

"The Greatest Gift"

Today we're discussing the greatest gift to the greatest number at the greatest price for the greatest benefit. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're looking at the gift of Jesus Christ.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We want to focus on the one thing on which we can depend, the written word of God. The Scriptures have stood the test of time as God's holy and true message. It contains God's truth, God's love, God's commandments, God's promises, and God's warnings. We can get what God desires and what He's doing by looking into His word. And this is why we continually go to the Scriptures. We want to hear what God has to say. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be part of your life each week.

We may receive many gifts, but we have no gift as great as the gift of Jesus Christ Himself. Everything He is and He did profoundly affects us all. Because of Him, our lives are more blessed, richer, purer, and kinder. From Him we have faith, hope, and love. Jesus was indeed unique and gave to us what no one else could give. He opened the door to forgiveness, to the church, and to hope beyond the grave. The Lord gave us God's word, paid for our sins with His blood, rose from the dead, and built His church kingdom.

2 Corinthians 8, verse 9 says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." Because of His sacrifice, we're spiritually rich indeed. Every spiritual gift in the heavenly places can be found in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1, verse 3). Where would we be without Jesus? We'd be immeasurably poorer spiritually and any other way. No one has impacted this world with greater morals and values than the Son of God, Christ Jesus. This world cannot do without Him, and you cannot do without Him either.

Now we offer this study free on the greatest gift. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

We'll now worship in song, read from John 3, 16 to 21, and explore the blessing of the greatest gift in Christ Jesus.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 3, verses 16 to 21. It points to one of the most well known verses of all time, but there's more from the lips of Jesus than is just found in this one verse. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he's not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 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 for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." That's a reading from God's Holy Word.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that Jesus has given Himself as a gift to us. And Father we're thankful that You have been willing to sacrifice Him for our sins. Father help us to believe in Him, and to give ourselves fully and truly to You, and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

I love beautiful hymns sung with hearts filled with love and praise. I'm grateful to the church at Edmond for decades of singing lovely hymns that encourage our souls.

Jesus Christ challenges us to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses daily and follow Him. And we realize this is a great, and life-changing commitment. Christ wants you to change your heart and change your life. The blessings He offers to those who follow Him, however, is greater than we can ask or imagine. Yes, we must count the cost of following Christ; but we must also look to the prize of our high calling. Why should we follow Jesus? Well let's examine these reasons.

First, we should follow Him because of His great love. Though you and I have been loved by family and friends, we can't find a greater love than the love shown to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins on the cruel cross. No one else has died for our sins, and no one else could. He showed us the love of God and how we should love God. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." Now our sins separated us from God, but the love of Christ opened the door for us to be reunited with God, so that we could live with Him forever.

Though we were once in sin, He lovingly and sacrificially made it possible for us to be at peace with God through the blood of the cross. Colossians 1:21 and 22 describes what He did: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him." Through love and sacrifice, He brought us to God holy and blameless.

Second, we should follow Him because He brought us the truth. John 1:17 says that "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." Jesus described the blessing of the truth in John 8:32, "and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Now the truth gives us the standard by which we can judge what is right and wrong, what is moral and immoral, what is good and evil. We need this standard to know what we should be and what we should do rather than to fall for lies and wickedness. The Lord Jesus told Pilate in John 18:37, "You say correctly that I am a king. And for this I have been born, and for this I've come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Are you listening to the voice of Jesus?

Peter explains how the truth purifies us and causes us to be born again in 1 Peter 1:23 to 25, "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you've been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you." If we want to know the truth, then we must listen to the words of Jesus found in Scripture.

Third, He is the One who can give us the forgiveness of sins. Few things in life are as troublesome as a guilty conscience. A guilty conscience punishes us and pierces our hearts. It shames us to know that we've done something evil. We regret what we've done, we feel dirty inside, and we long for a clear conscience. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 says that "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." The wounds of Christ heal our souls and spirits through forgiveness. Now forgiveness means God no longer counts our sins against us; that we're free from the guilt and consequences of our sins.

Now when God through Christ forgives us, God no longer sees us as we once were. Before our forgiveness we couldn't inherit the kingdom of God or live in heaven with God. In forgiveness, however, "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus

Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6 and verse 11). Through Christ God washed us and made us clean; God sanctified us and made us holy; God justified us and declared us righteous. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21 says, "For our sake he [that is God] made him [that is Christ] to be sin who knew no sin [Christ knew no sin], so that in him [in Christ] we might become the righteousness of God." What a blessing it is to be forgiven! What a blessing to be free from sin!

