

“WHY CHRISTMAS IS A GIFT WE CAN'T REFUSE”

2nd In Series: “Why Christmas Is Not Optional”

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INTRODUCTION:

This Christmas season we are taking a closer look at why “Christmas” - in it's truest and purest significance – is NOT optional for us to understand and respond to in kind. Last week, we began by re-examining what really happened, why it happened precisely the way it did, and what that really means to us. **This morning, we will more closely examine why Christmas can and perhaps should be described as “A Gift We Can't Refuse.”**

Which is not intended to be understood as a gift we are incapable of refusing, but rather as a gift that: on one hand, is much too great and valuable to refuse (kind of like '*the giveaway that nobody will want to miss*'); and, on the other hand, is an offer that to refuse would result in unimaginably unpleasant consequences that cannot otherwise be avoided or reversed (sort of like *putting yourself under the 'protection' and 'provision' of the mafia*). **How we respond to the true meaning and significance of Christmas is – as we'll see this morning – a choice between choosing the blessings of a Holy and Loving God committed to honor His rules and expectations; OR choosing instead a life under the auspices of the Devil committed to his rules and expectations with it's short-term deceptions of glamor, prestige, power and earthly fortune and long-term never-forgotten or paid debts and obligations!** (*repeat*)

There is NO middle ground or other options. We can pretend and even convince ourselves there are, but that is not reality and sooner or later reality WILL inevitably claim us.

SCRIPTURE: 1 JOHN 3:1-10 (cont'd)

PRAYER

WE NEED THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS FOR:

I.) **SALVATION**

- **Illustration:** “One day, when Vice-President Calvin Coolidge was presiding over the Senate, one senator angrily told another to go 'straight to hell.' The offended Senator complained to Coolidge as presiding officer, and Coolidge looked up from the book he had been leafing through while listening to the debate and wittily replied, 'I've looked through the rule book, you don't have to go.’”
- **The gift of Christmas is that we don't have to live eternally disowned and separated from God!**
- Born on this day is the Savior, the One and only one who can save, deliver, rescue, help us in our distress, and set us free from that which separates us from Him and His full blessings: SIN
- **Isaiah 53:2-7** *He grew up before Him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or splendor that we should look at Him, no appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like one people turned*

away from; He was despised, and we didn't value Him. Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth.

- **Luke 19:10** *For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."*
- **Acts 4:8-12** *Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man--by what means he was healed-- let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene--whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead--by Him this man is standing here before you healthy. This Jesus is The stone despised by you builders, who has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."*
- **Hebrews 7:24-26** *But because He remains forever, He holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them. For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*
- It is true, there can be no salvation without forgiveness of sins, but salvation is even more than that! Forgiveness of sins is a necessary requirement whereby salvation can be attained, but it is not salvation itself. Biblical salvation is the process and reality of being saved and delivered from a life enslaved to sin and separated from God to a life restored to be lived in perfect union, or fellowship, with Jesus!
- Being cleansed of our sin makes salvation possible, but salvation is living in the fullness of a new, restored, intimate and righteous relationship with Him!
- **It is not just being called 'His children' but remaining in Him in all ways and all times as we live as His children.**

II.) **ADOPTION**

- The Bible teaches that when we are saved from our sins, we are also correspondingly adopted by God as His children.
- Of course, to be adopted means that we had a different natural father who has disowned, neglected and/or abused us. Scripture tells us clearly and directly (v. 10) that this is the Devil. We are born 'in the flesh' and our 'fleshly father' is the Devil. Whether or not we like it, chose it, or even acknowledge it, it is the situation we were born into.
- **We must receive the gift of Christmas in order that we may be saved from this horrible fate that we have no control over and instead be adopted by God into His family! ALL of us!**

- Thus, as Christians, we share the same **Father** and are all spiritual **siblings**. Together, as a church, we are God's **Family**. We are eternally **bound** together, related by Jesus' **blood** and under the authority of our Heavenly Father. **We must act and treat one another accordingly.** We must realize that, as God's children, He has bestowed special opportunities and responsibilities upon us and we are the heirs of His grace and blessings!
- This divine passage in 1 John that we have been looking at, instructs us that being God's 'children' has even greater significance. It means that it is for us to carry on and represent His Name and reputation!
- **Like salvation, our adoption is for an even greater purpose. It is not and never was intended as a one-time blessing or a static, unchanging life of privilege. Above all, we are to honor our Heavenly Father by living our lives before others in a consistent manner that accurately represents Him, His values, His character and that promotes His glory!**

We do this through . . .

