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LET'S OPEN GOD'S GIFT

Dear Friends,

Late December in Ohio can sometimes be a very cold and snowy time of year. Though I don't particularly enjoy bitter cold weather or shoveling piles of snow, this time of year is without question just about my favorite. Why? Because it is when the world turns its attention to the birth of Jesus Christ, the hope of salvation.

It is true that some Christians are adamantly opposed to the celebration of Christmas, refusing to decorate, have Christmas parties or give presents; they believe such things are pagan in nature and dishonoring to God. However, I see it quite differently: if it weren't for Jesus, none of these celebrations would be taking place. If it weren't for Jesus, neither Christians nor the lost would be singing, "...Christ the Savior is born," or "Joy to the world, the Lord is come...", or "...oh come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

To me, all of the beautiful lights, decorations, songs, parties and gifts exist for one reason: Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was born to offer eternal life to mankind. No matter how true it is that pagans once celebrated their feasts at the end of December, I see celebrating Christmas as a way to "reclaim" that time of year: the "thief" tried to steal that time of year and claim it for his own; but by celebrating the birth of Jesus, we are "restoring life" to that season. Even the word "holiday" comes from the phrase "Holy Day."

When it comes to gifts, the greatest gift God has given us is Jesus. But there is another gift He has given that is almost as valuable: His Word, the Bible. Here is just a small sampling of what we would have without the Bible:

- No written revelation of God's love for humanity
- No documentation of the birth of Jesus
- No record of God's promises to those who trust Him
- No way for the deaf to feast on God's life in written form
- Nothing to hide or sow in our heart (Psalm 119:11 and Mark 4:14)
- No source for lyrics to innumerable songs of praise and worship
- No printed form of God's spiritual life (John 6:63)
- No universal standard for establishing doctrine or for confirming what people preach as being truth or deception

Not only did God give us His Word for us to read and learn about Him, He gave us His Word to use as a source of power for change. Consider how God used His word to do what secular science rejects as possible:

- He spoke and created measurable space where there had been no space; we call it "the universe."

- He spoke and created subatomic, elemental particles so infinitesimal they have not all yet been discovered.
- He spoke and those particles arranged themselves into molecular order according to laws of physics, which were also instituted by what He spoke.
- He spoke and those particles arranged themselves into identifiable structure: planets, animals, plants, water, etc.

His words contain two things: His will and the power to cause His will to manifest. Until He spoke, His will only resided in His heart. After He spoke it set off a series of events at a magnitude our human minds cannot comprehend. But there is more. Consider what God said in Genesis 1:26-27,

²⁶ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

For the sake of time and space, I won't break down individual words from the original language. But briefly, in these two verses God is saying, "I will create a non-deified replication of Myself who will have My ordained authority to act in the same way that I act. This authority extends to both the males and the females." Relative to what I am sharing in this letter, God is saying that He has ordained us to use His words to bring about change.

This does *not* mean we can speak a universe into existence. What *does* mean is that we can speak what He has spoken and expect to see the results He has described in scripture. If we speak outside of what He has already spoken - in other words, speak that which contradicts what He has said - then we will not get the results He desires for our lives. The only will God stands in agreement with is His; thus, if we speak in accordance with His will, He will act on our words. After all, Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

If we live speaking things opposite to His will and desires for our lives, we have created a breach in our relationship with Him. It doesn't mean we have lost our salvation or incurred His anger toward us. It means we have limited Him concerning what He can do for us. He spoke and we now have the Bible. His Word is eternal truth. He will only stand in agreement with truth. If we speak something not established in His Word, He cannot move to bring it to pass.

