

## A Christmas Poem

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the town  
Not a sign of Baby Jesus was anywhere to be found.

The people were all busy with Christmas time chores  
Like decorating, and baking, and shopping in stores.

No one sang "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed".  
Instead, they sang of Santa dressed-up in bright red

Mama watched Martha Stewart, Papa drank beer from a tap.  
As hour upon hour the presents they'd wrap

When what from the TV did they suddenly hear?  
'Cept an ad.. which told of a big sale at Sears.

On Wal-mart! On K-mart! On Target! On Penney's!  
On Hallmark! On Zales! A quick lunch at Denny's

From the big store downtown to the stores at the mall  
They would dash away, dash away, and visit them all!

So away to the mall they all flew like a flash...  
Buying things on credit and others with cash!

And, as they made their way home from their trip to the mall,  
Did they think about Jesus? Oh, no... not at all.

To pray to the Savior...they had no time to stop.  
Because they needed more time to "Shop til they dropped!"

There were presents to wrap and cookies to bake.  
How could they stop and remember who died for their sake?

Then on the roof, there arose such a clatter  
As grandpa hung icicle lights up on his brand new step ladder.

He hung lights that would flash. He hung lights that would twirl.  
Yet, he never once prayed to Jesus..Light of the World.  
Their lives were so busy with their Christmas time "things"  
No time to remember Christ Jesus, the King.

Christ's eyes... how they twinkle! Christ's Spirit... how merry!  
Christ's love... how enormous! All our burdens... He'll carry!


So instead of being busy, overworked, and uptight  
Let's put Christ back in Christmas on this most Holy Night!



## Mel Gibson on Christ Crucified

**Keywords:** [Christ, death of](#); [Christ, life of](#); [Christ, love of](#); [Christ, substitute for humanity](#); [Christlikeness](#); [Cross](#); [Crucifixion](#); [Example, Christ's](#); [Faith](#); [Forgiveness](#); [Hope](#); [Imitation of Christ](#); [Jesus Christ](#); [Truth](#)

**Filters:** [Quotes](#), [Famous People](#), [Popular Culture](#), [Weekly Updates](#)

**References:** [Matthew 27:35-54](#) ; [Luke 23:26-49](#) ; [Romans 15:2-7](#) 

**Tone:** Positive

On *The O'Reilly Factor*, Mel Gibson spoke about his upcoming movie about Christ's life:

I think it's meant to just tell the truth. I want to be as truthful as possible. But, when you look at the reasons behind why Christ came, why he was crucified, he died for all mankind and he suffered for all mankind, so that, really, anybody who transgresses has to look at their own part or look at their own culpability. It's time to get back to a basic message, the message that was given. At this time, the world has gone nuts, I think. Christ spoke of faith, hope, love, and forgiveness. And these are things I think we need to be reminded of again. He forgave as he was tortured and killed. And we could do with a little of that behavior.

*Citation: The O'Reilly Factor (1-16-03); submitted by Michael Herman, Glen Ellyn, Illinois*

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TOPIC	REF #	TEXT
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Suffering

332-18

The cross is a place of peace and power. Just look at this man's letter:

"I spent one-and-a-half years on a kidney machine before getting a transplant. At first I did a lot of complaining, but then I stopped when I read the account of the Crucifixion. Because in the kidney center, they helped me get out of my coat; with Jesus, they stripped off his clothes. When entering the center, the nurses always spoke a kind word; Jesus heard 'Crucify him!'

"On the machine I would develop a headache and they would bring me an ice pack and aspirin; a crown of thorns was shoved on Jesus' head. Sometimes I would get thirsty and they'd give me juice; Jesus got vinegar. I laid on a comfortable bed for five hours; Jesus hung on nails. I hardly felt the needle they inserted in my vein; spikes were driven through Jesus' hands and feet. My blood was cleansed; His blood spilled on the ground.

"Jesus turned my days of complaining into days of praising when I took time to look at the cross. A careful look into the events that took place that day on Calvary should stop all our complaining."

The cross is a place where one dies to self, enjoys no rights, and grovels in humility. How odd for our Lord to invite us to be crucified with Him; but God knows the cross is also a place of grace, and the nearer one draws to Calvary, the more abundant the peace and power.

*O blessed cross, teach me to nail my cares to You. Crucify my complaining, mortify my grumbling, and cause me to praise!*

(August 25)

The Cross

380-06

Meanwhile in the borrowed tomb, God was keeping His promise. "For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told" (Habakkuk 1:5). "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death," he had declared through the prophet Hosea (Hosea 13:14).

In some mysterious way that I don't understand, the tomb during those hours became God's workshop to undo the tragedy of Eden. "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die," God had warned the first humans (Genesis 2:17). But they hadn't listened. Sin had entered the world through one man's choice, and along with sin came its consequence, death (Romans 5:12).

p. 165

its

Michael  
Card  
Violent  
Grace

(Jesus Loves Me: Celebrating the Profound Truths of a Simple Hymn by Calvin Miller) New York, NY: Warner Books. Copyright – Calvin Miller, 2002.

TOPIC	REF #	TEXT
Love	442-12	<p>Charles Swindoll, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, tells of a poignant story about a physically challenged child who was often abused and always ignored by his classmates. The little boy wanted to be sure that he participated fully in the giving and receiving of valentines. On the day of the valentine exchange he took his bag of cards to school. He was excited that he had made out a card for everyone in the class.</p> <p>That day, although the kids received a valentine from him, he received none. The children had conspired in a terrible cruelty and agreed not to give him any cards.</p> <p>On the way home that night the boy walked along, muttering "Not one, not one, not a single one." He continued this recitation till he was home. When his mother asked him what he was saying he spoke up, "Not one, Mama! Not one! I didn't forget a single one. I gave everybody a valentine."</p> <p>This is the all-inclusive lesson of the cross. No one is forgotten in the cross. Jesus loves us so much, he must surely have entered heaven saying, "Not one, not a single one. My blood has covered all. No one has been left out."</p> <p>pp. 162-3</p>

(Renewed Day by Day: Daily Devotional Readings: Volume I by A. W. Tozer, compiled by Gerald B. Smith) Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications. Copyright – Christian Publications, 1980. dated pages.

TOPIC	REF #	TEXT
Cross <i>Do This First!</i>	246-01	<p>The old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. In Roman times, the man who took up his cross and started down the road was not coming back. He was not going out to have his life redirected: he was going out to have it ended! The cross did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more!</p> <p>The race of Adam is under death sentence. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. Thus God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him against to newness of life!</p> <p>(January 5)</p>

TOPIC	REF #	TEXT
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Salvation

367-02

The thief on the cross cries out for salvation, and the Lord hears and answers. The petitioner doesn't have to pray or make a sincere promise. Furthermore, he doesn't have to be baptized. he doesn't have to perform six months of good works to earn heaven. He doesn't even have to pass through a one-week probation period where he proves himself worthy of the calling of eternal life. Grace abounds!

On what basis, then, is he accepted into God's kingdom? (Pay close attention, please.) Faith. It's as simple, and as complex, as that. Faith alone in Christ alone. *Sola Fide* . . . period. That's all that God wants. And that's all that we can offer.

Back in the eighteenth century, August Toplady wrote of this in his great hymn, *Rock of Ages*:

Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!<sup>4</sup>

4. Augustus M. Toplady, *Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me* (18th century), 2nd and 3rd stanzas.  
p. 144

Pearl Singing

# Our Great Savior

Rowland W. Pritchard  
Arr. by Robert Harkness

J. Wilbur Chapman

1. Je - sus! What a Friend for sin - ners! Je - sus! Lov - er of my soul!  
 2. Je - sus! What a Strength in weak - ness! Let me hide my - self in Him;  
 3. Je - sus! What a Help in sor - row! While the bil - lows o'er - me roll,  
 4. Je - sus! What a Guide and Keep - er! While the tem - pest still is high,  
 5. Je - sus! I do now re - ceive Him; More than all in Him I find.

