

Christmas: God Gave the Greatest gift of All Have you opened your present? Forgiveness John 3:16

Jesus is the greatest person who has ever lived; each year we celebrate His Birth as the coming of our salvation.

Salvation is the greatest gift of all.

Salvation is the only gift that everyone really needs.

Salvation is presented to us as the ultimate Christmas gift in what is perhaps the best known verse of the Bible. Why not say that verse with me, it is John 3:16.

John 3:16 "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."

JOHN 3:16

During World War I the newspapers ran the story of a letter found in the pocket of a soldier who had been killed in action. As his pockets were emptied and mailed to his mother, these words were found by her written on the back of a letter:

"The Greatest Verse in the Bible"

For God—the Greatest Lover

So loved—the Greatest Love

The World—the Greatest company

That He gave—the Greatest Event (which is Christmas)

His only begotten Son—the Greatest Gift

That whosoever—the Greatest Offer

Believeth in Him—the Greatest Simplicity

Should not Perish—the Greatest Security

But Have Everlasting Life—the Greatest Possession

This Christmas do you have that greatest security? Do you know that you have received the greatest possession of all—Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Sometimes Christmas is especially hard for those who compare what they want with what others get. But the good news is that as a Christian, God has given us everything in Christ.

All we have to do is unwrap and experience all that He has given to us.

UNOPENED PRESENTS

All of us who are saved, born again, and believers in Jesus Christ this morning have received a gift—the greatest gift. But the question we need to answer this morning is have you opened that gift. Salvation has many wonderful elements—each like a special present. Are you opening your presents?

I'll never forget my first Christmas on staff at Grace Community Church; it was an unforgettable lesson. I was busily preparing gifts for each of my fellow staff members. As I came into my office I saw a book on my desk, glancing up I saw that my copy of that commentary on Galatians was up on the shelf in its place. Thinking it was just an extra copy I had been given by someone, I wrapped it up and made it a part of my gift pile. Soon all the gifts were passed out among the thirty plus pastors on staff at Grace that I served alongside.

Then came the embarrassing moment; a few days later, as John MacArthur, the pastor of that church I served came to my door holding that same commentary of Galatians in his hand. He said, "What's wrong—didn't you like your present?" I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I gave you this book as your Christmas gift, wrote you a note of encouragement inside, left it for you on your desk—and you gave it away to someone else!"

Oh how badly I felt, to never have even opened the special gift that I was given. Many of us believers have a similar experience with salvation. We have been given the only gift that everyone really needs. We receive Christ's salvation—but so many stop there. They just sit and hold this priceless gift in its beautiful package, but never really open it up and get into what God has given.

Salvation is a package that contains a lifetime of never ending joys and delights as we partake of Christ, finding Him our daily portion.

But how often do we only glance at them and think that we already have "done that [been saved]"—and do not grow in 'grace and the knowledge" of all that Christ's death accomplished for us?

Our spiritual lives are all about a life long search in God's Word to find and by faith embrace these gifts.

These gifts are opened by faith one by one as we see who we have become in Christ. So the Christ of Christmas is the start of a lifetime of priceless treasures, given to us freely by God above.

Be sure you have opened your presents this Christmas, given by Jesus.

START A NEW SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

If you have never tried this I'd encourage you to start a new dimension of your spiritual life by opening your gifts. Let me share with you one of the more wonderful spiritual exercises you can ever do.

As you begin each day, each month, and as we come to the end of this month—as you begin a new year, one of our greatest privileges is to open and enjoy the gift of salvation God has given to us. By faith we please God when we believe what He's said about us. We need to not live by what others say or have said about us all your life.

Satan is the Accuser and wants us to only remember all the many times we have fallen; Satan delights in the days, weeks, or months he can keep us condemning ourselves for what we've done. That is his plan, so don't fall for it. Resist Satan as you believe the truth; speak the truth; and preach the Gospel to yourself.

And when ever we fall down, God says to just turn back to Him and repent, confessing our sin immediately--and believe that what God has promised in His salvation. We are forgiven, justified, regenerated, reconciled, adopted, redeemed, and sanctified. That makes us precious in His sight, special in His plan.

One of the most powerful habits you could grow is to take this list of the ramifications of having received the only gift everyone really needs and rejoice by faith in your great salvation!