God wants us to walk by faith, not by the conditions of this natural world or the circumstances around us (2 Corinthians 5:7). He also told us that faith comes by hearing His word (Romans 10:17). This makes perfect sense: you cannot live by what you do not have; and you cannot have what you need if you do not go to the source. Many Christians reject the notion that Believers can "confess" things into existence. But consider what God Himself has said about His words and what we speak:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

***Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.
(Psalm 33:8-9)***

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

***A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.
(Luke 6:45)***

***Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
(Proverbs 4:23)***

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (Proverbs 18:21)

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. (Mark 11:23)

If I ignore the imbalanced teaching of many preachers and allow the Bible alone to be the standard for what I believe about confession, then I can come to no conclusion other than the fact that confession works. What I confess is the key. God's words are spirit and life. God's words are a revelation of His will. By feeding His words abundantly into my heart, I will eventually develop a storehouse of good treasure. Out of this abundance I will be speaking in line with His words and His will. My words will be filled with life and I will "eat the fruit" of His will. My words and thoughts will be acceptable in God's sight.

God said His words will not return void. Therefore, if I make His unfailing words my own words, then He will have an open door into my life to effect change. Yes, I can change my way of living by confessing the Word of God.

There are two primary ways we can sow God's words into our life so that they become the good treasure of our heart. One is to read and read and read the Bible. The other is to confess the Bible, both as it is written and as personal confessions. Many Christians are not familiar with using scripture to create personal confessions. As an example, I have used Psalm 91 in its entirety to develop a personal confession (I encourage you to compare the confession below with Psalm 91 as it is written in the Bible):

¹I will dwell daily in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

²Lord, you are my refuge and my fortress. You are my God and in you alone I trust.

³You deliver me from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence; all of the attacks of the devil.

⁴You cover me with feathers, and under your wings I trust (your glory is my constant covering): your truth is my shield and buckler.

⁵I will not be afraid of the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; ⁶nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

⁷A thousand shall fall at my side, and ten thousand at my right hand; but it will not come near me.

⁸Only with my eyes shall I watch and see the reward of the wicked.

⁹Lord, I choose to make you my refuge; you are the Most High and you are my habitation.

¹⁰No evil shall overwhelm me and no plague will come near my life or my home.

¹¹You have given your angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways.

¹²They bear me up in their hands so I do not dash my foot against a stone.

¹³I tread upon the lion and adder: I trample the young lion and the dragon under my feet. Yes, Satan and all his devils are under my feet.

¹⁴Because I have set my love upon you, you deliver me: you set me on high because I know your name.

¹⁵I call upon you and you answer me: you are always with me in trouble; you deliver me and honor me.

¹⁶You have satisfied me with long life, and daily you show me the fullness of my salvation.

What I have written above is just one way to use Psalm 91 as the basis for a personal confession. But this principle can be used with a great many passages of the Bible. It is *impossible* to have a wrong confession when what you speak has as its foundation the Holy Scriptures.

I encourage you to create your own confessions with scripture. No matter what you are seeking - healing, financial help, peace, direction for life, or anything else - God's Word is the source and the power for change. His words *never* contain fear, only faith. His words *always* lead to the answer.

God's Word is a precious gift that will never grow old, never fade, never lose its value and is suitable for all ages. It doesn't require batteries or assembly; it is eternally powered by God's life and given to us pre-assembled. Let's open the precious gift of God's Word and use it the way He intended, reaping the benefits of all it offers!

May this Christmas season be the most blessed you and your family have ever known!

In His Grace,

Jim

P.S. - This month I am offering a CD of the sermon "God's Image and Faith." It is a perfect companion teaching to this letter. If you would like a copy, complete and mail the order form below.

2014 SPRING PRAYER AND POWER CONFERENCE

The Spring Prayer and Power Conference will be Sunday, April 27 through Friday, May 2. Pastor Dave Roberson and Gary Carpenter will be with us again; other ministers may be here as well. Our primary host hotel will be:

Country Inn and Suites - Fairborn South
3971 Colonel Glenn Highway
Beavercreek, Ohio 45324
(937) 439-2222
www.countryinns.com/fairborn

We have a limited number of rooms blocked off for the conference. I suggest you book your room as soon as possible. When you call the hotel, tell them you are booking a room for the Grace Christian Center conference. Various room sizes and special rates are available.

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_____ Please send a CD of the sermon, "God's Image and Faith."

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