Friends may fail me, foes as - sail me; He, my Sav - ior, makes me whole.  
 Tempt - ed, tried, and some - times fail - ing, He, my Strength, my vic - t'ry wins.  
 E - ven when my heart is break - ing, He, my Com - fort, helps my soul.  
 Storms a - bout me, night o'er - takes me, He, my Pi - lot, hears my cry.  
 He hath gran - ted me for - give - ness; I am His, and He is mine.

*Refrain*

Hal - le - lu - jah! what a Sav - ior! Hal - le - lu - jah! what a Friend!

Sav - ing, help - ing, keep - ing, lov - ing. He is with me to the end.

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## DON ANDERSON MINISTRIES

STATION A  
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### *Final Fulfillment* RESPONSE TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2:21-40

#### I. Born under the Law v. 21-24

v. 21 And when eight days were fulfilled to circumcize Him, and they called His name Jesus, which he was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

v. 22 And when the days of their purification were fulfilled according to the law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

v. 23 Even as it is written in the Law of the Lord, that every first-born male opening the womb shall be called holy of the Lord.

v. 24 And to offer a sacrifice according to what has been said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

#### II. Simeon v. 25-35

v. 25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

v. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

v. 27 And He came in the Spirit into the Child Jesus that they might do for Him according to the custom of the law,

v. 28 Then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said:

v. 29 "Now Lord, let your bond-servant be departing in peace according to your word;

v. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation.

v. 31 Which you prepared in the presence of all peoples,

v. 32 A light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."

v. 33 And His father and mother were marvelling at the things which were being said about Him.

v. 34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign to be spoken against—

v. 35 And a sword shall pass through your soul—in order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed."

III. Anna v. 36-38

v. 36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in her days greatly, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

v. 37 And then as a widow to the age of eighty-four and she departed not from the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

v. 38 And she coming up at that very moment began giving thanks to God, and continued speaking of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

IV. Going Home v. 39-40

v. 39 And when they completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

v. 40 Now the child was growing and becoming strong; becoming full of wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

(When the Cowboys Come to Town! by Stephen Bly) Winchester, ID: Bly Books.  
Copyright – Stephen Bly, 2000.

### BETHLEHEM PINE

I was camped out in the Dakota snow  
when Christmas Eve rolled around.

Me and Slim and a dog named Flop,  
three days ride from town.

Not a tree in sight for thirty miles,  
as we huddled in the draw.  
The chips ran out the day before;  
we was burnin' twisted straw.

Oh, it was cold, I'm here to say  
and getting' kind of scary  
As we hunkered down in our bedrolls  
on that deserted, lonely prairie.

Slim was convinced we'd never live  
to see the light of day.  
He shook my hand, scratched Flop's ear,  
and then commenced to pray.

I have to admit it got to me  
and I was feelin' mighty low.  
A frozen corpse out on the sage  
ain't the way I wanted to go.

So I joined with Slim in divine entreat  
with a serious prayer or two.  
"Lord, we don't need all that much  
... jist a small miracle will do."

The dry snow was a blowin' sideways  
when we first heard that sound:  
A stutterin' trot, and a scratchin' noise,  
somethin' drug on frozen ground.

The dark outline of a long eared mule,  
who smelled our puny flame,  
Came draggin' somethin' across the snow  
and actin' hugely lame.

We scrambled out in the frigid storm  
to inspect what we could not see  
And found a mule badly bleedin',  
still chained to an evergreen tree.

Slim twitched his ear, I pulled the shackle,  
while the mule continued to croon  
With salve and a half clean flour sack  
we doctored that fetlock wound.

It was a twelve foot pine he chewed in two,  
tryin' to set himself free.  
I was thinkin' the Lord answered our prayers  
and sent us a Christmas tree.

"The mule came from somewhere,"  
Slim decreed, with hope upon his brow.  
"Unhobbled he'll know his way back home,  
and lead us there somewhere."

We called him Star, it seemed to fit.  
He steered us to the stable.  
We didn't leave 'til daylight, though,  
it was as soon as the mule was able.

The tree was branded Bethlehem Pine  
and it burnt up hot and slow.  
It gave its life, that we might live,  
like the Savior did long ago.

You kin have your symbols of Christmas,  
with parties and presents at ever' turn.  
Jist give me a mule, who knows his way home,  
and a Christmas tree that'll burn.

p. 63

RESPONSE TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2:21-40

*Now I lay me down...*

*When I get the urge to study, I lie down until it goes away!*

INTRODUCTION:

*Tragedy!*

*Gorilla: I'm too smart to study + too cute to care*

X A fellow went into the store the other day and said, "I want to buy my girl a present for Christmas. What do you think she would like?" The clerk said, "Does she like you?" "Oh, yes, I'm positive she likes me." "If she likes you, she'll like anything," said the clerk.

X What are you going to give me for Christmas?

X Close your eyes and tell me what you see.

Nothing.

That's what you're going to get for Christmas.

X How did you like those Chinese back scratchers I gave you for Christmas?

X Is that what they are? My wife's been making me eat salad with them.

The office party Christmas carol:

"Check the halls for Sol and Molly"

This Christmas, if you really want to give a gift that keeps on giving, how about a PREGNANT CAT.

X I wanted to get my wife one of those sports cars with bucket seats for Christmas--now if I can only find one with a bucket big enough.

X For the minister who has everything: STAINED GLASS CONTACT LENSES

X Have you tried to buy a tree yet? The prices are so high--I paid \$6 for one and I brought it home in the car--not in the trunk--the glove compartment.

Page  
Came out of Rev  
Needs

THE GREATEST GIVER

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Hide-away: "I don't care who you are Fat Man!  
Get those reindeer off my roof!"

INTRODUCTION

Christmas time is the time when kids and money both sprout wings.

Incidentally, Santa Claus won't be making the rounds this year. He's still down at the Internal Revenue Service trying to explain the six billion dollars he put down for gifts last year.

~~This is the letter of explanation he wrote:~~

~~I'm sending this note to advise you that taxes have taken away the things I find most essential. My reindeer, my workshop, my sleigh. Now I'm making my rounds on a donkey. He's old and crippled and slow, so you'll know if I don't see you Christmas. I'm out on my fanny in the snow.~~

Mark told me the other day Christmas in Los Angeles is always interesting. You usually see the carolers dressed in bermuda shorts groping their way through the smog singing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear."

~~Christmas cards, you've got to send one to everybody and if you miss someone, you'll never live it down. Personally, I've licked so many flaps I even burp sticky.~~

~~Christmas is also the time for giving and there are presents galore. I just bought a perfect Christmas present for my dentist, a leaky ant farm.~~

~~One of my friends said that his wife hadn't spoken to him since Labor Day, so he figured that the least he could do was buy her a little Christmas present to show his appreciation.~~

It is really fascinating the new toys they've got now for Christmas. One is called a neurotic doll. It's wound up already.

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## Mark Twain's Christmas Wish

(On the door of the telephone closet in the Mark Twain house, Hartford, Connecticut)

It is my heart-warming and world-embracing Christmas hope that all of us - the high, the low, the rich, the poor; the admired, the despised; the loved, the hated; the civilized, the savage - may eventually be gathered together in a heaven of everlasting rest, peace and bliss ... except the inventor of the telephone.

One clerk said, "Here's a doll for you. It drinks, it wets and it cries." I said, "I'm not surprised."

Christmas is not only a time of cards and giving, it's also a time of greetings. One guy said, "Merry Christmas to the Christians, Happy Hanukkah to the Jews, and good luck to Madelyn Murray O'Hair."

~~One of the cutest stories that I heard this year came from a group of first graders who were told to draw a picture representing Christmas. There were pictures of Santa Clauses, Christmas trees, presents and all of the other things that we relate with the Christmas season.~~ One little fellow had drawn a picture of a Nativity scene. He had Mary, and Joseph and the shepherds coming to kneel at the stable and several of the animals standing around. Off to one side, however, he had drawn a picture of a little fat man. As the teacher looked over the would be artist's work, she noticed the little fat man off to the side and asked the question, "Who is he?" And the response of the child was, "Oh, he is round John Burgeon."