Keep this list in your Bible, at home, on your computer, put one on your mirror where you start your day, and in your car. Where ever you need to keep reminding yourself of what great things God has promised and done through Christ's death for us!

Slowly as you understand and lay hold on these truths a life-changing transformation take place in our minds, and then in our emotions, and finally throughout our entire life as we live each day based on God's eternal truth.

As you think about Christmas, gifts, presents, giving and receiving—why not check and be sure that you are opening the only gift that you (and everyone else) really needs? It starts as we:

OPEN THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

Because of our sin—we are all debtors to God's Righteousness; so we need forgiveness.

Forgiveness. Nothing matters more to any who have sinned—and God says all have sinned.

One moment before your last breath, one thing will matter more than anything else—whether you are dying forgiven or unforgiven.

The peace you can have one moment before you die is available on a daily basis if you understand what God has done in Christ and if you choose to respond by faith to Him.

In Forgiveness we go from hopelessly offending God stained by sin to the peace of complete forgiveness.

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God is a God who offers His children complete forgiveness. Trace with me again those life giving words in your hearts as I read them to you.

Then repeat the truth of what God has done!

- *"... as far as the east is from the west, **so far has he removed our transgressions from us**". (Psalm 103:12). God said all my sins are gone. Say that aloud with me.*
- *"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, **They shall be as white** as snow; Though they are red like crimson, **They shall be as wool.**" (Is. 1:18). I am white as snow in God's sight. Say that aloud with me.*
- *"For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**" (Jeremiah 31:34b). God has forgotten all my sins. Say that aloud with me.*
- *"She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "**Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.**" (John 8:11). "There is therefore now **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 8:1). Jesus will never condemn me for my sins. Say that aloud with me.*

This morning celebrate your forgiveness that is only in Christ.

OPEN THE GIFT OF JUSTIFICATION

Because of our sin—we are all guilty convicts in God's sight; so we need justification.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take guilty convicts and destroy any record that that ever committed a crime and takes their place in the punishment—**that's**

justification! A Sinner stands before God as accused and is declared righteous by His imputed righteousness.

In Justification we go from being accused and guilty before God to being righteous and with no record of wrongs!

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has once and for all through Christ's sacrifice justified us. That means that He has accused us, declared us guilty of sin and then made us righteous and forever deleted the record of all our wrongs.

- *Romans 8: 33-34* "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." I have been justified and by Christ justifying me and because the record has been erased—I am free forever from condemnation. Say that aloud with me
- *1 Corinthians 6: 17* "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." By Christ justifying me—I am forever united with the Lord. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 1: 4* "... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love". By Christ justifying me—I was chosen by Jesus to be holy and blameless in his sight. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 2: 6* "...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". By Christ justifying me—I am already seated with Christ in Heaven. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 3: 12* "... in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him". By Christ justifying me—I can always approach God with confidence. Say that aloud with me
- *Colossians 3: 3* "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God". By Christ justifying me—I am safely hidden with Christ in God. Say that aloud with me
- *Hebrews 4: 15-16* "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." By Christ justifying me—I always have His grace and help. Say that aloud with me

OPEN THE GIFT OF REGENERATION

Because of our sin—we are all dead in our trespasses and sin; so we need regeneration.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take us who are dead in our sins, bring us to life and welcome us as family members, full of endless life and brand new—**that's regeneration!**

In Regeneration we go from dead and decaying to alive and overflowing.

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God Himself has regenerated us. That means that He has sought us out in our dead and decaying condition, breathed eternal life into us, and brought us into His family by the new birth. Then He comes to live within us so we are forever having an abundant and overflowing, eternal life.

- *1 Corinthians 12:27 "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually".* Because Jesus regenerated me—I am a member of Christ's Body. Say that aloud with me
- *2 Corinthians 1:21 "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God".* Because Jesus regenerated me—I am established, anointed and sealed by God. Say that aloud with me
- *Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".* Because Jesus regenerated me—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Say that aloud with me
- *Colossians 2:10 "...and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power".* Because Jesus regenerated me—I am complete in Christ. Say that aloud with me
- *1 John 5:18 "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him".* Because Jesus regenerated me—I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me. Say that aloud with me

OPEN THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION

Because of our sin—we are all enemies of God; so we need reconciliation.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take enemies and make them friends—**that's reconciliation!** A Sinner stands before God as an enemy and is made a friend by His peace.