III.) **VICTORIOUS LIVING**

- This concept, Victorious Living to the honor of Jesus Christ, is the primary focus and instruction of this passage in 1 John that we have spent these 2 weeks examining. Everything else is the foundation necessary to produce this ultimate purpose!
- Of particular concern to the time and audience of John's original, inspired writing was the danger presented by false teachers who were saying and encouraging things that may have sounded like good news and wonderful encouragement, but in reality would result in just the opposite.
- The **first** thing these false teachers were promoting was the idea that the pre-existent Son of God, Jesus Christ, did not come in the flesh. This, in turn, led by extension to a **second false** teaching which presented a view of the Christian life as one in which the physical and spiritual are disconnected and separate. We dealt with both of these challenges and Scripture's response last week. In short, Christ's incarnation confirms and assures that the physical and spiritual **are** to be intertwined as well as our being and doing.
- The **third false** teaching that needed to be addressed was the rejection of any notion of sinlessness among those spiritually reborn by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Rather, they argued that because of the separation of physical and spiritual, some sin is both inevitable and not really your fault. In other words, your body will still inevitably do some things that are sinful, but that's no longer the 'real you.' The 'real you' is spiritual, which is separate from and 'above' the physical. Therefore, even as your physical body may be defiled your spiritual self is not. It is this lie and God's truth that we will focus on for the rest of this morning's message.

1.) **There Are No Sinless Christians**

- **1John 1:8** *If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
- **1Jn 1:10** *If we say, "We have not sinned," we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*
- Let us not be deceived by false teachers or even ourselves. Sins of the body, mind or spirit can not be separated or compartmentalized. !

2.) **God's Born-Again Children Have An Advocate**

- Even in full and true awareness of our sins and sinfulness, there is hope and an opportunity for victory in grace through faith in Jesus Christ!
- **1John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- **1John 2:1** *My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father--Jesus Christ the righteous One.*

3.) **His True Children Will Live In Purity**

- **1John 3:3-11** *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure. Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law; sin is the breaking of law. You know that He was revealed so that He might take away sins, and there is no sin in Him. Everyone who remains in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you! The one who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous. The one who commits sin is of the Devil, for the Devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil's works. Everyone who has been born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him; he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God. This is how God's children--and the Devil's children--are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another,*
- We will always during this life in the flesh struggle with the opportunity and temptation to sin. Yet, if we are His children born-again in His Spirit, we will always seek a life that honor's Him, always fight and resist sin in the new, more-than-sufficient power that He has given us. We may yet stumble and fall, but we will never ignore, justify, accept or minimize our failure.
- Rather, the moment we recognize our sin for what it is we reject it, turn completely away from it and seek Him in broken confession that He may restore our purity. We then commit ourselves anew to take any and all extra precautions to never repeat our sin and destroy our purity.
- In this way, though our lives may be imperfect in all it's steps, our life as a whole is one that identifies us as sons of the Heavenly Father – not just in name, but in character, heart and purpose!
- The often misunderstood and mis-interpreted **verse 6** in 1 John 3, seen in it's full context here, re-affirms and summarizes this truth.
- To “**remain**” in Christ is to live in such a way as to be ever-focused on Him, ever-committed to Him, ever-conforming to His will and character, and ever-devoted to bringing Him honor and glory.
- Both references to 'sin' ('sins') in this verse appear in the original Greek in a continuous present tense. In other words, it directly refers not to a single occurrence but rather to a habitual, or regular, or common re-occurrence or lifestyle that is marked by any sin. It is the difference between having uncharacteristically lied on one specific occasion and being a liar by nature and regular practice.
- **By grace through faith in Jesus Christ we are saved! How we live – our focus, purpose, character, following – is both the evidence of our true spiritual state and familial identity!**
- Though our lives can never earn our salvation or adoption, they do testify and present the evidence of the truth and fulness of it!

- **1John 1:4-7** *We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him. If we say, "We have fellowship with Him," and walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*
- **1John 2:3-17** *This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked. Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn't know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have had victory over the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, God's word remains in you, and you have had victory over the evil one. Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle--is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God's will remains forever.*

HOW WILL WE RESPOND TO CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR?

When we come right down to it, Scripture is clear that the ONLY way any of us can honor or celebrate the true Christmas is through unconditionally and forever accepting God's Greatest Gift. We unwrap this gift when we accept fully in faith that it is only through His cleansing power exercised through His incarnation, sacrificial death, and resurrection that we may be saved from eternal corruption and death and receive instead eternal life in full fellowship with Him as His children and heirs.

There is NO question that even if we stop there, the gift of salvation is ours and nobody and nothing can take that away.! YET, if we do stop there, we foolishly deprive ourselves of the real gift that salvation opens up to us: a transformed, perpetually growing and more blessed victorious life through which each day we come to greater resemble and honor our Heavenly Father!

So says the Word of God, and so I believe!