~~My very favorite Christmas story has to do with three Aggies that went to a Christmas party and they were to come dressed up at the party for something which depicted the Christmas season. They came decked out in their yellow fireman's slickers with John Hancock red hats on. Someone quizzed them as to why they came dressed that way. Their simple reply was, "We are three wise men coming from a fire."~~

#### INTRODUCTION TO PASSAGE

Last week we studied together Mark 10:35-45. We learned that the two keys to greatness:

1. being a servant
2. being a giver

Fulfilling our function we will  
Always get a response rather than  
A reaction !!

Being servants and being stewards.

Since Christmas is a time of giving, I thought it would be good for us to consider one of the greatest passages on the subject of giving in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

① Have you noticed all the new Charities this year.

① The Society for the rehabilitation of Las Vegas Losers.

② The John Brunch Society for late eaters.

② I want to tell you the kind of year I've had. If I cornered the mistletoe market - they'd postpone Christmas.

③ I know its the thought and not the gift that counts - but couldn't people think a little bigger?

④ Santa Claus story is dying. you tell it to a 7 year old now days and he wants to know how many pounds of thrust the sleigh develops before it leaves the pad.

⑤ Dad to a three year old: "No a reindeer aint a horse with a T.V. Antenna."

"Christmas time is the one time a year when we act like we should all year through!"

## PSALM 127

Prosperity Comes from the LORD.

A Song of Ascents, of Solomon.

- UNLESS** the LORD <sup>a</sup>builds the house,  
They labor in vain who build it;  
Unless the LORD <sup>b</sup>guards the city,  
The watchman keeps awake in vain.
- 2 It is vain for you to rise up early,  
To <sup>1</sup>retire late,  
To <sup>a</sup>eat the bread of <sup>2</sup>painful labors;  
For He gives to His <sup>b</sup>beloved <sup>c</sup>even in his sleep.
- 3 Behold, <sup>a</sup>children are a <sup>1</sup>gift of the LORD;  
The <sup>b</sup>fruit of the womb is a reward.
- 4 Like arrows in the hand of a <sup>a</sup>warrior,  
So are the children of one's youth.
- 5 How <sup>a</sup>blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;

Read: Psalm 127

December 22—Saturday

### GIVE THEM LOVE!

Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord.

Psalm 127:3

**A** WEALTHY woman was so caught up in her love for worldly pleasures that she had little time for her daughter. Even when her child became bedridden because of an illness, the mother's attitude remained the same. She felt she could shower gifts on her daughter to compensate for her lack of personal attention. Intent on her own plans, she left the girl in the care of a nurse and went to Europe to see the sights. While there, she remembered her daughter's birthday and sent her a rare and beautiful vase. When it arrived, the nurse brought it to the girl, saying, "Wasn't it thoughtful of your mother to remember you with another vase?" Refusing even to look at the present, the girl cried, "Take it away, take it away!" And then, as if her mother were in the room, she tearfully exclaimed, "Oh, Mother! Don't send me any more things. I have enough flowers, vases, and pictures. Send me no more! I want you—YOU!"

This incident points out an important truth—one that is especially applicable as we near the time of Christmas gift-giving. Shallow, outward pretenses of affection are not enough. Children can't be bought. Even though they may express great interest in gifts during this month, they need our love and tender concern above all else. Sharing, teaching, and caring—all purchased with unselfish love—will meet their deepest need.

Should we give gifts at Christmas? Of course. But most important, let's give our children the gift of love during this season and all year long.

—H.G.B.

*Peace and plenty here abide,  
Smiling sweet on every side;  
Time doth softly, sweetly glide  
When there's love at home.*

—Anon.

**The best thing to spend on your children is your time.**

I. ~~A~~ Vietnamese + A Jew were Talking waa.

A. Jew Pounds the Viet.

World War II Japanese - Chinese - Viet.

B. Viet Pounds the Jew

Sinking the Titanic - Iceberg - Greenburg - Goldberg.

II. Appreciate Your Kindnesses!  
Enjoying Your Friendship!

Newsletters  
camping  
Mailing list

Mark of Constancy

A. Compassion - Moving into A mess  
And Making A Miracle Happen.

B. Conduct - Goal orientation  
Made like X - ~~8~~ Secondary

Ph. 1. 3: 1. Knowing 2. Power  
3. Suffering 4. Death 5. Rapture  
6. Forgetting Past 7. Pressing on 8. Goal

C. Constancy James 1:1-12

Lack of  
Direction  
Discipline  
Dedication

Difference between Temptation + Test.

Tempt. From evil one to destroy

Test " Lord to develop

Teacher: test Tempt cheat

Cookies " tempt Arrange them

RESPONSE TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2:21-40

INTRODUCTION:

A fellow went into the store the other day and said, "I want to buy my girl a present for Christmas. What do you think she would like?" The clerk said, "Does she like you?" "Oh, yes, I'm positive she likes me." "If she likes you, she'll like anything," said the clerk.

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I wanted to get my wife one of those sports cars with bucket seats for Christmas--now if I can only find one with a bucket big enough.

For the minister who has everything: STAINED GLASS CONTACT LENSES

Have you tried to buy a tree yet? The prices are so high--I paid \$6 for one and I brought it home in the car--not in the trunk--the glove compartment.

## Background to the Passage -2-

• In Luke 2:1-20 we have Luke's account of:

- 1. the birth of the Lord Jesus
- 2. the visit of the angel to the shepherds
- 3. and the shepherds finding the babe in the manger.

v.20 says "And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them."

What I would like to do for this Christmas message is to consider the immediate response recorded by Luke to the birth of Jesus.

\* We are going to be considering verses 21-40. These verses will be divided into four sections.

### I. BORN UNDER THE LAW v. 21-24

Galatians 4:4,5

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

It was absolutely essential that Christ fulfill all of the requirements of the law before he could ever become a redeemer of those who were held in bondage under the law. And so here in these verses, we have Mary, along with Joseph, fulfilling all of the legal requirements, while He, being yet a child, in order that when He becomes of age, He might thus fulfill all future requirements in anticipation of His own death upon Calvary.

Mission scrubbed if this had not been done!

\* v.21 And when eight days were fulfilled to circumcize Him, and they called His name Jesus, which He was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Daily Bread  
Yesterday!

December 23  
Saturday

## A BABY BOY

READ:  
Luke 2:8-14

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[Mary] brought forth  
her firstborn Son, and  
wrapped Him in  
swaddling cloths.  
—Luke 2:7

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THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:  
■ Nahum 1-3  
■ Revelation 14

could restore the relationship.

*God wanted to send Jesus.* He loved us so much that He gave His Son (John 3:16) so that our relationship could be restored. Jesus was the only One who could meet His demand for a perfect sacrifice—only He was sinless (Heb. 9:11-15). He willingly gave Himself on the cross. God accepted that sacrifice and raised Him from the dead.

Because of our need and His love, God the Father gave us the gift of Jesus the Son. Accept His gift today—it's free.  
—Anne Cetas

*Rejoice, O soul, the debt is paid,  
For all our sins on Christ were laid;  
We've been redeemed, we're justified—  
And all because the Savior died.* —D. De Haan

---

**Jesus died that we might live.**

The full-page advertisement in the newspaper caught my eye immediately. Near the top of the light-blue page was the silhouette of a star. In the center of the page were the words:

IT'S A BOY.

Luke 2:11 was printed across the bottom of the page: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (NIV).

This simple message—it's a boy—proclaimed the indescribable gift of a Savior who came to earth as a baby. Why did He do it?

*We needed God to send Jesus.* Because of our sin, we were separated from a holy God (Rom. 3:23). A perfect Savior and mediator was needed to bring us back together. Only God

on the 8th day the boy is to be circumcized?

Leviticus  
12:3

When the Lord Jesus was eight days old, prescribed by the Law, it was necessary for him to fulfill this first requirement by being circumcized. And it was at this time that He also received his name.