In Reconciliation we go from being an enemy at war with God to being His treasured friend!

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has ended His war against us in our sin by Christ's reconciling sacrifice and has established not a truce, He has made us His treasured friend.

- *Ephesians 1:6 "... to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved".* Because Jesus reconciled me—I am accepted In Christ Jesus. Say that aloud with me
- *John 15:15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you".* Because Jesus reconciled me—I am Christ's friend. Say that aloud with me
- *2 Corinthians 5:17-20 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God".* Because Jesus reconciled me—I am Christ's ambassador of reconciliation. Say that aloud with me

OPEN THE GIFT OF ADOPTION

Because of our sin—we are all strangers to God; so we need adoption.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take strangers and make them part of the family—**that's adoption!** A Sinner stands before God as a stranger and is called a Son by His choice.

In Adoption we go from being a stranger and an outsider to being His son or daughter and in partnership with Him!

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has taken me from being a stranger outside of His presence and blessing and has made me his child and the son and daughter of His family in partnership with Him.

- *Ephesians 1:5 "... having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."* I have been adopted by God. Say that aloud with me
- *John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name".* Because I was adopted by God—I am God's child. Say that aloud with me
- *John 6:47 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life".* Because I was adopted by God—I have everlasting life. Say that aloud with me

- *John 10:10* "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly". Because I was adopted by God—I have abundant life. Say that aloud with me
- *John 15:15* "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you". Because I was adopted by God—I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life. Say that aloud with me
- *Romans 8:17* "... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together". Because I was adopted by God—I am an heir of God, and co-heir with Christ. Say that aloud with me
- *Romans 8:28* "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose". Because I was adopted by God—God is working everything in my lifetime out for His good. Say that aloud with me
- *Romans 8:29* "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren". Because I was adopted by God—I am being conformed into Christ's likeness. Say that aloud with me
- *Philippians 3:20* "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ". Because I was adopted by God—I am a citizen of heaven. Say that aloud with me

OPEN THE GIFT OF REDEMPTION

Because of our sin—we are all slaves to unrighteousness; so we need redemption.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take slaves and make them freed forever—**that's redemption!** A Sinner stands before God as a slave and is granted freedom by Christ's payment.

Christ's death to pay the price of our sin is so wonderful that we, the redeemed of all the ages will be joined by the angels so that together we may sing a new song, as Revelation records:

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5: 9–12)

In Redemption we go from being a slave chained to our sins to complete freedom by God and a new focus.

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has liberated us from our slavery to sin, broken sins chains that long had enslaved us and freed us to focus our lives on what really matters to Him.

- *1 Corinthians 6:20* "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's". Christ bought me with a price—I belong to God. Say that aloud with me
- *Philippians 1:6* "...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ". Because Christ bought me in redemption—God will finish what He started in me. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 2:10* "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them". Because Christ bought me in redemption—I am God's workmanship. Say that aloud with me

OPEN THE GIFT OF SANCTIFICATION

Because of our sin—we are all defiled; so we need sanctification.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take our soiled and misdirected lives that always get wasted and make them clean, focused and fruitful—**that's sanctification!**

In Sanctification we go from our formerly wasted and empty life to holy purposeful life.

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has come into me and taken over my wasted life and made me new, entered my empty life and filled it with Himself to make me holy and filled with His purposes more and more until He gets me Home.

- *John 15:16* "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you". Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I have been chosen by God to bear fruit. Say that aloud with me
- *Acts 1:8* "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I am a personal witness for Christ. Say that aloud with me

- *Romans 8:35* "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I will never be separated from the love of God. Say that aloud with me
- *1 Corinthians 3:16* "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I am God's temple. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 1:1* "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus". Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I am a saint. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 1:13* "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, you are marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit". Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I am sealed and marked by the promises of God. Say that aloud with me
- *Ephesians 2:18* "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father". Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit. Say that aloud with me
- *Colossians 3:12* "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering". Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I can wear Christ's love every day.
- *2 Timothy 1:7* "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind". Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—I never need to fear again. Say that aloud with me

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