

# "THE GIFT OF LOVE"

## Selected Scriptures

I love Christmas. The colorful lights, the parade, the joy, the excitement of boys and girls, the food, and the music that fills the airwaves make this a special time of the year. Christmas is the time of year you gather with your family, enjoy favorite traditions, and make new memories. It's a day overflowing with cozy feelings, sweet reunions, and—yes—lots of love.

To others, Christmas is a day that brings up painful memories. For some that empty chair around the table reminds them of a spouse, a child, or a grandparent that has stepped into eternity. For others, Christmas is overshadowed by strained family relationships, or it is burdened with the realities of a difficult year. How can one celebrate in the middle of this kind of heartache?

No matter how you feel about the Christmas season, God's Word provides a reason to rejoice. This is the second sermon in the series, *"Experiencing the Gifts of Christmas."* Last week, we unwrapped **The Gift of Hope**. Today, we're going to unwrap **The Gift of Love**.

The gift of God's love is a Christmas gift like none other because it is an...

- **Unconditional Love:** God's love for humanity is unconditional and selfless, given without obligation or merit.
- **Unfathomable Love:** When we examine God's love and see it for it really is, it stuns us. God's gift of love cannot be repaid.
- **Unprejudiced love:** God loves those who are poor, those who are rich, those who have it together, and those who don't have it together. God loves everyone!
- **Unrestrained Love:** God's love permeates every aspect of our lives—our relationships, our finances, our careers, our leisure, our hurts, our victories, etc.
- **Unrelenting Love:** The love of God will never be cancelled by circumstances, by demonic powers, by human governments, or even by death itself.

December 8, 2024

CFBC... "Experiencing The Gifts of Christmas"

- **Unsurpassed Love:** No other love can compare to God's love. His love is for here and now and for all of eternity.

The gift of God's love is one that you must unwrap this Christmas. Will you...

## ACCEPT THE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE.

Okay, let's dig a little deeper into this magnificent subject.

**John 3:16...For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

Repeat this verse with me. There are four truths I want you to grasp as you consider unwrapping the Gift of Love.

### 1. THE REALITY OF GOD'S LOVE

**...For God so loved the world**

**God is love.** That's His character and nature. He loves every person. It matters not if they are...

- are popular or unpopular
- are good looking or not-so-good looking
- blessed with money or have no money at all
- are healthy or unhealthy
- from a good family or a bad family.

God loves all kinds of people.

**1 John 4:7–8,16... Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 16...We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**

So the question is never whether God is willing to love us—the question will always be are we willing to receive His love. Listen, God's love for you is not some kind of fairy tale. It's real and it's robust!

## **2. THE RECORD OF GOD'S LOVE**

**...That He gave His only begotten Son**

How can we know for sure that God loves us? Is there any proof? There is. God sent His unique Son into this rebellious and broken world. Get this now. Jesus, the Son of God, became a human being. When Mary kissed her baby, she was kissing the face of God. Jesus was God in the flesh.

Couldn't God have sent an angel to straighten out our messy world? Surely Gabriel or Michael the Archangel could have done the job. No, they couldn't. It took someone special to deal with the sinfulness of our hearts and the brokenness of our lives. So, what did God do to prove His love for us? He sent His Son to handle our sin problem.

**Romans 5:8...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

**1 John 4:9–10... By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

The English word "propitiate" means "to appease and render favorable." God's anger is the settled opposition of His holy nature to everything that is sinful and evil in our lives. Such opposition to sin cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand or the wink of an eye. It requires something much more substantial. The Bible states that only the sacrificial death of God's Son on the cross could accomplish this.<sup>1</sup>

- **He was mocked.**
- **His flesh was ripped from His body the scourge.**
- **He was paraded through the streets of Jerusalem like a criminal.**
- **His hands and feet were fastened to the cross with iron spikes.**
- **He endured the wrath of God for us.**

That's how much God loves you! What amazing gift God gave us on that first Christmas!

**ACCEPT THE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE.**

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<sup>1</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, [\*Tyndale Bible Dictionary\*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1087.

Okay. We've already seen the reality of God's love and the record of God's love. Now, I want you to see...

### 3. THE RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE

#### ...That whoever believes in Him

Boys and girls, Christmas is not just about the cradle; it's also about the cross. Jesus, God's Son, died for our sins on the cross and He was raised from the dead on the third day. Jesus is alive!

The proper response to God's gift of love is to believe that Jesus is God's Son and that His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead is sufficient to save us from our sins.

**Romans 10:13...for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."**

If you truly believe in Jesus, He will forgive your sins. You will never have to fear the wrath of God. Don't ignore this God-given opportunity or procrastinate.

**ACCEPT THE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE.**

Okay. We've already seen the reality of God's love and the record of God's love and the response to God's love. Now, I want you to see...

## 4. THE RESULT OF GOD'S LOVE

### ...Shall not perish, but have eternal life

According to John, our greatest need is to be saved from "*perishing*." This word refers to dying without having our sins forgiven and without having God's wrath appeased.

God didn't send His Son and expose Him to the harsh cruelty and the agony of the cross in order to condemn the human race. He sent Jesus to keep us from perishing. He sent Him to save us!

If we believe in Jesus, He gives us the gift of eternal life. This term refers to the quantity of life believers will enjoy in heaven with Jesus where we will experience fullness of joy and pleasures *forever*. But wait. Eternal life also refers to quality of life that begins the moment we believe in Jesus. Here's how Jesus described it...



**John 10:10... "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**

This simply means that Jesus will help you to live a new and better kind of life right now. All of this is possible if you...

**ACCEPT THE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE.**

## **CONCLUSION**

This is Laken's stuffed animal, and he was given to her when she was just a baby. It's a polar bear. Early on she named him "Paw." She sleeps with him, plays with him, and takes him with her when she spends the night away from home.

The gift of God's love is not the kind of gift you accept and unwrap and then put on a shelf. It's more like a favorite stuffed animal that you embrace and carry and hold and love till its ears fall off.

God's gift of love is our lifeblood. It's the oxygen coursing through our spiritual lungs continually filling us with life. You need this gift. Without it, you will

December 8, 2024

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never experience the sheer joy and the continuous pleasure that God provides in heaven.

Are you ready to receive the wonderful gift of God's love? You can have it if you believe in Jesus—*that He died on the cross for your sins and that He was raised from the dead*. Let today be the day that you experience God's love in a real way.