Luke 1:59-63

"And it came about that on the eighth day, they came to circumcize the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias after his father; and his mother answered and said, 'No, indeed, but he shall be called John.' And they said to her, 'There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.' And they made signs to his father as to what he wanted him called. And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows: 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished."

Our verse goes on to say: "which he (that is, Jesus) was called by the angel (that is, the angel Gabriel--

Luke 1:31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus."

The name Jesus is the name "Joshua" in the Old Testament. It is the name which means "Savior."

Math. 1:21

And the angel had stipulated this name by which he would be called before he was conceived in the womb.

v.22 And when the days of their purification were fulfilled according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

This verse speaks of a time now 32 days later, because a woman was unclean for 40 days upon the birth of a little boy before she could experience the purification according to the law of Moses.

Coupled with this purification rite, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

I think it is important to see the Lord's submission to the ordinance of circumcision and the family's submission to all of the requirement of the law, as a lesson to us to endure much rather than increase the offense.

Their purpose in coming is to present him to the Lord.

Romans 12:1,2

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies, a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

1 Samuel 1:9ff

"Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the Lord, and she, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. And she made a vow and said, "O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy maidservant and remember me and not forget thy maidservant but will give thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

1 Samuel 1:26-28

"And she said, "O my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord, for this boy I prayed; and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of him; so I have also dedicated him to the Lord, as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord, and he worshipped the Lord there."

v.23

Even as it is written in the Law of the Lord, that every first-born male opening the womb shall be called holy of the Lord.

Exodus 13:1,2

"Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "Sanctify to me every first-born, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast, it belongs to me."

Every first-born son of the tribe of Levi was dedicated holy to the Lord's service. On the other hand, Jesus is of the tribe of Judah, and it was necessary for the parents to pay a price of redemption as they publicly consecrated their child to God.

In order to be exempt from temple service, the redemption fee was five shekels of silver.

If a shekel was worth 64¢, \$3.20 would be the total redemption price. The daily wage in those times was somewhere between 16-18¢ so we are talking about the wages for 17-20 days in order to pay this redemption fee that they are paying on this occasion.

v.24 And to offer a sacrifice according to what has been said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Leviticus 12:6-8

"And when the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting, a one-year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. Then he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether a male or a female. But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

Mary and Joseph are bringing the offering of the poor here in this verse to fulfill these legal requirements.

### 2 Corinthians 8:9

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich."

It was possible to buy two birds for less than a tenth of the amount for a lamb and a bird to fulfill these legal requirements.

It is obvious that it has been quite expensive for Joseph all the way around as far as this trip is concerned. There were no vacancies when they arrived because they hadn't phoned ahead for reservations, and as a result, they spent that first night in a manger.

They have now been there some forty days fulfilling all these responsibilities to the law, and I am sure he has probably run up quite a motel bill at the Bethlehem Holiday Inn.

Perhaps he's hired on with some construction job as a carpenter building condominiums in Bethlehem or something of that sort.

### II. SIMEON v. 25-35

First it was the shepherds who came to see the child; now some 40 days later in the temple, Simeon also sees the Christ.

v.25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

One writer put it this way:

"Lord, keep me sweet when I grow old,  
And things in life seem hard to bear;  
When I feel sad and all alone,  
And people do not seem to care.

Oh keep me sweet and let me look  
Beyond the frets that life must hold,  
To see the grand eternal joys;  
Yes, keep me sweet in growing old!"

Paul Tournier in his book The Seasons of Life says, "The die is cast. That which I have been able to do, to learn or to acquire is gradually losing its value. The doing and the having are giving way to the being. What is important for the aged is not what they are still able to do nor yet what they have accumulated and cannot take with them. It is what they are. This is the cause of the dreadful feeling of uselessness that so deeply bothers most elderly people. All those concepts of our modern western civilization in which effective action is held above all contribute to their plight."

Simeon was one of the persons who lived by that principle, that what a man is, is more important than what a man does.

There are four beautiful things that are said about Simeon in this 25th verse:

1. This man was righteous.

Matt. 5:6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

2. He is devout.

What does it mean to be devout?

This word occurs in Acts 2:5

"Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven."

Acts 8:2

"And some devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him."

Acts 22:12

"And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the law and well spoken of by the Jews who lived there."

One writer says, "It is displaying a solemn and reverential devotion to religion and religious exercises." The word means in the Greek text "taking hold well." It means reverencing God.

"Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart." The outward appearance is righteous in Simeon. As God looks upon the heart, he finds a man who is devout. The horizontal is righteous--the vertical is devout. The action is righteous--the attitude is devout.

Luke 1:6

"And they were both righteous in the sight of God walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord."

It is being fearful of offense:

Acts 24:16 "And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." It is not slipping into a careless, negligent performance. It is watching against adding to or taking from or altering what God has said. It is mingling together fear and love.

He is a man who was:

1. RIGHTEOUS
2. DEVOUT
3. LOOKING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL

This means he is looking for a person, the Messiah, who is the consolation of Israel.

When things are bad, at least we have one consolation: What we have to suffer now is nothing worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us later.

Titus 2:12,13

"Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus."

And the fourth thing that is said of Simeon:

4. AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS UPON HIM.

John 14:17

"That is, the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not behold him or know him, but you know him because he abides with you and will be in you."

Titus 2:2

"Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance."

Simeon certainly meets all of these qualifications. He is a man righteous, devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

v.26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

The instrument for this revelation to Simeon was the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13,14

"But when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own initiative but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify me for he shall take of mine and shall disclose it to you."

1 Thess. 1:10

"To wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, that is, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

Simeon had been promised that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Messiah.

Genesis 18:17

"And the Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. For I have chosen him in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what he has spoken about him.'"

Psalm 25:14

"The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him and he will make them know his covenant."

Proverbs 3:32

"For the crooked man is an abomination to the Lord, but he is intimate with the upright."

Daniel 2:19

"Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

Amos 3:7

"Surely the Lord God does nothing unless he reveals his secret counsel to his servants the prophets."

v.27

And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus that they might do for him according to the custom of the law,

Simeon came, directed by the Spirit, into the temple at the same time Mary and Joseph were bringing in the child Jesus.

Psalm 37:23,24

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighted in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."

Isaiah 30:21

"And your ears will hear a word behind you: this is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left."

Proverbs 3:5,6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path."

It is to the temple that these parents had come in Jerusalem with the child.

First, Simeon had a revelation that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Secondly, he had had a direction, a burden, a concern to come into the temple at this particular time.

The reason Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus to the temple was that they might do for him according to the custom of the law.

As we have already seen, their purpose in coming was:

1. for their purification
2. to present the child Jesus to the Lord
3. to pay the five shekels of silver.

So according to the custom of the law, they came for purification, presentation and paying of the redemption money for the first-born.

v.28 Then he took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said:

It is normal for people to be attracted to little babies, children who are a month and a half old are indeed precious and just seemed to be begging to be held.

It reminds me of what one little sheep said to the other sheep: "Ewes is not fat; ewes is just fluffy."

In this 28th verse he did two things:

1. He took the child Jesus into his arms
2. He blessed God.

How does one bless God? I always think of the PAT FORMULA:

PRAISE  
ADORATION  
THANKSGIVING

From his lips probably came the words of the doxology:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise Him all creatures here below.  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."



# THE GIFT OF JESUS

It's a gift wrapped in love,  
the love of a King.

It's a gift wrapped in grace —  
what a wonderful thing!

