

“The Perfect Once for All Gift”—Hebrews 10:8-10

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Perfect Once for All Gift”, is Hebrews 10:8-10 → *When He said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then He added, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He does away with the first covenant in order to establish the second covenant. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Gift giving in connection with Christmas may be a tradition based on the practice of the wise men who brought their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to baby Jesus. However, if this is true, then following their example we would give gifts to Jesus. This makes sense since it is supposed to be the celebration of His birthday! There are those who do perceive giving gifts to others as giving to Jesus based on their understanding of His words from Matthew 25:40 → *As you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.*

With all the traditions of gift-giving connected with the celebration of Christmas around the world we don't have to go far to see that in our

culture it is no longer focused on the celebration of Christ's birth, Who brought God's perfect gift to mankind. Christmas hymns have been replaced with other songs praising a mythological figure called Santa Claus. I recently attended an elementary school Christmas program which included a song stating that Santa is the man of the hour. Naturally my thought was: "Nope! Jesus is the Man of the hour!" Unfortunately there was no Jesus. However, in all fairness it was billed as "holiday program," not a "Christmas program." The sad fact is that in all the special holiday prime time tv programs the only place you will hear about the Biblical account of Jesus's birth is when Linus recites a portion of Luke chapter two to explain to Charlie Brown the true meaning of Christmas.

Why? Why is Christ being taken out of Christmas and replaced by a "holiday season?" As all the Christmas hymns confess, Jesus came to deal with sin—your sin—your disobedience to God's Law. Our sinful human natures do not want to face our sin, let alone talk about it. Thus, it's much more comfortable to invest our efforts in that which makes us feel good at the expense of that which brings us forgiveness.

In the text before us the Holy Spirit reveals how the requirements of *sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings* which were *offered according to the law* (cf. verse 8) under the old covenant could not cleanse a person of his sins. In the previous verses He explained that

the law . . . can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (cf. Hebrews 10:1-4) Does Christmas become a reminder of peoples' sin every year?

Thus, Jesus came to do His Father's will (cf. verse 9) and offer the perfect once for all gift for all mankind—He shed His blood on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for all your sins, for all time. Think of the value we place on gift-giving. Some families even set money limits on the gifts they exchange. If it's a major gift which cost quite a bit you may hear someone say something like, "Merry Christmas . . . and happy birthday . . . happy Valentine's Day . . . happy 4th of July . . .", as if it is the one gift which covers every "holiday" for the rest of your life. However, there is only one perfect gift that covers you for all sins for all time. It's Jesus' sacrifice on the cross **for you!**

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 Yahweh promised to *make a new covenant with* His people which would not be like the former covenant under His Law. This new *covenant* would be characterized by an intimate relationship with Him where *no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know*

Me, from the least of them to the greatest. Why will they know and acknowledge Him? He goes on to say: *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* It is based on His “divine amnesia” under a whole new covenant of grace!

According to verse 9 of our text, Jesus came to do *away with the first* covenant under the Law, which places our sins continually before us, *in order to establish the second* covenant under His grace, which places our sins continually on Jesus. John 1:16-17 says: From Christ’s *fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*** The celebration of Christmas with all its traditional gift-giving can be celebrated **properly only** if you recognize your sins and cling to the perfect once for all gift of the atoning work of Jesus on the cross for you. This is true faith. Otherwise the celebration of Christmas simply becomes another burden under laws which constantly show us how “naughty” we are and the many times we fail to be “nice.”

The story is told of the little boy who wanted to write a letter to Jesus with His Christmas “wish list.” He began: “Dear Jesus, I’ve been really nice for the last 6 months.” He paused, crumpled up the paper and started over. “Dear Jesus, I’ve been really nice for the last 3 months.” Again, he thought a moment, crumpled up the paper and started over. “Dear Jesus, I’ve been really nice for the last 2 weeks.” Totally

frustrated, he crumpled up the paper, walked over to the nativity scene in his living room, grabbed Mary, sat down and started his letter again: “Dear Jesus, if you ever want to see Your mother again . . .”

Interesting how the Holy Spirit produces guilt in us when we place our performance next to the Law. We will try to justify our sinful actions or work harder to drown out the guilty conscience or try to totally ignore the Lord along with anyone or anything having to do with Him or even delve into more sinful behavior. You can see this when you’ve searched and searched for the perfect gift for someone and, after giving it to him, it didn’t elicit a perfect response of gratitude, joy and praise you expected. And if it did, it is usually short lived. There’s no way to appease the human sinful heart as it deals with the demands of the Law.

This is why Jesus came to do His Father’s will, not to appease sinners. He came to offer the perfect once for all sacrifice for the forgiveness of all your sins **as well as be that sacrifice Himself**. These two elements are what the word “propitiation” is meant to describe: To offer the sacrifice as well as be the sacrifice. Verse 10 of our text says: *By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* To be sanctified means to be made holy, pure, forgiven and blameless **in God’s sight** forever! It means that the Holy Spirit will produce a holy celebration of Christmas with gift-giving flowing from grace and not from obligation and guilt. It means you will have the

desire to live a holy life because Jesus lived perfectly under God's Law
for you!

No doubt, when you look at yourself this side of heaven, you will not see such a holy person. You will still see sin manifest itself in your heart and life. You will see this sin also manifest itself in your relationships with others. The difference is that you know how sin is dealt with properly: **By clinging to *the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all your sins!*** You won't try to chase ways to relieve the guilt of your sin by more works of law made up by you. Instead, you'll cling to the work of Jesus, confess your sins to Him and experience the perfect once for all gift of forgiveness in Him!

So . . . if you're looking for the "perfect gift" for someone, there you have it—***the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all sins.*** Sound like kind of a strange gift to give in the midst of all our traditional gift-giving? Well, because Jesus is being taken out of Christmas with more and more baptized Christians ignoring His work in their lives you cannot assume that people (even in your own family and circles) actually know the true meaning of Christmas. So do not hesitate to give the gift which the angel gave to the shepherds in Luke 2:10-11 → *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ*

the Lord. For it to be **good** news of great **joy** can only happen by faith in Jesus, Who offered His body as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of all sins, for all people, for all time! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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