



Title: Eternal Gifts of Christmas
Theme: What Will You Find at Christmas
Series: Grasping the Truths of Christmas

“Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men, on whom His favor rests.” (Luke 2:14)

Eternal gifts for those who grasp the truths of Christmas with their hearts

There are eternal gifts for those who grasp the truths of Christmas with their hearts. Understanding those gifts and walking in the free grace by which these gifts come will completely change a person’s attitude toward the season which we now celebrate.

I would propose to you that there are wonderful benefits for those on whom God’s favor rests. Most people including church attendees quote only part of the angel’s message from the Lord in Luke 2:14, “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men...” However, the Holy Spirit leads the Children of God to understand the rest of the verse, “...on whom His favor rests.” It is Christians with a heart after God that are the ones that express a life that walks in the grace and mercy of God.

Pastor Rick Warren was 100% correct when he said, “You are going to find what you are looking for this Christmas.” For those who have the heart of Pharaoh, He is going to give them that hard heart they so want. (Exodus 8:15; 9:15; 10:1,20,27; 11:1; 14:8; Joshua 11:20; 2 Chronicles 36:13) For those who want to believe the lies of those brought forth by the devil, the Lord will cause them to believe those lies. (2 Thessalonians 2:11; 2 Timothy 3:3-4)

However, there is something different for those who have the heart of David after his sin was exposed by the prophet Nathan, who wrote, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” (Psalm 51:10-12)

To these types of spiritual hearts God will cast His favor in great amounts. Those who have the favor of God upon their lives will live a life that expresses God’s forgiveness, peace of mind, and eternal life found in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit has this question for all today, “What will you find this Christmas? What will be the expression of your life for all to see?”

Forgiveness of sins through His name

There are many benefits for those who grasp the truths of Christmas, one being forgiveness.

Acts 10:43 says, “All the prophets testify about [Jesus] that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.” (Acts 10:43)

A little boy wrote Santa Claus saying, “Dear Santa, there are three boys who live in our home. Jeffery is two and he is good some of the time. David is four and he is good some of the time. Norman is seven and he is good all the time, I am Norman.” (Rick Warren, Christmas Message)

The Bible tells one truth that must be grasped there are no Normans in this world. If we could tap into the brains of Christians and recall all they thought and did this last year and project it upon our big screen there would be some extremely embarrassed Christians. There are no Normans in this world. Thus, even today we are in great need of God’s forgiveness and mercy both available in Jesus’ Name.

A Christmas card sent to Pastor Rick Warren said, “If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness so He sent a Savior.” The greatest need for all of mankind is forgiveness and the greatest need for Christians is the continued forgiveness that can be found in Jesus’ Name.

“Forgiveness” (*apheseoes*) in Acts 10:43 means to release one’s sins from the sinner. This required Jesus’ coming as man so the sins of the world may be cast upon Him. Thus He can take on the punishment of sin upon Himself. He did this because His Father sent Him, and He came voluntarily. The reason this forgiveness needs to be a continual forgiveness is because the children of God are not delivered from the presence of sin when they get saved. Thus, Christians will slip into sin. However, sin will not have dominion over them because the Holy Spirit will convict them of sin and draw them to repentance. In Jesus’ Name they will be forgiven. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; 1 John 1:8; Hebrews 8:24)

1 John 1:8 says, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8) Christians who think that they no longer sin deceive themselves.

Dr J. Vernon McGee was in Bible College. When he met his first room mate he had quite a surprise. His roommate informed him that he had not committed a sin over the last three years. Dr. McGee was shocked to meet someone who was so sanctified in this life that he no longer slipped into sin.

As time went on, Vernon McGee's roommate blamed him for everything that went wrong, no matter what. After the first semester, freshman were able to change roommates. McGee went to his roommate and informed him that he was moving into another room with someone who was like him. That is, a sinner saved by grace who God was still doing a work in. Vernon and his new roommate got along just great. Two Christians standing in need of much prayer, just two sinners resting in the continued forgiveness of God given to them in Jesus' name.

The great news of the angel was, "...in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 11) "Savior" (*soter*) is Jesus Christ who delivers and preserves at saving sinners from the danger and destruction of sin, and puts sinners in a state of prosperity and happiness. Jesus as Messiah, the Savior of men, saves the repentant sinner from the guilt and the power of sin, from eternal death, from punishment, and misery as the consequence of sin. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary)

Walter B. Knight wrote about an African pagan, Masagr. He was a man known for lying, stealing, polygamy, slavery, and drunkenness. After hearing the message of God's forgiving and saving grace found in Jesus Christ, he surrendered His heart and life to Jesus. He was very old and so wanted others to hear the good news that was proclaimed by the angels, "A Savior has been born to you." He saved every penny he could and even sold his cow to buy a bicycle.