It's a gift wrapped in joy,  
the joy of creation,

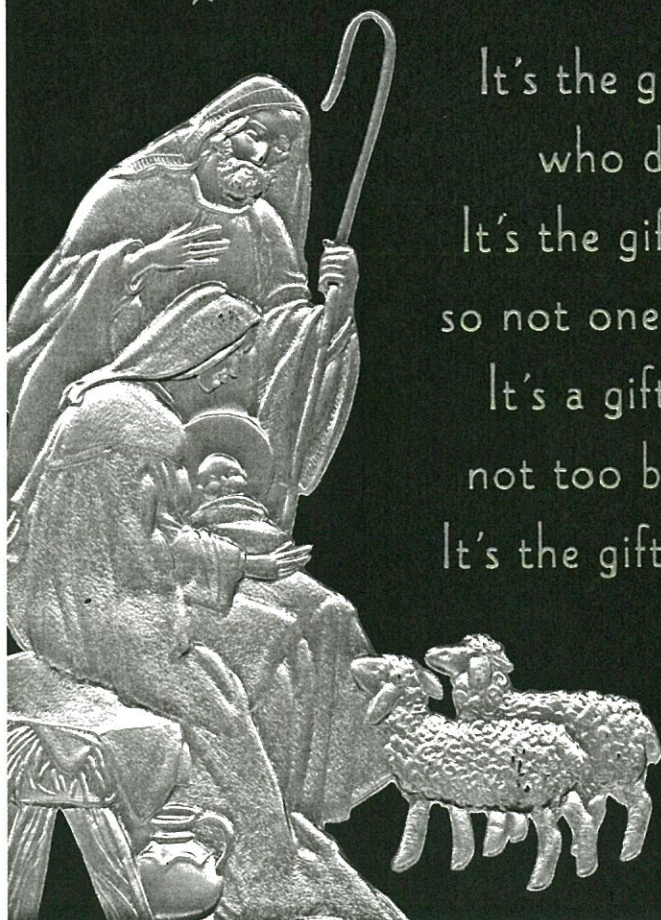
A gift wrapped in song,  
the song of salvation.

It's the gift of a Man  
who died on the cross.

It's the gift of new life  
so not one would be lost.

It's a gift just for us,  
not too big, not too small.

It's the gift of Christ Jesus —  
the best gift of all!



v.29 "Now Lord, let your bond-servant be departing in peace according to your word:"

Simeon is a perfectly satisfied believer.

Simeon speaks as one who knows where he is going when he departs this life and he cares not how soon he goes.

"Now Lord, let your bond-servant"

Simeon is a willing servant who joyfully acknowledges God's absolute right over him.

He is one who hears and obeys.

"Now Lord, let your bond-servant be departing"

Philippians 1:21-23

"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me, and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better."

The two words for departing in this passage in Luke and in Philippians have the same root. One is apoluw and the other is analuw. It is the picture of loosing the ropes from the mooring as we set sail. It is the taking up the stakes and pulling down the tent and going to the permanent dwelling.

"Now Lord, let your bond-servant be departing in peace"

This is the description of death for the believer.

Cliff on Friday was repeating over and over the little phrase "No trouble, no trouble, no trouble."

Saturday: Peace, Perfect Peace!!

He is setting sail for his permanent dwelling and it is in peace with the absence of trouble.

"Now Lord, let your bondservant be departing in peace according to your word"

Genesis 45:28

"Then Israel said, It is enough. My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

When Jacob makes this statement, he is 130 years old. And when he actually dies, he is 147. We do not know whether or not Simeon immediately went home to be with the Lord. But when he did, and his assignments were finished here, he was departing to a permanent dwelling and departing in peace.

Simeon's words are words of joyful self-surrender. In these lines we find they are filled with humble recognition of God's absolute sovereignty, with trustful resignation and with tenderness of heart with which he is holding the baby Jesus in his arms. He yields himself to God when fulfillment of his promise has allowed him to live long enough to be able to see the Messiah, and in him the realization of the plan of redemption for the world.

"Sing them over again to me,  
Wonderful words of life."

Lord, I am ready to come to the house now that I have seen the Messiah.

v.30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

The reason he is wanting to be departing in peace is given in this 30th verse: "For my eyes have seen your salvation."

- ① Past
- ② Present
- ③ Future

It's your salvation which you have, and you have the right to give it or to keep it.

Your salvation is in a person, and we know that person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's salvation is bound up in a person.

Salvation is a person. It is not something you do.

*Too Late to Try but Never Too late to Trust !!*

Genesis 48:8ff

"When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?' And Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons whom God has given me here.' So he said, 'Bring them to me please, that I may bless them.' Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. And Joseph brought them close to him and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.'"

While looking at this babe, his own eyes saw the thing God as the almighty Lord had done to save the world.

v.31 Which you prepared in the presence of all peoples.

Which salvation you prepared in the presence of all peoples, not just a select group.

Colossians 3:11

"A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcized and uncircumcized, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman; but Christ is all and in all."

The first thing he says about this salvation in v. 31 is:

1. You prepared in the presence of all peoples

v.32 A light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."

2. The second thing he says about this salvation is "it is a light for revelation to the Gentiles."

Jesus himself said that he was indeed the light of the world.

John 3:19-21

"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil, for everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Ephesians 2:11-13

"Therefore remember that formerly you the Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands; remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

3. this salvation is "the glory of your people Israel."

Psalm 24:7

"Lift up your heads O gates, and be lifted up O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads O gates, and lift them up O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who

is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts; he is the King of Glory."

Matt. 6:13

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Salvation then involves a person, light and glory.

This salvation wrapped up in the person of the Lord Jesus has been prepared in the presence of all peoples. It is a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

v.33 And His father and mother were marvelling at the things which were being said about Him.

As they saw this distinguished old gentleman exuding the fragrance of a righteous life and displaying the characteristics of a devout man of God, he, being inspired by the Spirit speaks these incredible words about this baby that he holds in his arms. The response of Mary and Joseph is they "were marvelling at the things which were being said about Him."

Obviously, they must have said some things that caused Simeon to turn his attention toward them in the next couple of verses.

v.34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the falling, and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign to be spoken against--"

Whereas in verse 28 Simeon blesses God, here in verse 34 Simeon blesses Mary and Joseph.

I am sure Simeon blesses them in a similar way as the angel spoke to Mary at the time of the announcement that she was going to be the one that the Lord had chosen for this particular project.

Probably blessed for:

1. Her availability and Joseph's consent
2. Their accountability to the law and to the fulfillment of all of its requirements.

He then said to Mary, his mother, three things in the remaining parts of his address:

1. The first is seen in verse 34:  
"Behold, this child is set for the

1. "falling and rising of many in Israel"

2 Cor. 2:15,16

"For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death; to the other an aroma from life to life, and who is adequate for these things."

Even as he hung upon the cross, the one thief asked to be remembered when he came into his kingdom. And the Lord responded, "Today you will be with me in the paradise." The other, he had to fall away, to depart because he never put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:11,12

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Matt. 7:24-27

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts upon them may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and burst against that house. And yet it did not fall for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act upon them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain

descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and burst against that house and it fell; and great was its fall."

2. The second thing that is said to Mary about this child is "for a sign to be spoken against"

A sign always points to the sender and he is a sign to be spoken against."

Luke 4:28,29

"All in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things, and they rose up and cast him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw him down the cliff."

John 8:13,14

"The Pharisees therefore said to him, 'You are bearing witness of yourself. Your witness is not true.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true. For I know where I came from and where I am going. But you do not know where I come from or where I am going.'"

v.35

And a sword shall pass through your soul--in order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.

And so Simeon has said to Mary three things:

Salvation 1. The child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel

Sign 2. for a sign to be spoken against

Sword 3. a sword shall pass through your soul.

And the purpose of that is "in order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed."

I am sure the time spoken of here of the sword passing through the heart of Mary refers to the time when she is standing at the foot of the cross with John the Apostle some 33 years later.

Luke 23:26-28

"And when they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon a Cyrenian, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. And there were following him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting him. But Jesus turning to them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.'"

John 19:25-27

"Therefore the soldiers did these things but there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household."

"At the cross her station keeping,  
Stood the mournful mother weeping.  
Close to Jesus to the last,  
Through her heart His sorrow sharing,  
All his bitter anguish bearing,  
Now at length the sword had passed."

The purpose of Calvary and of all of this pain is seen in Simeon's last phrase, "In order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed."

Man is looking on the outward appearance; God is looking on the heart.

