

“A REALITY CHRISTMAS GIFT”

2 Corinthians 9:15

INTRODUCTION

1. No doubt about it... in the next few days, you'll hear one word more often than just about any other. The most often used word at Christmas is *“gift.”*

Eg. I'm tempted to do a little survey today. How many of you are still looking for just the right gift for the right person at the right price?

2. Every once in a while, you hear someone say , *“What do you get the person who has everything?”* Well, I came across a list of possible gifts you might buy for the person who has everything... that is, if you can afford it.

Eg. You might buy that special person a vehicle known as a *“rinspeed splash.”*

Forget the Bentley, the Rolls Royce or the Ferrari. This car not only travels on land, but with a touch of a button, it can also travel on water. And because of a unique hydraulic system, it can fly about two feet above the surface of the water. The cost? Only \$4 ½ million.

What do you buy the woman who has everything? How about a 132 carat diamond necklace that has seven diamonds with seven separate colors including yellow, pink, and two shades of blue - one for every day of the week. It only costs a measly \$21 million for the woman of your dreams.

Eg. Do you know the record for the most expensive Christmas gift in the world? It's the Phoenix 1000 - a 213 foot personal luxury submarine. I'm told it's the largest

private underwater vehicle ever built with a total interior of 5,000 square feet. It comes complete with a small automobile and even a mini-sub with its on docking area that can take your guests 2,000 feet below sea level. This could be yours for that special someone for only \$78 million.

3. Well, most of us won't go anywhere near gifts like that this Christmas. One wise guy said, *“Christmas is a time when we exchange a whole lot of gifts we really like - for a load we don't especially want.”*

4. Whether your approach to gift giving is sincere or cynical, Christmas most likely involves gifts. The most costly gift ever given at Christmas was given by God. Do you realize that the tradition of gift giving was established by God Himself on that very first Christmas?

This morning, we discover that the gift God gave us is beyond description. That's what Paul says when he writes to the Corinthians in II Corinthians, chapter 9.

If you have a copy of the Scriptures, I'd invite you to turn to one short verse in II Corinthians 9 that reminds us of the gift God gave us that first Christmas.

Have you ever received a gift that was beyond description? Have you ever looked at a gift and thought, *“This is just beautiful...it's something I've wanted all my life”*? Or maybe you've received a gift that carried all kinds of emotion like a diamond ring.

5. I want you to notice what Paul says about the gift God gave us on that first Christmas 2,000 years ago. Notice verse 15.

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”
(2 Corinthians 9:15).

Now don't misunderstand. Musicians have tried to describe God's gift to us. Some of the greatest music ever written like, Handel's "Messiah" and carols we love to sing like, "O Holy Night" or "Silent Night" describe that gift. Almost every store and restaurant you enter at this time of the year is playing some of the great music of the season.

Poets and painters have tried to describe the gift God gave us that first Christmas, but the Apostle Paul calls that gift "*indescribable*." Do you know why? I want to unpack four reasons why the gift God gave us on that first Christmas is an indescribable gift. First of all, the Bible tells us . . .

1. GOD OFFERS US A PERSONAL GIFT.

My wife and I have been married 33 years. I learned something a few years ago. It's important for me to give her what she wants -not what I want her to have. I've learned what she likes and dislikes over the years.

Did you ever get a gift you really didn't want? We have a technical term at Christmas to describe a gift nobody wants. You know what it is? "Fruitcake!"

Did you ever give a box of candy to someone who was a diabetic? Or did you ever give a tie to somebody who only wears jogging suits?

You see, when God gave His gift to us on that first Christmas, it was just what we needed. He could have given us other nice gifts, like broccoli that tastes like chocolate, but what He gave us on that first Christmas was exactly what we needed.

You see, the Bible says God knows each one of us personally. Look at these words in Psalm 139.

“O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways”
(Psalm 139:1-3, NASB).

When you think about it, God knows every one of us intimately. He is not a mystical “higher power” who cannot relate to us. He couldn't possibly have made Himself bigger to impress us, so He came to earth as a baby to identify with us.

Eg. Someone said it like this.

“Christmas is the powerful grip of a tiny hand reaching from a bed of straw. It is love, tugging our hearts back to God.”

Look at these words in Matthew 1:23

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel" - which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Here's the point: Whatever personal need you have, God can meet! The writer of Hebrews said it like this:

“God has said, I will never leave you; I will never abandon you” (Hebrews 13:5, NCV).

The gift God offers us at Christmas is a personal gift.

2. GOD ALSO OFFERS US A PRACTICAL GIFT.

Most of us receive one or two gifts each year that are completely useless.

Eg. I heard about one woman who stuck her Christmas list to the refrigerator door so her husband would see it. She knew he needed some very basic instructions, so she only asked for “*something that would make me slim and beautiful.*”

When Christmas arrived, she couldn’t wait to open the package that would be gorgeous and just for her. You know what she got? An exercise bike!

You know, sometimes we get what we deserve at Christmas, but God gave us something we didn’t deserve. Look at these words from Romans 6:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

God’s practical gift for us is **forgiveness**.

At Christmas, most of us work hard to make our homes look nice. We clean up and decorate and prepare for special celebrations. Some of us even get a haircut or a new hairdo to make us look better on the outside for the holidays. Do you know that God is far more concerned about the inside? Jesus said it like this in Matthew 5:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

His gift changes you and me from the inside out. David prayed these powerful words when he looked at his own life:

“Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God”

(Psalm 51:9,10a).

You may have come to this room this morning with great baggage in your life. Maybe you have a whole list of decisions you regret. If the spotlight of truth were turned on your life today, you’d love to erase the past.

Do you realize when God gave us His first Christmas gift, He addressed all of those issues for us. The angel said in Luke 2:

*“Today in the town of David **a Savior** has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:11).