He found a missionary, gave the bicycle to him and encouraged him to find a young person who was full of zeal for the Lord, that he may go and tell his fellow tribesmen about Jesus Christ.

This pagan African became a child of God, forgiven and saved from the sins that once held him in bondage. He had the Holy Spirit living in him, giving him the same burning desire as the shepherds had on that first Christmas. He wanted others to hear what has been told them about Jesus.

Great peace

Christians who find the Christ of Christmas are sinners who are saved by grace. They depend upon the forgiveness that is given in Jesus' name. And this brings them a great peace.

Psalm 119:165 says, “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.” (Psalm 119:165) “Law” (*torah*) is used twenty-five times in Psalm 119 in parallel with various other words with the same meaning. The word in itself is an active verb meaning to love the instructions in a general way from the Lord. It means loving the ways, customs and directions from God as David so longed to know and love the Lord’s ways. (The Complete Word Study)

There are those who develop such close relationships in Christian marriages, with Christian parents, with friends, co-workers and spiritual overseers, that they long to be around these Christians for instruction and guidance in the Word of God. These Christians will deny themselves certain pleasures in life to prayerfully read and study the Word of God. They pray not only revelation of God’s Word, but illumination of the Word so they can have the Lord’s strength to live it out. These Christians find themselves getting victory over the flesh, overcoming the world, and exposing the lies of the devil.

They find peace in the way they use the Lord’s provision, talents, and abilities the Lord has given them. The guidance of the Holy Spirit as He illuminates the Word of God in their lives enables them to walk victoriously rather than stumbling over the temptations and in the trials of life.

Pastor Rick Warren very rightfully observed that there are three things that rob people from enjoying Christmas. They are guilt, grief, and grudges.

Satan has a way of bringing up past regrets around Christmas time. He uses family members, co-workers and even those in the church to point out past sins of people. The great news is that if the child of God has confessed his sin to the Lord and is producing the fruit of repentance, then those sins are not held against him anymore. The Holy Spirit wrote through Ezekiel, “But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. (Ezekiel 18:21-22) The prophet Micah gives this promise of God regarding the sins of the repentant, God will “...hurl all [their] iniquities into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:19) (The Expositors Bible Commentary; Matthew Henry)

It is like the Lord takes those sins that have been confessed and turned from, calls them up on the computer screen, highlights them, and pushes the delete button. The list of sins goes blank. Sins unknown or repented for will not be recalled by the Lord.

Christmas time is that time of the year when grief haunts many. Loved ones that have passed on, and broken relationships lurk around each corner. Unmet expectations hit hard at this time of the year. Every Christian has a cross to bear and they must bear it daily. (Luke 9:23) However, because of Christ they do not have to bear it alone. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29)

Roy Fowler saw an illustration that shows so clearly how Christians try to live. While in the Philippines he saw the driver of a caribou wagon stop for a very old man who was carrying a heavy load. The driver offered the old man a ride for free. Carefully the old gentleman accepted. He got into the wagon and held on to the rails but never set his load he down in the wagon.

So many Christians are carrying a big load and they refuse to lay it into Jesus' hands. They live miserable lives and carry unnecessary burdens, hoping to hold on until they get to heaven.

There are plenty of rewards here on this earth for Christians who will just lay their burdens into Jesus hands. Christians are called to take Christ's yoke upon them. Christians cannot find rest if they are looking only for personal comfort and escape from Christian duty, for this will make them restless and miserable. They will only find ease as they give themselves and what has been given to them to the service of Jesus Christ. (The Pulpit Commentary)

As afflictions in Christ abound and are prolonged, consolations abound and perseverance is given by Jesus as long as Christians go to Him as teacher for He invites them to be His students. (Matthew Henry Commentary)

As Christians throw off the yoke of the flesh, the world and the lies of the devil, they find that Jesus' yoke is easy and fashioned just for them to make them Christ-like. Jesus said "My yoke is easy." (Matthew 11:30) "Easy" (*chrestos*) means well fitting. It is not harsh or galling nor will it put a callous on the spiritual heart. (The Complete Bible Dictionary; William Barclay; The Preachers Outline & Sermon Bible)

As Christians carry their cross they must bear and lay their burdens into the hands of Jesus Christ and allow what He is taking them through to mold them into His image. They will find that the yoke He puts on them is easy.