Proverbs 4:23

"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

Matt. 27:39ff

"And those who were passing by were hurling abuse at him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes and elders were mocking him and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He's the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we shall believe in him. He trusts in God; let him deliver him now if he takes pleasure in him. For he said, I'm the Son of God.' And the robbers also, who had been crucified with him were casting the same insult at him."

Calvary was certainly a time of choosing sides. Stress invariably reveals what is in the heart. And there are those who are weeping and mourning, who have put their faith and trust in Christ. And there are still others, the majority, who are mocking and crying out, Crucify him, crucify him! Yes, indeed, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed in this set of circumstances.

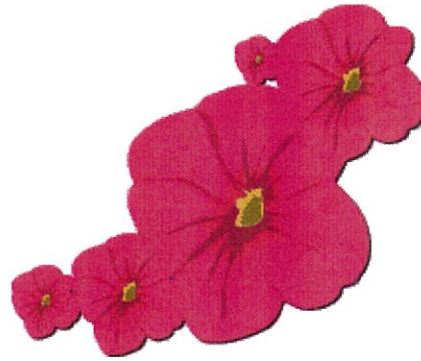
May I say that every time the Gospel of Jesus Christ is presented, the thoughts of the heart will be revealed, for a man will either accept or reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 6:2

"Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

III. ANNA v. 36-38

A man may go to heaven without health, without wealth, without fame, without a great nature, without learning, without big earning, without culture, without beauty, without friends, without ten thousand other things, but they never can go to heaven without Christ.



## **Christmas Letter**

Dear Loved Ones:

As you well know, we are getting closer to My birthday. Every year there is a celebration in My honor and I think that this year the celebration will be repeated. During this time there are many people shopping for gifts, there are many radio announcements, TV commercials, and in every part of the world everyone is talking that My birthday is getting closer and closer.

It is really very nice to know, that at least once a year, some people think of Me. As you know, the celebration of My birthday began many years ago. At first people seemed to understand and be thankful of all that I did for them, but in these times, no one seems to know the reason for the celebration. Family and friends get together and have a lot of fun, but they don't know the meaning of the celebration.

I remember that last year there was a great feast in My honor. The

dinner table was full of delicious foods, pastries, fruits, assorted nuts and chocolates. The decorations were exquisite and there were many, many beautifully wrapped gifts. But, do you want to know something? I wasn't invited. I was the guest of honor and they didn't remember to send Me an invitation. The party was for Me, but when that great day came, I was left outside, they closed the door in My face...and I wanted to be with them and share their table.

In truth, that didn't surprise Me because in the last few years many close their doors to Me. Since I wasn't invited, I decided to enter the party without making any noise I went in and stood in a corner. They were all drinking; there were some who were drunk and telling jokes and laughing at everything. Then this large man dressed in red wearing a long white beard entered the room with a loud Ho-Ho-Ho! All the children ran to him, say-ing: "Santa Claus, Santa Claus"...as if the party were in his honor! Why did they all know this man, but had no idea who I was?

At 12 Midnight all the people began to hug each other; I extended My arms waiting for someone to hug me and...do you know...no one hugged me. Suddenly they all began to share lavish gifts. They opened them one by one with great expectation. When all had been opened, I looked to see if, maybe, there was one for Me. What would you feel if on your birthday everybody shared gifts and you did not get one? I then understood that I was unwanted at that party and quietly left.

Every year it gets worse. People only remember to eat and drink, the gifts, the parties and nobody remembers Me. I would like this Christmas that you allow Me to enter your life. I would like that you recognize the fact that almost two thousand years ago I came to this world to give My life for you, on the cross, to save you. Today, I only want that you believe this with all your heart.

I want to share something with you. Though many didn't invite Me to their party, I am planning My own celebration, a grandiose party that no one has ever imagined, a spectacular party. I'm still making the final arrangements. Today I am sending out many invitations and there is an invitation for you. I want to know if you wish to attend and if you do, I will make a reservation for you and write your name with golden letters in My great guest book. Only those on whom respond will be admitted to the party. Those who don't answer the invitation...or answer no, will be left outside. Be prepared because when all is ready, you will be part of My great party. It will be ready before you know it.

I Love You,

Jesus

For Simeon, the measure of his life was not its DURATION, but its DONATION.

Psalm 31:15

"My times are in thy hand," and he makes all things beautiful in his time." *Ecc. 3:11*

v.36

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in her days greatly, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

Whereas we have met a man who probably was up in years and who was faithful to the Lord, so now we meet a woman by the name of Anna who has probably overheard the words of Simeon as he has spoken with such a heart filled with joy.

"And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher."

Anna's name means "favor or grace."

She was a prophetess. This involved a two-fold ministry:

1. Receiving divine revelation and making it known before the event happened.
2. The faithful exposition of the divine revelation that had already been given.

Her family history is given in that she is the daughter of Phanuel and she is also of the tribe of Asher.

"She was advanced in her days greatly."

*Never tell a woman that she is old !!*

Titus 2:3-5

"Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women, to love their husbands,

to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored."

"Having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity."

She had the privilege of being married for seven years before her husband died.

v.37 And then as a widow to the age of eighty-four and she departed not from the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

For over 60 years now Anna has been a widow. She has found therapy at the age of 84 in not departing from the temple. She is serving there night and day with fastings and prayers.

Psalm 134:1,2

"Behold, bless the Lord all servants of the Lord, who serve by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and bless the Lord."

Anna is a widow who has known sorrow and has not grown bitter.

Sorrow can make us:

1. Hard, bitter, rebellious, resentful

or

2. Kinder, softer, more sympathetic

A father's hand will never cause his child a needless tear.

Anna may be older but she never ceased to hope. She never ceased to worship and she never ceased to pray.

*"The night also is Thine."*—Psalm lxxiv. 16.

**Y**ES, Lord, Thou dost not abdicate Thy throne when the sun goeth down, nor dost Thou leave the world all through these long wintry nights to be the prey of evil; Thine eyes watch us as the stars, and Thine arms surround us as the zodiac belts the sky. The dews of kindly sleep and all the influences of the moon are in Thy hand, and the alarms and solemnities of night are equally with Thee. This is very sweet to me when watching through the midnight hours, or tossing to and fro in anguish. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as by the sun: may my Lord make me to be a favoured partaker in them.

The night of affliction is as much under the arrangement and control of the Lord of Love as the bright summer days when all is bliss. Jesus is in the tempest. His love wraps the night about itself as a mantle, but to the eye of faith the sable robe is scarce a disguise. From the first watch of the night even unto the break of day the eternal Watcher observes His saints, and overrules the shades and dews of midnight for His people's highest good. We believe in no rival deities of good and evil contending for the mastery, but we hear the voice of Jehovah saying, "I create light and I create darkness; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the Lord's servants weep with bitter sorrow, but they may not despair, for the darkest eras are governed by the Lord, and shall come to their end at His bidding. What may seem defeat to us may be victory to Him.

"Though enwrapt in gloomy night,  
We perceive no ray of light;  
Since the Lord Himself is here,  
'Tis not meet that we should fear."

best yet?

#250

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Corrie ten Boom said, "If you have some time on your hands, spend part of it on your knees."

Anna is a widow who loved God's house. Nearer to God, nearer to God was the desire of her heart.

Psalm 84:1,2

"How lovely are thy dwelling places, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God."

Eugenia Price says, "Anna permitted her heartbreak to force her to God. Those of us who have faced tragedy of any kind, particularly those of you who are widows, know that nothing heals the wounds like being consciously with God."

Anna was a woman who wasn't destroyed by a broken heart.

Jeremiah 49:11

"Leave your orphans behind; I will keep them alive, and let your widows trust in me."

Psalm 147:3

"He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds."

Can a person die of a broken heart? Many die in six months of their mate. Fifty percent of these is from heart failure.

Anna should have been without hope. She had only two options open to her:

1. Either return to her parents to wait for a second husband

or

2. Wait for physical death.

Her marriage lasted for seven years, and she has been a widow for over 60 years.

One lady said, "When my husband died, my life stopped."

