

Free Gift

It is interesting how many advertisers use the gimmick of “free gift” to entice the public into buying their products. The free gift concept is probably as old as advertising itself. Listening to old radio shows and 1950’s T.V. many of the sponsors of the shows were “brought to you by...” Times were certainly different then as the traditional family was still in place with dad at work and mom at home taking care of the domestic issues. Many of the shows and advertising were focused on things mom would need and use around the house, soap and laundry detergents, housewares and so on. I remember some of them from when I was young, the laundry soap would have free glasses or even a bath towel inside the box as a free gift. Daytime T.V. was flooded with “Soap Operas” as mom was at home and advertising targeted household needs.

The sheep were easily led back then, and it really isn’t any different today, except we are inundated with drug commercials to treat all the disorders moms and dads have today. There’s more panic buying as well, creating a fear that you need whatever it is they’re selling. The only fear we need is when we are working out our own salvation.

Philippians 2:12-13- “So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do according to *His* good pleasure.” Work is another four letter most churches forget to mention.

I watched a video on social media this week from the son of a former colleague who is really into the whole Jesus and salvation thing without knowing the content or totality of scripture. The topic was “the free gift of God.” He reduced the theme of God’s gift of salvation to Jesus plus nothing. An equation that simply means all we need to do is confess Jesus as our Savior and we’re off to Heaven. While he did make a point or two that we can do nothing ourselves to pay for this gift, it is freely given by the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:8- “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; **it is the gift of God,**”

Just so we are clear on the gift of God in this case is eternal life and it is freely given. Jesus Christ has paid the price for our sins with His life.

Romans 6:23- “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

It may be easy to understand why so many choose the effortless way, it doesn't require anything beyond mumbling a “sinner's prayer,” confessing Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. They take the Merriam-Webster's definition of free to the extreme, which is, Free Definition- “not costing or charging anything, enjoying personal freedom : not subject to the control or domination of another. This fits their narrative as they are not subject to God's Word or His Commandments as written.

1 John 5:3-4- “For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. Now then, everyone who is begotten by God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.”

We need to take a closer look at the word overcome in this scripture. If we truly desire this free gift of eternal life from God, we must overcome our sins and the world in which we live. We know we can accomplish this through our following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, going way beyond a “sinner's prayer.”

John 16:33- “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world.”

1 John 4:4-6- “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because greater *is* He Who *is* in you than the one who *is* in the world. They are of the world; because of this, they speak of the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God; the one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not of God does not listen to us. By this *means* we know the Spirit of the truth and the spirit of the deception.”

We must do the things He did, walk the path He walked and obey God the Father in all aspects of our lives. It is not a multiple choice, nor do we get to edit His instructions in His Word.

Ezekiel 37:24- “And David My servant *shall be* king over them. And there shall be one shepherd to all of them. And they shall **walk** in My ordinances and **obey** My laws and **do** them.”

James 1:22- “Then be doers of *the* Word, and not only hearers, deceiving your own selves.”

Isaiah 30:21- “And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This *is* the way, walk in it,” when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left.”

John 14:15- “If you love Me, keep the commandments— namely, My commandments.”

John 15:10- “If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love.”

We cannot begin to overcome anything without the Word of God.

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Maybe it's complacency that creates this lackadaisical approach to God's Word.

We have been duped into believing having it our way is the norm and we can choose to interpret scripture to fit any narrative.

2 Peter 1:19-21- “We also possess the confirmed prophetic Word to which you do well to pay attention, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and *the* morning star arises in your hearts; Knowing this first, **that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone's own private interpretation**; Because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the* Holy Spirit.”

How many times have we discussed the ways that scripture is taken out of context to support a false narrative? Just **believe** and say the sinner's prayer...

1 John 5:11-13- “And this is the witness: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has *eternal* life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have *eternal* life. These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to **believe** in the name of the Son of God.”

The “just believe” nonsense is dismissed in **James 2:19**- “Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this*. Even the demons **believe**—and tremble in fear.”

The mindset of “nothing further” or as was put in the video, “Jesus plus nothing” is like putting a screen door on a submarine. This is receiving the gift of God in vain.

2 Corinthians 6:1- “We then, working together *with Him*, are also exhorting you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

Having not been called by God the Father (**John 6:44, 65**), understanding scripture is beyond their grasp. What is harmful though is this delusional doctrine leads those astray who are seeking God in earnest. From our own testimonies, we know that if God is truly calling them, they will find His truth. We did and our presence here is evidence. Being lazy or slothful is an issue in all churches, even the churches of God.

Proverbs 19:15-16- “Laziness throws one into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. He who keeps the commandment keeps his own soul; he who is careless in his ways shall die.”

Proverbs 21:25- “The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to work.”

Once we become aware of God’s truth, our work truly begins. We can ill afford to become lazy or complacent, nor should we ignore the truth we have discovered.

1 Timothy 4:11-14- “These things command and teach. Do not allow anyone to despise your youth; but be an example to the believers— in word, in conduct, in love, in Spirit, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote *yourself* to reading, to encouragement, *and* to doctrine. Do not neglect the spiritual gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with *the* laying on of the hands of the elderhood.”

We spoke recently of the many gifts God has given us. We have been given the gift of His Holy Spirit at baptism. Opening our hearts and minds to the wisdom and understanding of His Word will *enable* us to overcome the things which we must while here on Earth.

Hebrews 6:10-12- “For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work, and the labor of love *by* which you have showed *honor* to His name, *in that* you have served the

saints and are *continuing* to serve *them*. But we earnestly desire that every one of you be demonstrating the same diligence, unto the full assurance of the hope until *the end*; So that you do not become lazy, but *that you be* imitators of those who through faith and steadfast endurance inherit the promises.”

The gift of God, eternal life *is* free. But we will not receive it ***IF*** we do not follow God’s instructions in His Word and the example set by Jesus Christ and overcome our sins and the things of the world. This is plainly affirmed throughout scripture, especially in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 2:25-26- “But hold fast what you have until I come. And to the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto *the end*, I will give authority over the nations;”

Revelation 3:5-6- “The one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**”

Revelation 3:12-13- “The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him* My new name. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

Revelation 3:21-22- “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

Revelation 21:7- “The one who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.”

We mentioned last week that God gave us two ears and one mouth as we are to listen twice as much as we speak. We have ears but are we listening to what is being said?

Matthew 13:14-17- “And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, ‘In hearing you shall hear, and in no way understand; and *in* seeing you shall see,

and in no way perceive; For the heart of this people has grown fat, and **their ears** are dull of hearing, and **their eyes they have closed**; lest they should see with their eyes, and should hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.’ **But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.** For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see what you see and have not seen; and to hear what you hear and have not heard.”

We are so blessed to know God’s precious truth and understand His Word through His Holy Spirit when so many are clueless.

John 17:1-3- “Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your own Son, so that Your Son may also glorify You; Since You have given Him authority over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send.”

The gift of eternal life by God’s grace came with a cost. While being free to us it was paid for with the blood of Jesus Christ. Talking the talk is not enough, being a “good person” doesn’t cut it, reading and knowing the Bible can fall short. **Doing**

what God instructs us to do with a grateful and humble heart will put us on track to overcoming *and* receiving the gift of God. As Christ died for us, we too must die to ourselves that He may live in us.

2 Corinthians 5:15- “And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and was raised again.”

There are no advertising gimmicks or shortcuts to receiving this free gift.

Diligence, devotion, and dedication to God’s way of life is mandatory. If we truly follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and ***do*** as He did, the gift of eternal life will be given to us at the First Resurrection. This is God’s promise.

1 John 2:25- “And this is the promise that He has promised us: eternal life.”