The yoke refers to oxen's yoke. The yoke was a wooden collar-like instrument placed on the neck and shoulders of the oxen. It was extremely important that the yoke be fitted for the shoulders of the oxen to prevent rubbing the flesh raw and causing sores. Measurements were taken, the yoke was roughed out and then oxen were brought back to have the yoke tailor-made. According to some traditions, some carpenter's shop may very well have carried signs like "My yoke fits well." (William Barclay; The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible)

The yoke refers to a man's life and task as he lives on this earth. Jesus is saying to take on His yoke, not the yoke of the flesh, the world, or the devil's lies. His yoke will fit Christians perfectly, making them useful to the life and task that He has planned for them down here. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible)

Whatever God has you facing right now is made to fit you perfectly. You have the Spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities to handle everything He allows you to go through. Therefore, lay your grief into His loving hands and surrender to His will for you.

Grudges and resentful are keeping many from enjoying Christmas. People, who have been hurt, hurt others by what they say, what they do, and even with their presence. This is done intentionally and unintentionally, and how Christians respond to that hurt will determine their level of happiness in this life, especially around Christmas time. Very few people walk continuously and victoriously over the sin of resentment. It so easily entangles, and can grip you at a moment's notice.

Jesus gives us a powerful truth that must be grasped in forgiving. He says, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:14-15) This passage of Scripture is found in the teaching of Jesus Christ's teaching about prayer, just before His teachings on fasting.

One of the most cheerful men of God I have ever known of in ministry was Dr. Bill Bright, a man whom I am convinced allowed the Lord to teach Him much about prayer and fasting. Dr. Bill Bright is the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. I remember being around him a little in Louisville, Kentucky. I watched the ministry he had overseen for some time. I once heard him say that it was through fasting and prayer that the Holy Spirit of God enabled Him to release all resentment toward everyone who had ever hurt him in any way.

He was most certainly the most joyful man in ministry that I have ever known about. He testified once, "The Holy Spirit has given me the ability to not hold grudges, there is absolutely not one person or circumstance in my life that I am resentful over."

The Holy Spirit wants Christians to know the joy of Christmas by becoming like Jesus, letting Him clear their hearts of any guilt, take their grief upon himself, and free them freed from all grudges so that they can have a joyous Christmas spirit.

Gift of God is eternal life

The Christ of Christmas most certainly wants Christians to know His peace. He wants all to have the gift of eternal life.

Everyone is going to die someday. The Bible says, “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,” (Hebrews 9:27) Everyone who has ever been conceived in his mother’s womb has eternal existence. It is up to each individual to decide just where they are going to spend it. The choice is heaven or hell.

The fact is everyone is going to spend more time on the other side of this life than is spent here. Some will live fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety and maybe even a 100 years on this side. The other side is forever.

Romans 6:23 says, “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

The Devil is a paymaster and he will make sure you suffer the consequences of sin. Those wages are death, and eternal separation from God. Through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit Christians enjoy the gift of eternal life in heaven.

Christianity is not the stage that someone has reached but always the direction of life that a saved man is heading. Instead of living a life that is bondage to sin, it is a life reaching out to and obtaining righteousness. It is a life fed by the Word of God, Illuminated by the Holy Spirit. A man’s talents, abilities, possessions and Holy Spirit gifts are spent for the glory of God, and not on self and the accumulation of worldly wealth.

Receiving the Gift of God, Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, offers three wonderful gifts. He clears the Christian’s past, takes care of him in his present state in life, and secures his future here and in eternity.

The Baptist Standard ran the true story of a man whom, I believe, came to understand that Jesus was the only person who could give him the forgiveness he sought, comfort in his most difficult circumstance and determination of where his eternal existence will be.

There was a poor drunkard who awakened one morning in a strange kind of bed. He felt something near him that was warm and soft, which was much different from his usual sleeping place in an alley somewhere. Finally it dawned on him that he was in a stable lying right beside a cow which was also lying in the straw beside him.

He was hungry, but realized that those in the street would be too offended by his low sinful condition to give him any breakfast. Then he heard those familiar Christmas bells that rang every year on Christmas morning. He realized that he had spent Christmas Eve night in a stable.

His thoughts turned to that story of Christ being born in a stable. He thought maybe the Christ who was born in a lowly place could help a poor fellow like himself, for he had heard the story of the birth of Christ and the gospel message before. So right then and there he chose to get down on his knees and invite Jesus into his life and heart. He chose to receive the gift of free forgiveness, a Savior who could understand and minister to him right where he was in life and determine where his eternal existence would be. He found Christ at Christmas.

What will you find this Christmas? Jesus offers forgiveness, empowerment for all of life situations and circumstances. He offers a life of true satisfaction and life spent forever with God the Father, Jesus the Son and a fellowship in the Holy Spirit. What will you find this Christmas?

Let us pray!

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