You have to really admire Anna. She didn't flee to isolation and self pity. She didn't become a burden to her relatives. She didn't become a lonely woman to whom life had nothing to offer. She was not hanging on to the past and all of its memories.

When the unity of a married couple is broken, what remains is a single person torn in two. What remains is the half of two people.

Anna fled to God. She dedicated her life to serving him in his temple.

She was willing to give more attention to God than to herself and to give his work the highest priority.

When a widow dares to leave the past alone, when she is not dependent upon memories for true happiness, when she dares to face both present and future with God, a supernatural peace floods her heart.

Activity and work is such a therapy for the healing of hurts.

Kierkegaard says, "The door of happiness opens to the outside, to others."

God who had cared for her so faithfully all these years saw to it that she didn't miss that sacred moment. This is the crowning moment of her life.

She is advanced in years but she still is serving.

You never get old, you just suffer from YOUTH DEFICIENCY.

## CORINTHIANS 13 - A CHRISTMAS VERSION

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens. Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way. Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but giving the gift of love will endure

Someone said, "An old timer is one who can remember when the village square was a place instead of a person."

John Denver says, "You can tell when you're gettin' old when, instead of asking how things are, they start asking how things were."

Mother Teresa says, "Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness, kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting."

1 Tim. 5:5

"Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day."

Proverbs 31:29-31

"Many daughters have done nobly but you excell them all. Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates."

2 Cor. 1:3,4

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

She is a woman of self-denial, much prayer and communion with the other saints.

Colossians 1:11 (Phillips translation)

"We pray that you will be strengthened from God's glorious power, so that you may be able to pass through any experience and endure it with joy."

God develops spiritual power in our lives through the pressures of hard places.

v.38

And she coming up at the very moment began giving thanks to God, and continued speaking of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Simeon sees and she speaks.

She is giving thanks to God for what he has done in the giving of this child.

2 Cor. 9:15

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift."

"And she continued speaking of him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

Anna does two things:

1. At this crowning moment of her life, she is praising and worshipping God.
2. She couldn't keep this news to herself.

Whereas Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel" and then gave testimony that his eyes had seen the Lord's salvation, Anna speaks of the fact that she is speaking to those who are "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

She not only sees Jerusalem in bondage to Rome but in bondage to sin and death. And Jesus is the One who is going to come and pay the price of redemption and set men free through his death on Calvary.

1 Peter 1:8

"And though you have not seen him, you love him; and though you do not see him now, but believe in him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

December 12  
Tuesday

## GOD INTRUDES

READ:  
Galatians 3:26–4:7

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When the fullness of  
the time had come,  
God sent forth His Son,  
born of a woman, born  
under the law.  
—Galatians 4:4

---

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:  
■ Hosea 9–11  
■ Revelation 3

James Edwards echoes this theme in his book *The Divine Intruder*: “[God] breaks into this world, even when He is unexpected and unwelcome. God joins us in our weakest and worst moments. There is a Divine Intruder among us.”

The stable in Bethlehem and the cross of Calvary remind us that “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4-5).

The Lord did not wait for an invitation to enter our world. Clothed with humanity, He lived as our teacher, died as our sacrifice, and rose from the grave as our Savior.

Christmas is coming—and so is Easter. —David McCasland

*This joyous season of the year  
Should prompt us to recall  
That Jesus' death on Calvary  
Provides new life for all. —Sper*

---

**Jesus' earthly life is framed by two impossibilities:  
a virgin's womb and an empty tomb.**

During this Christmas season, it's good to keep a firm grip on the reality of Easter. While the two events are celebrated at different times and in very different ways, they are both integral parts of God's initiative in His grand plan of salvation.

Peter Larson wrote: “Despite our efforts to keep Him out, God intrudes. The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: a virgin's womb and an empty tomb. Jesus entered our world through a door marked ‘No Entrance’ and left through a door marked ‘No Exit.’”

James Edwards echoes this theme in his book *The Divine Intruder*: “[God] breaks into this world, even when He is unexpected and unwelcome. God



## ILLUSTRATION

**Frustrated Christmas Shopper Lashes Out**

Send to printer

**Topics:** Advent; Attitude; Calvary; Christ, birth of; Christ, Cross of; Christ, death of; Christ, incarnation of; Christmas; Cynicism; Easter; Holidays; Stress

**Filters:** Christian Culture; Humor; Stories

**References:** [Isaiah 7:14](#) , [Isaiah 53:1-12](#) , [Matthew 1:18-25](#) , [Matthew 2:1-12](#) , [Matthew 11:28-30](#) , [Luke 2:1-20](#)

**Tone:** Neutral/Mixed

A woman was doing her last-minute Christmas shopping at a crowded mall. She was tired of fighting the crowds. She was tired of standing in lines. She was tired of fighting her way down long aisles looking for a gift that had sold out days before.

Her arms were full of bulky packages when an elevator door opened. It was full. The occupants of the elevator grudgingly tightened ranks to allow a small space for her and her load.

As the doors closed, she blurted out, "Whoever is responsible for this whole Christmas thing ought to be arrested, strung up, and shot!"

A few others nodded their heads or grunted in agreement.

Then, from somewhere in the back of the elevator, came a single voice that said: "Don't worry. They already crucified him."

*Homiletics (November/December 2006), Volume 18; submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky*

related images

**Christmas Shopping**

Printer view

Christmas shopping rush in Dublin, Ireland. Photograph taken by Flickr user Irish Typepad.

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December 19  
Tuesday

## NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

READ:  
Philippians 2:5-11

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You shall call His name  
JESUS, for He will save  
His people from their  
sins. —Matthew 1:21.

---

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:  
■ Jonah 1-4  
■ Revelation 10

How meaningful is the name of Jesus to us? Other names, like the names of those we love, are inexpressibly precious. But for those of us who are redeemed by God's grace, the name of Jesus is the most meaningful. And it is to our heavenly Father as well. He "has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Throughout the rest of our lives and into eternity, let's magnify that wonderful name—Jesus. —Vernon C. Grounds

*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!*

*Let all heaven and earth proclaim:  
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away,  
But there's something about that name!* —Gaither

---

**The name of Jesus is precious to those who know Him  
and profane to those who spurn Him.**

If you knew for certain that you were going to lose your voice and that you would never be able to speak again, what would you want your final words to be?

A man with throat cancer faced an operation that would save his life but not his voice. Just before surgery, he spent time with his wife telling her of his love. He did the same with his daughter.

Then he asked his doctor to let him know precisely when the anesthetic would make him unconscious. As the man was slipping off to sleep, he said distinctly, "Jesus! Jesus!" That was the last word he chose to utter in this life—"Jesus!"

I was so tickled playing golf the other day with Tom Pryor. On the 13th hole at Emerald Bay (about 190 yards straight of way) Tom's tee shot ended up over in the 12th fairway. On his second shot he blasted through some trees, up on the green, and into the hole.

Bobby Wolff's response was so classic, "Although I saw it on the 13th, I have had to listen to it for the rest of the round."

#### John 4:28,29

"So the woman left her water pot and went into the city and said to the men, 'Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done. This is not the Christ, is it?'"

"How I praise thee, precious Savior,  
That thy love laid hold of me.  
Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me,  
That I might thy channel be.

Channels only, blessed Master,  
But with all thy wondrous power,  
Flowing through us, thou canst use us  
Every day and every hour."

#### IV. GOING HOME v. 39-40

v.39 And when they completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

Mary and Joseph have come to the temple on this the 40th day to fulfill the requirements of the law of the Lord before they returned north to Galilee to their own city of Nazareth.

We know that, according to Matthew, the three wise men come and visit the Lord Jesus and then Mary and Joseph and the babe spend some time in Egypt before they go back to the city of Nazareth.

v.40 Now the child was growing and becoming strong; becoming full of wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

Our last picture, then, in summary form by Dr. Luke of the Lord Jesus at this point is that the child was growing physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally; he was becoming strong physically and he was becoming full of wisdom. He was developing his intellectual and mental capacities. and spiritually the "grace of God was upon him."

