our text—"who hath FIRST given to me?" "That I should repay him?" Who has FIRST given me something that was not my own, so that they laid me under an obligation to pay them back? Who is it that I owe for first giving anything to me, "that I should repay." Our text says, if you find one "it shall be recompensed unto him, again."

Sinner, God asks you and me this question, directly, "Who hath FIRST given to God?" Did you FIRST receive Christ? Or did God FIRST accept you?; did you FIRST give God your heart? Or did God FIRST give you a new heart?; did you FIRST give God your life? Or did God FIRST give you life, making you righteous and holy in Christ?

**Proposition:** Your answer to this question reveals whether you believe in yourself and trust your works OR whether you believe on Christ and rest in his works.

Your answer to this question reveals whether you imagine salvation to be something God owes you OR whether you believe salvation to be entirely of God's grace. Whether you imagine you should receive glory and praise OR whether you desire for God to receive all the glory, all the praise.

**Title:** First

**Divisions:** 1) Who first receives who? 2) Who first gives the heart 3) Who first gives life?

**I. WE WILL BEGIN WITH THIS QUESTION, WHO FIRST RECEIVES WHO? DOES A SINNER FIRST RECEIVE GOD OR DOES GOD FIRST ACCEPT THE SINNER? Romans 11: 35:...who hath FIRST given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**

### **Natural Thinking**

Natural born sinners are backwards in thinking—upside down in understanding. Unregenerate sinners think “self” is first in all things, especially salvation. The natural heart thinks, “I must take the first step”; the natural heart imagines, “I must first let God”; the natural mind vainly imagines, “It is up to me to first accept Jesus.” But it is not so; God is first in all things!

Romans 11: 36: For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

### **God First Accepted His People**

It was God who FIRST ACCEPTED his people in Christ.

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

John 1: 12: But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Acts 13:48: And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Indeed, those God has ordained to eternal life shall receive Christ, believing on Christ. We must receive Christ; we must believe on Christ. But make no mistake, our receiving Christ is the gift of God—**FAITH IS FIRST GIVEN BY GOD.**

Ephesians 2:8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Why is this so important? Most make their boast of what they did for their god. The gospel I declare is that salvation is all of God's grace rather than man's works; that God gets all the glory in our salvation and the saved sinner gets none! Now, which is it? Did God first accept you or did you first accept God? If you believe that you accepted God first, then my friend, you are yet dead in your sins—trusting in your works. If you believe God is sovereign in salvation: choosing whom he will, that he first chose you, and you rejoice, that it is so—then glorify God for it is God who makes his people accepted in the beloved.

## **II. SECONDLY, WHO FIRST GIVES THE HEART? DOES THE SINNER FIRST GIVE HIS HEART TO THE LORD OR DOES THE LORD FIRST GIVE THE SINNER A NEW HEART?—Romans 11: 35:...who hath FIRST given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**

### **Natural Heart**

Concerning the heart which every sinner is born with the first time, God says, (Gen 6: 5)

Genesis 6:5: GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21...and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....

Isaiah 1: 5 ...the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6: From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

Jeremiah 17: 9: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The unregenerate, natural heart, deceives the sinner with respect to his sin: the heart makes him think he is righteous and good; by comparing himself with other sinners, using sin as the measuring tool.

**Illustration:** Can you imagine one black lump of coal saying of another black lump of coal, "I'm not as black as he is!" It is just as ignorant for the sinner to compare himself with another sinner. Sinner, compare yourself with Christ!

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

The unregenerate natural heart deceives the sinner: that he knows God and his Christ, when in fact, he is blind and ignorant, and knows nothing as he ought: for there is no true knowledge but of God in Christ—and that, of a crucified Christ, and salvation by Christ alone.

1 Corinthians 1: 30:...of God is Christ made unto us Wisdom.

But the deceived heart makes a man disown what he is: Psalm 14:1: The fool hath said in his heart, "No God." No to God's way of salvation! No to God doing all the work! No to God receiving all the glory!

1 Corinthians 3:18: Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

Sinner, take sides with God against yourself, owning yourself to be the fool, owning your desperate need for God to give you a new heart, for God to make Christ unto you Wisdom.

1 Corinthians 8:2: if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Galatians 6:3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Yet, left to himself, in his vain, deceived heart, by his religious act of giving his polluted heart to his helpless Jesus, this is what the sinner has truly done...