Fourth, He opened the door to the church, the family of God. Jesus built the church (Matthew 16:18) He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20 and verse 28). Paul described the church in 1 Timothy 3 and verse 15 as "the household of God" and "the pillar and support of the truth." While the church is made up of fallible humans, it is perfectly and infallibly designed by the wisdom of God. It is God's household or family. And as God's family, it's filled with people who love God and want to live holy and loving lives. I've seen lives changed, hearts softened, and great sacrifices from those who call themselves Christians. They love, because Christ loved them. They give, because Christ gave to them. They serve, because Christ served them. There's no greater privilege than to live in the family of God.

Sadly, not everyone who calls himself a Christian lives the way a Christian should live. Some never learned to love, or to forgive, or to serve as Christ did. Some fall victim to every kind of temptation. Yes, some lust after the flesh, lust after the eye, and fall to the pride of life. If we see only the weaknesses in the church however, we'll miss the good, the service, and the love found in so many others. If you call yourself a Christian and then act like you never knew Christ, you need to examine yourself and repent.

Fifth, Christ has given us a righteous way of life that is filled with purpose. 1 Peter 2, verses 21 to 23 says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn't revile in return; when he suffered, he didn't threaten, but he continued entrusting himself to him who judges righteously." As Christians, we are called to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ. Jesus never sinned and never deceived others.

While we can't be perfectly sinless as He was, we should strive to live godly lives and to speak the truth. We must keep our eyes focused on Jesus and doing the will of God. Hebrews 12:1 to 2 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus led the way in doing the will of God, and we must not allow circumstances and sin to keep us from running with endurance in our journey to do the will of God.

Sixth, we should follow Him because He is the Way to eternal life. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me." The Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well of the great blessing of eternal life. And He said to her in John 4:13 to 14, that "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Now if we wish to have eternal life, then we must not only believe in but also obey the Lord Jesus Christ. John 3 and verse 36 clearly says that "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; and whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." 1 John 5 and verse 12 says, "Whoever has the Son has life; and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

What does it mean to have eternal life? It means that there will be life beyond that will last forever and ever. And the words of Jesus are the words of eternal life, and this is why we must believe in Him and in what He says. Jesus said in John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Eternal life means we have a relationship with the only true God and His Son Jesus. He is our Father in heaven, and we become His children.

Seventh, He promised us a place in the heavenly Father's house. The Lord Jesus encouraged the apostles on the night before His death in John 14:1 to 3, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. And if it were not so, I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you [wouldn't I have said that]? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I'm going."

And the Lord Jesus is now in heaven preparing a place for those who believe in Him, who love Him, and who follow Him. That place is in the Father's house. We've been kept in His heart, and now we can live in His house forever. He prepared a place for each one who believes in Him. Peter described that place in 1 Peter 1:3 to 5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Just think of it, a place prepared for us and kept in heaven that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading! What a blessing!

Now this great gift is yours, if you'll take hold of Jesus Christ. This gift is free, but it isn't cheap. It's not a gift to be taken lightly, to be forgotten, or to be forsaken. God won't bargain with you; He offers life according to His own terms. He's God, and we aren't. He gives His gift as He wills, and we can't expect to receive it by following our own will and ignoring His teaching and commandments. We can't substitute our way of salvation for His way. We must be wise to hear Him and act according to His words.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father we're thankful for the marvelous gift of Jesus gift of Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in so many different ways and given us so much. Father help us to give ourselves to You freely and fully with love and faith. And help us Father to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

God is the greatest giver; Jesus Christ is the greatest gift; that gift is offered to all, the greatest number; and eternal life is the greatest blessing for the greatest amount of time. No gift can compare. Amazingly, God offers this gift for free. Romans 6:23 says that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Revelation 22, verse 17 calls us to take hold: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires to take the water of life without price." Jesus Christ paid the great cost of salvation from sin, so He could offer it to you freely.

Will you accept it? Why wouldn't you choose eternal life? I've known some who thought sinful pleasure was a great gift, but the flesh doesn't last. I've known some who thought riches were the greatest prize, but you can't take your money with you when you die. I've known some who were so proud of the life they had, they wouldn't think of following Jesus. They won't deny themselves, take up their crosses daily, or follow Him.

Now if you wish to follow Him, then trust in Him and believe what He teaches. Stop trusting in your own ways and turn to the truth. Turn from your sins and from selfishness. And out of love confess

Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ. When you are baptized, God cleanses you and sets you free. He makes you His child and adds you to His church. When you meet God's conditions, trusting what God instructs, God blesses you with salvation. Won't you put your trust in Him and let Him bless you? God is looking to bless you and give you eternal life.

We hope today's study about the greatest gift has caused you to want to draw close to God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.