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular passage of Scripture?

LESSON #1: Obedience to the word of God ought to be our primary concern.

LESSON #2: Though Mary and Joseph were poor, they gave what they had to the Lord.

LESSON #3: Death for the believer should be a departing in peace.

LESSON #4: Salvation is wrapped up in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #5: Anna, as a widow for over 60 years, became better instead of bitter through her trials.

LESSON #6: Serving the Lord with intensity can bring therapy to the broken heart.

who would have thought

Many years have come and gone, yet this world remains the same. Empires have been built and fallen only time has made a change. Nation against nation, brother against brother. Men so filled with hatred killing one another. And over half the world is starving while a banner of decency is torn. Debating over disarmament, kill children before they're born, and fools who march to win the right to justify their sin. O every nation that has fallen has fallen from within. Yet in the midst of this darkness there is a hope a light that burns. This little child the King of kings, some day will return !!

LESSON #7: Our lives ought to be characterized by giving thanks to God and speaking for God to those who will listen.

"I know not how that Bethlehem's Babe  
Could in the Godhead be;  
I only know the Manger-Child  
Has brought God's life to me.

I know not how that Calvary's Cross  
A world from sin could free;  
I only know its Matchless Love  
Has brought God's love to me.

I know not how that Joseph's tomb  
Could solve Death's mystery;  
I only know the Living Christ--  
Our Immortality."

The redemption price for our sins was paid for on Calvary's cross some 33 years later. And now this wondrous gift of salvation is provided in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is standing at your heart's door knocking and waiting for entrance at this Christmas time. Will you not heed the Spirit's call and open your heart and your life to Jesus Christ, acknowledging your sin, and receiving Christ as your Savior. You, as a result of that act of faith, will be declared righteous in God's sight. O do not waste the time. Do not with King Agrippa say, 'Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian.' Recognize that now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

TOPIC	REF #	TEXT
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Marriage

Misc-67

**What A Merry Christmas This Could Be**  
**Willie Nelson**

What a merry Christmas this could be  
 If you would just come back to me  
 And say that you've forgiven me  
 What a merry Christmas this could be

It was just last Christmas  
 That we quarreled and you walked out  
 I knew that I was wrong  
 But you'd come back  
 I had no doubt  
 Now a year has rolled around  
 It's Christmas once again  
 And what I'd give if you'd come walkin' in

What a merry Christmas this could be  
 If you would just come back to me  
 And say that you've forgiven me  
 What a merry Christmas this could be

From CD *Classic Country Christmas: Volume One*. TimeLife.com. "What a Merry Christmas This Could Be" performed by Willie Nelson. Written by Harlan Howard & Hank Cochran). Sony/ATV Tree Publishing. BMI. Originally recorded prior to 1972. All rights reserved by BMG Music. Courtesy of The RCA Records Label, Nashville. Lyrics taken from: <http://www.geocities.com/islandlyrics/lyrics/xmasongs.htm>



## ILLUSTRATION

**Philanthropy Is Everyone's Business**[Send to printer](#)

**Topics:** Church; Culture; Generosity; Giving; Good deeds; Missions; Money; Money, Tithing; Offerings; Outreach; Poor; Poverty; Prosperity; Riches; Stewardship; Tithing

**Filters:** Pop Culture; Statistics

**References:** Proverbs 11:24 [📖](#), Acts 11:29 [📖](#), Acts 20:35 [📖](#), 1 Corinthians 16:2 [📖](#), 2 Corinthians 9:7 [📖](#), Galatians 2:10 [📖](#), James 1:27 [📖](#), James 5:1-6 [📖](#), 1 John 3:16-17 [📖](#)

**Tone:** Commend

According to research conducted in 2006, the vast majority of Americans make some contribution to the Red Cross, Salvation Army, American Cancer Society, local church, or other charitable organization every year. In fact, more Americans contribute to charities than bother to vote. U.S. donations have risen from \$1.7 billion in 1921 to more than \$200 billion a year in 2006. This represents an 88 percent increase in the last decade alone.

Americans privately donated more than \$4.2 billion to the Red Cross and other agencies working to assist the survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, and nearly \$2 billion to relief efforts connected to the Indian Ocean tsunami.

"Philanthropy is no longer just for the very rich," says Robert Bremner, professor emeritus of history at Ohio State University. "Philanthropy is everybody's business now."

*"Giving Away a Fortune," The Week (9-15-06), p. 15; submitted by Ted De Haas, Bedford, Iowa*

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## ILLUSTRATION

**Many Gift Cards Go Unused**

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**Topics:** Accepting Christ; Apathy; Assurance; Complacency; Eternal life; Gift of Righteousness; God, gifts of; God, goodness of; Grace; Imputation of Righteousness; Life, short; Neglect; Propitiation; Receiving Christ; Responsibility; Salvation, Assurance of; Salvation, gift of

**Filters:** Free; Pop Culture; Statistics

**References:** John 3:16 , John 14:6 , Romans 6:23 , Ephesians 2:8-9 , Hebrews 2:3 , Hebrews 12:25 , Revelation 22:17

**Tone:** Warn

According to the Consumer Reports National Research Center, one out of every five gift-card recipients never used their cards last year, representing about \$972 million in unredeemed cards.

The top reasons for not using gift cards include:

- Haven't had time: 50 percent
- Haven't found anything I wanted: 37 percent
- Lost the card: 14 percent
- Card expired: 12 percent

Jae Yang and Adrienne Lewis, "Americans Neglect a Billion in Gift Cards," USA Today (11-20-06); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky

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Jesus has the GREATEST Gift Card  
 Available!  
 ① Haven't had time — II Cor. 6:2  
 ② Haven't Found Anything I wanted —  
 Brother you can't make it without  
 this one!!  
 ③ Lost the card — You might be lost  
 but not the offer.  
 ④ Card expired — when you do!!

# I'M FREE

1.

So long I had searched for life's meaning,  
Enslaved by the world and my greed;  
Then the door of the prison was opened by love,  
For the ransom was paid-- I was freed

Refrain:

I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,  
I'm free from the guilt of the past;  
For I've traded my shackles for a glorious song--  
I'm Free! Praise the Lord! Free at last!

2.

I'm free from the guilt that I carried,  
From that dull empty life I'm set free;  
For when I met Jesus He made me complete--  
He forgot how (wicked) I used to be.

[ Verse 3 and 4 by your editor, Steve Van Nattan  
To sing verse 3 - 4 wait for the second play of the music. ]

I cried, O Lord, how did this happen,  
What price did my freedom demand?  
Then the Savior came near, and He whispered so low,  
"Come look at the prints in my hands."

Refrain:

I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,  
I'm free from the guilt of the past;  
I'll soon be with Jesus and sing the glad song--  
I'm Free! Praise the Lord! Free at last!

4

Your destiny soon will be certain,  
Your debts must be paid with a price;  
Jesus said, "I'm the way and the Truth and the  
Life,"  
Believe Him, and have Paradise.

# I'm Free

Words and Music by Bill and Gloria Gaither  
© Gaither Music

John 8:36

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."



So long I had searched for life's meaning,  
Enslaved by the world and my greed;  
Then the door of the prison was opened by love,  
For the ransom was paid - I was free.

## Refrain

I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,  
I'm free from the guilt of the past;  
For I've traded my shackles for a glorious  
song,  
I'm Free! Praise the Lord! Free at last!

I'm free from the guilt that I carried,  
From that dull empty life I'm set free;  
For when I met Jesus, He made me complete,  
He forgot how foolish I used to be.

## Refrain

I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,  
I'm free from the guilt of the past;  
For I've traded my shackles for a glorious  
song,  
I'm Free! Praise the Lord! Free at last!

I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,  
I'm free from the guilt of the past;  
For I've traded my shackles for a glorious  
song,  
I'm Free! Praise the Lord! Free at last!  
I'm Free! Praise the Lord! Free at last!

(Website: <http://my.homewithgod.com/heavenlymidis2/free.html>)