Psalm 14: 1:...They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. 2: The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3: They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

What is this “doing good” God says “none do” of their own heart?

John 3: 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, [to Christ] that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Those that do good, come to God, confessing that God did all the work, that God first gave him a new heart. He give God all the glory! But the deceived heart makes the sinner think he can clean up his own heart by his own religious acts. God says,

Job 14:4: Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

Job 15:14: What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

Jeremiah 13: 23: Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

## **New Heart**

Then how does a sinner get a clean heart, a new heart, so that he may willingly take sides with God against himself?

Ezekiel 36:26: A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Deuteronomy 30:6: And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Romans 2: 28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

So who hath been FIRST in giving his heart to the Lord Jesus? Not one! God must FIRST give us the new heart. Only then will the sinner obey Christ and give his new heart to the Lord Jesus, loving Christ and loving Christ to have the glory. Sinner, which is it? Has God FIRST given you a new heart? Or are you yet trusting that you FIRST gave your heart to God? Will you give God the glory? OR will you go on attempting to rob God of his glory?

**III. LASTLY, WHO FIRST GIVES LIFE? DOES THE SINNER FIRST GIVE GOD HIS LIFE? OR DOES GOD FIRST GIVE THE SINNER LIFE?—Romans 11: 35:...who hath FIRST given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**

God is Life! God is the FIRST giver, the ONLY giver of ALL Life!

Genesis 2:7: And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

And God is the FIRST giver of OUR natural life.

Acts 17:28: For in him we live, and move, and have our being...

But by the transgression of our first Head, Adam, every sinner is born into this world, spiritually “dead in trespasses and in sins.” To be conceived in sin is death

Genesis 5:3: Adam...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image;

Right on down to David who tells us exactly what that means:

Psalm 51:5: Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

For this reason:

Psalm 58:3: The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

To be guilty of sin and trespassing against God is spiritual death.

Ephesians 2:3: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. [who maketh thee to differ?] 4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

To be given life—FIRST by God—is for God to make us the righteousness of God, the holiness of God, FIRST in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new....21: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Just as Adam was our federal Head, Christ is the federal Head of all whom he represented—all God’s elect. By Christ’s doing and dying, his people are made the righteousness of God in him. Just as we received Adam’s corrupt seed so that we were conceived in sin the first time, so we must be born again of the incorruptible Seed by Christ Jesus in the new birth. All for whom he died, are given his Life, when Christ our Life, our Righteousness, and our Holiness, enters into these dead bodies in Spirit. Then are we created anew in righteousness and true holiness, after Christ’s image. Then are we made to lay hold of Christ as our only Righteousness and Holiness.

**Be sure to get this:** LIFE IS TO BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD; LIFE IS TO BE MADE THE HOLINESS GOD. GOD FIRST GIVES US LIFE WHEN CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS ENTERS IN, GIVING US LIFE IN HIS SPIRIT, MAKING US HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST THROUGH FAITH. TURN TO ROMANS 8 AND WE WILL SEE THIS DECLARED.

Romans 8: 1: *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6: For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. 7: Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8: So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9: But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the

Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10: And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

1 John 3: 9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

So when the believer gives his life to God through faith in Christ, we are only giving to God what God has already given to us, first. We do so through faith in Christ who is our only Righteousness and our only Holiness. Christ makes us accepted of God.

Romans 11: 36: For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.  
12: 1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Presenting our bodies in Christ through faith is the only way we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. We are only giving God what God has first given us. So believers give nothing to God, expecting a payment in return. It is our reasonable service after all that he has given freely by his grace unto wretched sinners like us.

Job 35:7: If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?

Psalm 24:1 «A Psalm of David.» The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

The believers' heart is this:

Psalm 116: 12: What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

2 Corinthians 5:14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

So sinner, did you FIRST give your life to the Lord Jesus? If you and I FIRST gave our life to God, we are attempting to give God something God will not receive—unrighteousness, sin and death! Or did God do it all—making you the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus?

**NOW, LET'S ANSWER THE QUESTION OF OUR TEXT--Romans 11: 35:...who hath FIRST given to [God]?** The answer is: not one child of Adam has ever FIRST given anything to God!

1 Corinthians 4:7: For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

You won't find the believer, boasting, saying, "I accepted Jesus."; "I gave my heart to Jesus."; "I gave my life to the Lord." Instead of us glorying in ourselves, we cry out,

Psalm 115: 1: Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

**Amen!**