

## 20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 49 (December 1-7, 2013)

How would you feel if you carefully selected Christmas presents for someone special, but he/she opened only one and left the rest unopened under the tree? That's how Jesus must feel when we look under the tree of Calvary for salvation, but we ignore all the other wonderful gifts He has prepared for us. In this week's studies, let's explore those other gifts paid for by His blood.

**Sunday** -- December 1 (1 John 1:1-6)

John begins his epistle (v. 1) by appealing to three of our senses (hearing, sight and touch). He is introducing Jesus Christ who came from Heaven to earth to purchase our salvation (v. 2). Those of us who have **seen** Him spiritually and **heard** His message of salvation must also proclaim it to those who have never heard. The purpose is to bring them into fellowship with Jesus and with us, His church (v. 3). The **joy** that comes to both the speaker and the listener is beyond comparison (v. 4). The message we are to proclaim is quite clear (v. 5): "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all." Many church members, however, have not been challenged to live a holy life **after** they have asked Jesus to forgive their sins (v. 6). Perhaps, this is **your** unopened present under Calvary's tree. The same God who has power to grant eternal life also has power to assist you in your daily living (see Titus 2:11-14). Ask Him to make you a better witness starting today.

**Monday** -- December 2 (1 John 1:7-10)

When someone says to you, "I have good news and bad news," you'll usually ask for the bad news first. Knowing this, I am going to invert these powerful four verses to teach it in a way you are accustomed to hearing. The **bad news** is that anyone who claims that he/she has not sinned denies the truth of Romans 3:23, therefore, making God out to be a liar (v. 10). The **good news** is in verse 9, which is true when we first ask Jesus to come into our hearts **as well as** every time we return to Him for forgiveness. The word, "confess," means **to agree with God**. We must return to Him often because, as we grow in our faith, He shows us other areas in our lives that need forgiveness and cleansing. Our sins (past, present and future) are **forgiven** when we are saved, but we need to agree with God each time He shows us new truth. That leads us to a wonderful present that we will open in tomorrow's devotion.

**Tuesday** -- December 3 (1 John 1:7-10)

We left our study yesterday with great news concerning the forgiveness of sins and the purification from all unrighteousness (v. 9). Immediately, however, we encounter more **bad news** in verse 8. Even though His blood washes away the **penalty** for our sins, we still possess a sin nature that rebels against His perfect will. Anyone who believes that he/she does not continue to sin after coming to Christ deceives himself/herself and the truth does not live inside. On this earth, we will never be **sinless**, but we should **sin less** each day as we grow in our knowledge of Him. The **great news**, however, is given to us in verse 7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." All of us have sinned (v. 10) and all of us continue to sin after we receive salvation (v. 8), but God's Word gives us the formula for living daily in His presence. Confessing our sins (v. 9) **and** walking with Him (v. 7) brings joy and a peace that the world cannot take away because we are enjoying His constant fellowship. This is the wonderful gift He purchased for us. Have you opened the entire package?

### Wednesday -- December 4 (1 John 2:1-2)

In his **gospel**, John wrote about basic salvation (some examples are John 3:16, 5:24, 11:25-26 and 14:6). In his **epistle**, he writes about the **deeper life in Christ**. He is now much older and wiser, so his days of arguing with Peter over which one of them was the greatest are behind him (see Luke 22:24). John sums up the reason for this letter in the first verse of today's text. I love the use of the word "if" instead of the word "when." Jesus knows we will never be perfect while we live in this sin-filled world, so He sits on the right hand of His Father to intercede for us (see Romans 8:34 & Hebrews 7:25). He also knows that His Spirit is living in us, giving us the power to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God. I am grateful that He does not require us to be perfect, though, before we can come into His Heaven. He is our atoning sacrifice already, but He has left us on earth to be evangelists to those who do not yet know Him as their personal Savior (v. 2). Let's spread the good news to everyone we meet.

### Thursday -- December 5 (1 John 2:3-6)

In these advanced teachings about Jesus, John remembers what he recorded about obedience in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of his **gospel** (v. 15, 21 & 23). The person who has no desire to follow His teachings does not really know the Lord. This is **bad news** for anyone who merely joins the church and does not invite Jesus to live in his/her heart. You cannot accept Him as Savior unless you have an inward desire to follow Him as Lord. The Word of God cannot dwell in anyone without creating a desire to obey Jesus (v. 3-4). The **good news** is that God's love makes a true believer complete, joyful and at peace (v. 5). The bottom line is recorded in verse 6: "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did." How can we do that? Return to 1 John 1:7 and rejoice in the Spirit's ability to assist us as we walk in the light we have already received.

### Friday -- December 6 (1 John 2:7-11)

In today's text, John again reminds his readers of the lesson taught in his **gospel** (John 13:34-35). He is now going to expand that older truth with a new application (v. 7-8). He has already warned us about making false claims and deceiving ourselves (1:6, 1:8, 1:10, & 2:6). He now teaches that we cannot claim to love Jesus while we harbor hate for our brother (v. 9). This includes our Christians brothers and sisters as well as those of our bloodline. John will amplify his point in 1 John 4:20. That fact may be **bad news** for some readers, but the **good news** is in verse 10: "Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble." John concludes his truth with a reminder that it is possible to be a **professing** Christian who has no assurance of salvation because he is walking in the darkness (v. 11) rather than in the light (1:7). Examine yourself to be sure you are in the faith (see 2 Corinthians 13:5). He is coming soon!

### Saturday -- December 7 (review of this week's devotions)

1 John is my favorite book in the Bible because it challenges each of us to go beyond where we are currently living. John is getting ready to teach us the **three stages** in a healthy Christian life (2:12-14), but we will examine those in next week's devotions. We have learned that we are not true believers if we **deny** our past sins (1:10) or our current sinful nature (1:8). We have also learned that we cannot claim to know Him if we **willfully** walk in the darkness (1:6) or hate our brothers and sisters (2:9). These wonderful advanced truths should humble us enough to cause us to drop to our knees and thank God for His **mercy** and **grace**, which are the wrapping for all the other presents found under the tree of Calvary!