

'HIS CHRISTMAS PRESENCE' *(Christmas is for kids / children of God)*

John 1:12-14

The Gift of Belonging

"...as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God..." **John 1:12**

Some religions say that we all are children of God, but the Bible does not agree with that wishful thinking. In fact, God's Word tells us the painful truth that every human being born is *'dead in trespasses and sins...controlled by the prince of the power of the air (the devil)...and are by nature children of wrath'* (**Ephesians 2:1-3**) until he or she trusts Christ for the forgiveness and mercy of God found only in Him on the basis of the cross upon which He suffered and died for us (**Ephesians 2:4-10**). As the verse above confirms *'...as many as receive Him (turn from self and sin to righteousness and Him), to them He gives the right (privileged authorization) to become children of God'*. Like it or not, the fact is that God the Father doesn't have any natural born offspring, only 'adopted children' in His family. And it is a tremendous privilege to be an adopted child of God (**Romans 8:14-17**)! If you have given your heart and life to Christ, you have been adopted out of the awful orphanage of the devil and now belong to the awesome family of God (**Colossians 1:12-14**). Adoption means that God picked you out of the masses of other lost human beings to be His son or daughter (**Ephesians 1:3-6**)! In fact to legally complete the transaction for your adoption was the reason for Christmas in the first place according to **Galatians 4:4-5**: *"when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons...you are no longer a slave (of sin) but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"*! Do you fully comprehend that last phrase? You, despite the fact that you were adopted into God's family are a co-heir of God just like Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son! If you sincerely received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord by faith, you belong to Him and in Him all He has belongs to you. Right now, prior to our coming transformation (**1 John 2:28-3:3**) access to our awesome inheritance is limited, just like a minor heir is restricted until his or her maturity. But someday in our perfected condition with Christ, we will rejoice forever as we enjoy our eternal inheritance with Him. For now, it is a blessing just to know that He chose us to be His and we belong to Him forever. We are able to get some of our inheritance now with our Guardian, the Holy Spirit's concurrence, but just the Gift of His possession of us, His promises to us, and His presence within us is more than we could have ever imagined before we belonged to Him.

Maintaining the Gift of God

(A WORD to the Wise about Salvation)

John 1:12-18

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Who calls you is faithful, Who also will do it."

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Spiritual Life is Empowered by 'Believing in HIS Name'

(Reviving your spirit's capacity to expand your faith)

vs. 12-13

"But to as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (authorization) to become children of God, to those who believe in His Name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Just prior to our salvation experience with Christ, God gives us the pre-salvation gift of 'faith' (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). After we put our faith in Christ alone, making it 'saving faith', our spirit is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (**Titus 3:4-7**). Our newly regenerated spirit now needs constant 'recharging' by the Word of God (**1 Peter 2:2, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:15-17**). As spiritual children of God our faith must feed on God's Word daily like manna from heaven for our spirits to remain healthy and holy (**Romans 10:17, Psalm 119:9-11**).

Belief or faith to be saved in the first place had to be a gift from God. It couldn't be inherited from others, exerted from ourselves or implanted by religion. Therefore growth of our spiritual capacity to trust God for other things can only come through devotional commitment.

Discuss how your saving faith has evolved into sanctifying faith through feeding on God's Word. What are some devotional disciplines or techniques you use to keep your spirit energized and growing in grace?

Spiritual Light is Experienced in ‘Beholding HIS Glory’

(Increasing your soul’s capacity to exclaim your faith)

vs. 14-15

*“And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of Whom I said, ‘He Who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’”***”

60 years after Jesus’ return to heaven, John still remembered with awe-- watching, listening and being with the glorious Savior. As he and the other disciples studied Jesus day to day they all came to sense His fullness of grace and truth and gradually became that way also (*1 John 1:1-4*). John, the prophet, was also transformed by ‘beholding’ Jesus (*John 1:29-34, 35-36; 3:28-34*).

Our soul is that cognitive part of us where we comprehend, interpret, and decide things. It is the headquarters or central office of our mind, will and emotions. The soul becomes like the things fed into it through our eyes, ears and thoughts. By filtering out all but what is conducive to knowing Christ better our soul, under the Holy Spirit’s tutelage, becomes more and more like our Lord (*Romans 8:29-30, Philippians 4:8, 1 John 4:17*). This is worship. And it is worship that as much as anything else converts the soul to think and feel and decide just like the Lord Jesus (*John 4:23-24, 9:30-32; Rev. 4:10-11, 7:11-12, 11:16-18*). Worship is not merely things we do like singing and praying – it is the sense of His presence and power that moves us to do those things with reverence and humility.

- 1. When and how do you most effectively ‘behold’ Him in worship?**
- 2. What needs to be true about the setting, etc. for your soul to worship?**
- 3. How is worship transforming your soul to think and feel and speak like Him?**
- 4. When worship fills your soul and overflows into outward expression, what does it look and sound like?**
- 5. Does what others may think of your style of worship concern or inhibit you? Why?**
- 6. And how do you handle that?**

Spiritual Fullness is Exuded in ‘Begetting’

(Transforming to your physical capacity to exude your faith)

vs. 16-18

*“And of His fullness we have all received, **and grace for grace.** For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. **The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**”*

Generally speaking, our physical body’s actions will be in concert with what is happening in our spirit and soul (for better or worse = *Matthew 12:35-37, John 7:37-38, Eph. 5:3-10*). To God it is vital that if we are becoming more like His Son inwardly, that it be also be expressed outwardly. God is not visibly tangible like people, so the world needs to see that He is real by how those of us who know Him are being affected by Him. Jesus was ‘begotten of the Father’ (sent into the world in visible, tangible form) so mankind could hear and see and believe. Now that He is not Personally here, it is through us He proves Who He is and what He is like. It is our main purpose in life to let God ‘beget’ Him again through our words and lives (*Acts 1:8*).

To live and talk and serve like Jesus is expected of us (*‘of His fullness we have all received’*). God will give us *‘grace upon grace’* to accomplish this mission. When we’re filled with the Holy Spirit, we, like Jesus, will be full of *‘grace and truth’* that others will see and be drawn to want to know and experience Him too.

- 1. If your spirit is energized with faith and your soul has a heightened sense of His presence, your physical being will be submissive to do His will and glorify Him.**
- 2. Discuss how our physical body is really just a conductor of what we are about inside.**
- 3. What are some ways we can creatively ‘beget’ (show forth) the Lord at Christmas?**