

Yes its Christmas time, when parents go insane, and advertising goes crazy: a time when you wander around the shops in a daze to the tune of "Jingle Bells". Somehow amongst the glitz and glamour the meaning of Christmas is lost.

Two things come to mind when Christmas rolls around. Firstly Christmas celebrates the most amazing gift that any person could ever receive – the gift of eternal life with our Heavenly Father.

The word Christmas gives us the clue: Christ - mas. Christmas is all about the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christmas was God's starting point of extending the gift of having a personal relationship with Him.

God gave His only Son for us that He could then give His Son to us. So we celebrate Christmas because we celebrate the giving of Jesus Christ as an unconditional gift of divine love. From a human perspective so many of our relationships are based on a conditional footing. It is rare we do or give something without expecting something in return.

The nature of God's gift is summed up in Ephesians 2:8-9: For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Christmas is all about making us whole in body, soul and spirit, not broke. The word grace can be defined as a favour done without expectation of return. Romans 5:8 says; But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Christmas was the start of a rescue mission for the lost souls of mankind. No one else was equipped or able to carry out the rescue except Jesus Christ, because He was sinless, perfect in every way. The word saved can be defined as the spiritual and eternal salvation granted immediately by God to those who believe in Christ.

Experiencing this gift of Christmas which culminated at Easter on the cross of Calvary, is not something that can be done through human endeavour. Recently I was sharing with a woman what it means to become a Christian and how. She couldn't understand that if she could attain being acceptable to God, in and of herself, then Christmas is nothing more than a farce. Why? Because Jesus was born and crucified for no purpose.

Jesus Christ came at Christmas because mankind is naturally sinful and is unable to redeem his/her own soul; that is why salvation is described as a gift. This woman could not see that if you have to work for something it is no longer a gift, but rather a payment. This is why Paul states that salvation is not of works, it is not something achieved but received. Christmas is all about receiving a gift that has eternal implications.

The second thought I want to highlight is that once the gift of Jesus Christ is freely received, our slate is cleared, cleansed, made new. Maybe you are wondering what the year 2013 holds for you. One thing is for sure, if you have not received this free gift of salvation, through the person and work of Jesus Christ, your future is not good from an eternal perspective. The amazing thing about having the Christmas gift of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is that it transforms our lives from the inside out. We are made whole in body, soul and spirit. Becoming a Christian transforms the way we live, the way we think and act. What a great way to go into the New Year.

Let me finish with Ephesians 2:10: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

May you know the reason for the season.

– CARL CARMODY, EDITOR OF CHALLENGE

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PLEASE TURN OVER

Contact us by phone (08) 9453 3311 or fax (08) 9453 3006
Email: info@challengenews.org

PRAISE:

- For the Lord's direction and wisdom over the year in terms of the different editions of the paper and for the right stories to be produced each month.
- As we approach the end of 2012 we thank the Lord for our wonderful volunteers who make themselves available each month to come and help wrap the paper for distribution. We could not do any of this without their commitment.
- For the steady increase of orders coming from the USA. The next edition will see a substantial increase in production and distribution.
- For the many opportunities Carl was given to share about the Challenge paper while in the Eastern States. He visited 30 churches and we are beginning to see orders come in from that visit which is wonderful.
- For the opportunity to begin producing our first electronic edition of the Challenge newspaper into the Philippines early 2013.

PRAYER

- Pray for Don and Lillian Kennedy who are our reps in the Eastern States. Pray for the Lord's protection particularly as they travel around Qld and NSW promoting the paper.
- Pray for the Newell family as they wind up ministry July 2013. Pray for the right direction to take in terms of their Australian visa etc. and also for their personal support.
- Pray for the Trezona family in the USA. Andrew continues to travel near and far to promote and develop the paper so please pray for Karen and the girls as they face the day to day stuff with Andrew away a lot of the time.
- Pray for much needed funding for the different editions of the paper and in particular Africa for 2013.
- Pray for Carl Carmody and Bob Walker as they are in South Africa until December 11. Pray for the Lord's protection while in Johannesburg and for valuable contacts made with churches and also plenty of testimonies to replenish the files for next year.
- We would value prayer for David Wetaka and his family who oversee the paper in Uganda. We are needing to raise \$50pw towards ministry costs for the work to continue there. If you would like further info please email john@challengenews.org
- Pray for our writers who contribute each month to the Challenge newspaper. We often have people write into Challenge enquiring or making comment on an article. Our writers make a very important contribution.

*For to us a child is born ...
Prince of Peace* **ISAIAH 9:6**



MY RESPONSE

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