

A LOVE GIFT FROM JESUS

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When my daughter was three, I took her with me to a Christian bookstore. After I found the card I wanted, I couldn't find my daughter. As I called the police, she came out from behind an electric fireplace, eating some candy. I explained to her we must pay for what we take. As her father, I took responsibility for her actions and paid for the candy.

Jesus Took Responsibility for Our Sin

After Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they were filled with guilt and shame. Fear led them to hide from God, for they knew that death was the consequence of their choices. Instead of condemning them, God introduced His plan to save them. (Genesis 2:17; 3:1–8,15,21).

As the father of the human race, Adam brought sin and death to all. As our Creator, Jesus took responsibility for all our sins. He became human so He could represent us. As “the last Adam,” He lived a perfect life and died the death we all had earned (Romans 5:12; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:45; John 1:1–14, 29; 3:16, 17).

The Good News Is Greater Than the Bad News

“Through [Adam’s] offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through [Jesus’] righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Romans 5:18).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ” (Rom. 6:23).

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23,24).

As the last Adam, Jesus represented all of us. When He died, we all died in Him the death we earned. So Paul could write, “The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died” 2 Corinthians 5:14.

This is how God “justifies the ungodly” (Romans 4:5) and why Paul can say, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not [counting] their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

No matter who we are or what we have done, God is not counting any of our sins against us because of what Jesus did!

God Wants a Loving Relationship With Us

The simple truth is, “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” If we don’t believe this, we call God “a liar” (1 John 5:11, 10).

God loves us and wants the relationship with us to be restored. He invites everyone to be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20).

For reconciliation and healing to occur, repentance, confession, and forgiveness are necessary. God took the initiative to begin the reconciliation process. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . . When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Romans 5:8,10; See Col. 2:13).

God’s love draws us (John 12:32) and “leads [us] to repentance” (Romans 2:4). Repentance is allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us to turn from sin and let Jesus be our Savior and Lord.

Confession is being honest with God about our sin and need for a Savior. When “we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

God is just when forgiving us, for we all “have been crucified with Christ.” All who choose to be reconciled to God can say, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20; See also 2 Corinthians 5:14; Colossians 2:13).

Jesus Saves From All Aspects of the Sin Problem

There are three aspects of the sin problem we need to be saved from: the wages of sin, which is death; slavery to sin; and all the evil effects of sin.

1. Jesus has saved the world from the wages of sin through His perfect life and death. (Everyone is free to accept or reject this gift.)
2. Jesus is saving believers from slavery to sin through the Holy Spirit.
3. Jesus will save believers from the evil effects of sin when He returns and gives them new bodies and later creates a new heaven and earth.

A Love Gift Jesus Made For Us

To help us experience God’s love and salvation, Jesus made a gift for us. He said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). He made it to be a blessing, not a burden. Every Sabbath, God says, “Remember, I created you and I am the One who sanctifies you” (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13,17; Ezekiel 20:12,20).

To sanctify means to make holy. The gospel reveals how Jesus makes us holy and saves us from all three aspects of the sin problem. Understanding this frees us to grow into maturity by finding security in Christ.

We All Have Been Sanctified In Christ

Jesus “gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). By His choice, “we have been sanctified [made holy] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

We can’t make ourselves holy. This is what Jesus did. “For [God] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We are invited to come to Jesus just as we are. When we come, we are “holy, acceptable to God” because of Jesus. Then as the Holy Spirit leads us into truth we are “transformed by the renewing of [our] mind” (Romans 12:1,2; John 16:13).

The Sabbath reminds us that we all have been sanctified “in Christ.” This truth enables God to be just when forgiving us, qualify everyone for eternal life, and restore our freedom of choice (Heb. 10:10; 1 John 1:9; Rom. 4:5; Col. 1:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:20,21).

Believers Are Being Sanctified Spiritually

“By one offering [Jesus] has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

While we are growing, we stand perfect in Christ through His perfect life and death.

All who choose to receive Jesus as their Savior will receive the Holy Spirit. He will lead them into the truth that transforms them and sets them free from slavery to sin. As they grow into maturity in Christ, their lives will manifest “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22,23; see also John 1:12, 13; 8:31–36; 15:4, 5; 16:13; Romans 12:2).

Those who persistently resist the Holy Spirit will hate “the light.” They will not want to come into God’s presence. With sadness and grief, God will honor their choice and they will perish in the end (John 3:16–20; Revelation 6:14–16; 20:11–15).

The Sabbath reminds us that God is sanctifying believers spiritually. This enables believers to grow into maturity, be a blessing to others, and enjoy being with God.

Believers Will Be Sanctified Completely

The Sabbath reminds us that God will “sanctify you completely” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). When Jesus returns, believers will receive new bodies. God will also create “a new heaven and a new earth [where there is] no more death” or suffering. Then all the evil effects of sin will be gone forever. (1 Corinthians 15:50–55; Revelation 21:1–4)

Resting In Christ

The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that God is the One who makes us holy in every way. This truth reminds us of God's love and frees us to:

1. stop trying to make ourselves holy,
2. rest in Jesus' salvation every day,
3. love others as Jesus has loved us, and
4. live with the assurance we have eternal life.

(Exodus 31:13; Hebrews 4:1–9; John 15:12; 1 John 5:10-13).

Experiencing Meaning in Life

The Sabbath is a gift from Jesus that answers vital questions related to the meaning of life:

1. Where did we come from? A Creator!
2. Where are we going? To live forever with God unless we hate the light of God
3. Why are we here? To love as Jesus loves us and invite them to be reconciled to God

The Sabbath And The Gospel Are United

At the heart of the Ten Commandments is a gift from Jesus reminding us of the everlasting gospel—the answer to the sin problem. When the gospel and the Sabbath are separated from each other, both will be distorted.

Without a correct understanding of the gospel, legalism will set in. Ignoring the Sabbath will lead to lawlessness. When one commandment is discarded or changed, it opens the way for people to ignore others. Jesus said this would happen. “Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).

Embracing the Sabbath in the light of the gospel will deliver us from legalism and lawlessness and lead to true revival and reformation. (Isaiah 56; 58; Mark 2:28).

So in love, God said, “My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign. . . that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you” (Exodus 31:13).

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the Sabbath. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).