Eg. I love these old words:

“If our greatest need had been education, God would have given us a teacher. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have given us a scientist.

If our greatest need had been money God would have given us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have given us an entertainer.

But our greatest need is forgiveness, and God gave us a Savior.”

God’s Christmas gift is the only gift everybody can enjoy. A fisherman wouldn’t be very excited about new golf clubs. And, a golfer wouldn’t be too excited about receiving a rod and reel for Christmas.

God gave us the one Christmas gift everybody can enjoy. It’s eternally practical. When Jesus came to this earth, He came as the Savior.

What does that mean? It means, He came to save us from the penalty of the sin we have committed against a

perfect God! You talk about a practical gift! It's no wonder Jesus said in John 6:35:

“Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty’” (John 6:35).

God offers you and me a personal gift. He offers us a practical gift. But there's a third characteristic of the gift God offers us at Christmas...

3. GOD OFFERS US A PERMANENT GIFT.

Eg. Maybe nothing is more disappointing at Christmas than receiving a gift that isn't going to last very long. Children can receive expensive toys, but at the end of Christmas Day, they end up playing with the boxes or the wrapping paper. Sometimes, the presents break before we've had a chance to use them much.

Sometimes, the presents we give don't represent a lot of thought. Just ask the wife whose husband gives her a stapled-shut bag from the neighborhood 7-Eleven that contains an assortment of candy bars, breath mints, windshield replacement blades and a receipt that indicates the purchase was made 27 minutes earlier.

God's gift to us doesn't last for just a little while... it's permanent. It won't go back in the box or back to the shop. Jesus said God gives us “*eternal life.*” I love these words in I John 5:

“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (I John 5:11b-13).

Eg. I read about a little boy who was misbehaving around Christmas. His dad warned him if he continued to disobey, he'd have to live with the consequences.

The little boy looked at his dad and said, “*Please don't make me live with the consequences. I want to live with you and mommy.*” Folks, our Heavenly Father, knows that every one of us is in danger. We are at risk at living with eternal consequences because of our rebellion. We are at risk of being eternally separated from Him. That's why God sent the greatest gift of all - His Son, Jesus - to this earth so you and I could experience eternal life forever with Him.

I love these words of Jesus in John 5:

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

Someone said it like this:

“Life without Christ is a hopeless end, but life with Christ is an endless hope.”

That's right.

God offers you and me a personal gift, a practical gift and a permanent gift. There's one more characteristic of the gift God offers us at Christmas...

4. GOD OFFERS US A PRICELESS GIFT.

The gift God gave us was free, but it was not cheap. It came at a huge cost. We could not save ourselves from the impact of our own sin, so God sent His son to rescue us.

When Jesus died, he fully paid the debt we owe God so that we could experience forgiveness from God. Look at these words in John 1:29:

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

I love these words of Romans 3 from the New Living Translation:

“God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding His blood” (Romans 3:25a, NLT).

Eg. One Christmas, a grandmother could not decide what gift to give her three grandchildren. She decided to simply put a check for \$25 in each card with a message that read, *“Buy your own gift.”* She wrote a note in the card, put the card in an envelope, and mailed the card. To her surprise, she found the three checks under some newspapers. She’d forgotten to put the checks in with the cards.

When her children received their Christmas cards, they opened them and reading the shocking message, *“Buy your own gift.”*

Folks, here’s the shocking truth of the Gospel. Jesus Christ has bought our gift for us through His death on the cross. God spent everything He had on us. John says it like this:

“...God... sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Eg. Every once in a while, I open a Christmas present with three little words that spell frustration for me. The words are,

“Some assembly required.”

Eg. Recently, I read about a man who ordered a tree-house for his kids. It arrived and the time came for him to assemble it. He laid out all the parts on the floor and began reading the instructions.

To his dismay, however, he discovered while the instructions for a tree-house were there, the parts were for a boat. He sent an angry letter the next day to the company complaining about the mix-up. Here’s the response he received:

“We’re truly sorry for the error and the inconvenience. However, it might cheer you up to remember that somewhere there is a man out on a lake trying to sail your tree-house.”

Do you understand that God does not expect us to assemble our own kit of forgiveness. He has provided the instructions and He has provided the plan for forgiveness. The plan is accomplished already through the death of Jesus Christ. And the instructions are simple - we receive God’s free gift to us.

He doesn’t force Himself on any of us. He offers the gift of His forgiveness and a relationship with Him forever, if we’ll accept it. It’s amazingly simple - even a child can understand. We accept God’s gift of forgiveness through Christ by believing in what He’s done for us.

Eg. In 1976, I stood before a pastor who asked me a question, “*Will you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?*” The best human decision I ever made was when I said, “Yes.”

Then, that pastor turned to my bride and asked her whether she would accept me as her husband. After some serious thought, she said, “Yes.”

At that moment, because we committed ourselves to each other, we entered a relationship that changed our lives forever.

Now listen to me: “Do you understand that 2,000 years ago, God gave an answer to the question of whether He was willing to enter a loving relationship with us? When Jesus Christ came to this earth, all of heaven shouted, “Yes.”

Now God puts the question to every one of us:

- “Are you willing to enter a relationship with Me through faith in Christ that will change your life forever?”

CONCLUSION

John said it like this:

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

At Christmas, you and I receive gifts we often don’t want or need. God offers us something we can’t do without. It is forgiveness from the One who made us, who knows all there is to know about us, who is the God of

heaven and earth. All it takes is to accept what He has done for us and receive the gift. It is a personal, practical, permanent and priceless gift available only through Jesus.

Would you bow your heads with me?

I want to ask you, “Have you received that gift God offers you?” How would you answer this question:

- Am I willing to receive God’s gift to me?