

The Grace of God has appeared– Christmas 2013.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14)

Beloved in the Lord,

The grace of God has appeared – the grace that brings salvation to all people. This is the essence of the Christmas message, in fact it is also the message of Easter, the message of The Bible. It is the message of the Christian faith.

Jesus stated it like this:

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18)

Let us consider for a short while how things would be if God had sent His Son Jesus into the world, to judge the world. If that were the case, then we would not be celebrating Christmas. Christmas would not be a time of peace and joy and love. We would have nothing to celebrate because we would all be condemned. No man could stand before the judgement of God.

The Bible bears out this truth in so many places. I will give you just two examples:

You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,

Who remembers You in Your ways.

Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,

We continued in them a long time;

And shall we be saved?

⁶ For all of us have become like one who is unclean,

And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;

And all of us wither like a leaf,

And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isaiah 64:5-6)

In the New Testament we read:

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

²⁰ ***because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.***

²¹ ***But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:19-23)***

There are very many more texts I could cite that reveal this same truth to us. It is clear that all of us are sinners and that if Jesus had come to judge, we would all be found guilty, and would all receive a death sentence, because that is the punishment for sin.

Thank God, that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. That includes you and me. You see Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not to come and judge us, but to save us. He came as our Saviour.

That night when Jesus was born, shepherds (who were outcasts in society) were the first to receive the Gospel, the Good News. It was proclaimed to them by a choir of Angels:

“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)

In the same way that the Bible tells us that all have sinned; the Bible tells us that Jesus has come as a Saviour for all people. He came to save us from sin, to set us free from the curse of eternal death. He came so that at the age of 33, He would die a substitutionary death. He would take our punishment and die on a cross in our stead, in our place, in order that we may receive a pardon., and inherit eternal life with Him in Heaven with God The Father.

Does this news excite you? Does your heart overflow with joy at the news that instead of punishment, you have life granted to you? Are you excited and thankful that the Grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all people? Does your voice rise up to join the Angels in singing:” ***Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”?***

If not, then maybe, and most likely, you have not yet met the real Jesus whose birthday we celebrate. It is one thing to know the Christmas story and completely another to know Jesus personally as your Lord and Saviour. A change has to take place in your life. There needs to be a transaction between you and God. We are born in sin, we are born separated from God. We are born with a rebel that rises up against God.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

We are born again when we confess to God that we are sinners, that we need salvation, and that we believe that Jesus has paid our sin debt in full with His own precious blood, and that He died and rose again. We are born again when we open the door of our heart to Jesus and receive Him in as Lord and Saviour. When we do so we become children of God.

We read in John 1:10-14

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

When we receive Jesus into our hearts we become children of God. We have received His gift of salvation. This is something that each one of us must do personally. His gift is free and it is complete and Jesus will never turn away anyone who comes to Him in faith. This transaction has to take place in this life, after death it will be too late. Those who have not received Jesus, who have not been born again will be facing the White Throne Judgement, where the verdict will be guilty and the sentence – eternal death.

God does not desire this for any one, and that is why this message comes to you today. It is a message of love.

Please understand that God is Just and His Word cannot be changed. He gives us an opportunity to be saved, but we must take it. He will not force us to receive His gift. The choice is ours.

I plead with you, if you haven't already: Come to Him today and receive His gift. Open your heart to Jesus today.

If you already have, then may this Christmas message and this Christmas time, be a reminder to you of God's love and mercy. May it be a time of celebration and thanksgiving. Thank Him anew that His grace has appeared bringing salvation to all people, to you in particular. Remind yourself of the tremendous price Jesus paid to save you. How great is His love and mercy. Allow His grace to be your teacher, your instructor as our text says:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

We live in a corrupt, fallen and dirty world, and we need to be instructed in how to live holy and pure lives that honour God, who has so graciously saved us. We need to daily remind ourselves, who we belong to, whose children we are. How much it cost for Him to redeem us. We need to deny ungodliness and worldly desires.

We are called to live holy lives, to live sensibly, righteously and godly. Our lives should daily reflect the love of God, the Holiness of God; The Grace of God; The Righteousness of God.

Our commission is to be salt and light. Today there is little salt and little light. So much salt is dampened and light dimmed in the sea of compromise. We need to keep our eyes firmly fixed on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ whose birth we celebrate today. We need to live lives that reflect Him and honour Him. That is what He has called us to do.

May we be as our text says: zealous for good deeds. Luke warmness is no good. It is time to be zealous for God and His Word. We need to stand up for what is right, what is just, what is true and holy. Paul says to us:

“Therefore I urge you, 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. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
(Romans 12:1-2)

We are born again once. We receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour once; we are saved once; but we need to daily sacrifice our lives to Him. We need to daily present our bodies to Him as a living and holy sacrifice. When we do, we live as His dear children and our lives bring Him glory.

Today as we celebrate Christmas, may each one of us humble ourselves before the Lord and offer ourselves to Him, who gave all for us. May we be holy and pleasing in His sight.

May our offering of ourselves to Him be gratitude for His gift of Himself to us.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.