

Theme: **SLIDE** The Gift That Keeps On Giving *(In Jesus, we receive the right to become children of God)*

Object: Wrapped Gift from Christmas

Scripture: **SLIDE** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13 NASB)

This knife was one of my Christmas gifts. I really do like it. Did you receive a lot of gifts for Christmas? I'm sure that you did. Of all of the gifts that you received for Christmas, what was the very best one? What was your favorite? *(Give the children an opportunity to tell about their favorite gift.)*

You know, there is one thing that I have learned about Christmas gifts. No matter how much you enjoy receiving them, they just don't last. Some of you may have received new clothes. They look nice and you enjoy wearing them, but sooner or later, they wear out, go out of style, or you outgrow them. I am sure that many of you received toys. You really enjoy the toys, but eventually, they either get broken or you get tired of playing with them. Perhaps you got some candy, I got some dark chocolates. Well, when you eat it, it is gone. Except for what you wind up wearing around your waist.

There is one Christmas gift that is different. It never wears out. It never goes out of style. You will never become tired of it. It is like the **SLIDE** Energizer Bunny -- it is a gift that keeps on giving year, after year, after year. Do you know what that gift is? It is the true gift that Christmas is all about. It is God's gift to us. **SLIDE** It

is His Son, Jesus.

The Bible tells us that all who receive Jesus and believe in his name become the children of God! When we become the children of God, we have all of the rights and privileges of being His child. He will love us, protect us, and provide everything that we need. The best part is that it never ends. The Bible says that

SLIDE “Goodness and *loving kindness* will follow me all the days of my life, and I will *live* in the house of the LORD forever.” (Psalm 23:6)

I enjoy giving and receiving gifts at Christmas, but I think it is important for us to remember that the greatest gift of all was God's gift to us. It is the gift that keeps on giving! **SLIDE** In Jesus, we receive the right to become children of God)

Dear Father, we thank you for loving us so much that you gave your Son so that we too could become your children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Slide Who Shall Come?

This morning we come together to worship the Lord for the first time in 2014. I look forward to this year with great anticipation of what the Lord will do in each of our lives and the life of Canyon Bible as a community. Let's begin by praying for not only this morning, that God might open our hearts to greater wisdom and understanding of Him, but also that 2014 will be a year of spiritual growth.

Last week someone came to me after the service and asked if I was mad – they thought from my teaching I might be angry. This was both a great question and a hard question. We are in this journey together and everyone should feel free to approach me; for if my teaching of God's Word is not meaningful and helpful to your spiritual growth then what good is it? I want to take a moment to address this question. First, I am a man of passions – peace and frustration, love and anger, compassion and a great anxiousness for people's spiritual futures. You see, I know what I was before God saved me and I would never, never want to go back. He called me out of a world of religious cults and darkness into the light. I desperately want everyone to be called by God and yet, I know this will not happen. I am frustrated to live in a society that no longer sees right and wrong, black and white, but everything is gray and most things are acceptable. I want to call sin – sin and call people to repent, but I desire to treat people with love and compassion – even the enemies of God. So, yes, I do struggle with my emotions and I am desperate, absolutely desperate, for people to be saved. I have little patience with those who call themselves Christians, but play at it, live as the worldly unsaved do and also for those who bring dishonor to our great God. If people are convicted here in our community it should be by the Word of God and they should not be rejected or hurt by

my or anyone else's behavior. So, I do covet your relationship to the point that you should be able to give me constructive criticism. It is my hope by taking the time to explain who I am also helps as I begin to teach from the Word this morning for it is a difficult subject, but one I believe is in this passage and one that the Lord has put on my heart. For those of us here who are believers in our Lord Jesus this is a difficult doctrine to understand with our human minds, but for anyone that is not saved this will be either convicting or it will make no sense. It would be my prayer this morning that if you are convicted you would not waste time, for there is no guarantee of tomorrow and that you would seek Christ as your Lord and Savior, repent and come to know the peace the world does not. Jesus said it was necessary for Him to go away so that God would send the Holy Spirit to live within the souls of believers so that as Jesus said, **Slide** "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27 NASB) May you, my beloved, know the peace of Christ this morning and the rest of your lives! **Blank**

Jude says in his introduction that believers are "those who are called" and because they are called by God they are "kept for Jesus Christ." These words echo the message from Jesus in John chapter 6, verses 36 and 37. Let me begin by backing up and starting in verse 35, please open your bibles to John chapter 6 beginning inverse 35 that we ended with last week. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.'" When we accept Jesus as God very God and as our personal Lord and Savior this begins the life long process called "Sanctification." Our souls are brought to spiritual life and the Spirit begins filling us with spiritual knowledge and wisdom from God that changes the way we think and live. As we study the Word of God it speaks to our souls, this grows us spiritually and at the same time washes the corruption and

filth of this fallen world out of us. Both churches and individual believers are weak if they do not feed daily on Jesus as the Bread of Life, Who is the Living Word and if we do not meditate on the Written Word of God daily. These next verses we will focus on this morning, if understood and are allowed to penetrate the heart, will cause us to grow spiritually and become stronger. These are difficult verses, perhaps some of the most difficult, yet they are verses that take us deep into the heart and mind of God.

These next two verses will fix our minds on the grace and sovereignty of God in all things. These verses take confidence away, away from anything that might be found in man and anchor it in God alone. They teach of man's sin and inability to save himself. They teach of God's electing and irresistible grace. God offers the gospel freely and it teaches of His ability to keep all saints for eternity. Think of these things as I read John chapter 6 verses 36 and 37. Listen to the words of Christ, of God, "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." This doctrine is reflected in many Christian creeds. It is sometimes taught using the acrostic **Slide** "TULIP" which stands for: **Slide** Total depravity of man, **Slide** Unconditional election, **Slide** Limited atonement, **Slide** Irresistible grace and **Slide** Perseverance of the saints. This acrostic is meant to help us understand man's condition and God's grace, it is **not** meant to be a complete definition of God's plan of salvation.

The first principle is of the **Slide** Total Depravity of mankind as taught in verse 36, **Slide** "you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." This is more than describing the current situation for we see later in this very chapter in verse 44 Jesus says, **Slide** "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise

him up on the last day.” No one comes to Jesus unless God draws or regenerates his or her soul. Jesus is not surprised by the crowd’s reaction to Him. They had witnessed more than enough to know Jesus was the Messiah – they had seen His miracles, heard His powerful teaching, but they did not believe because they could **not** believe. What is difficult at this point is to understand that the scriptures teach that even though man cannot come to Christ unless God calls him, he is still responsible for his choice not to believe. We have a sinful nature because of Adam’s sin. As the Apostle Paul wrote, **Slide** “...we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath ...” (Ephesians 2:3 NASB) By God’s **Slide** “Common Grace” or His undeserved favor that is given to all mankind, His creation, people have been able to do good in our societies in education, development of civilization, science, technology, art, law, etc. Mankind has been constrained by civil law, which historically has been influenced by God and His Scriptures. As parents we must raise our children with the truth of the scriptures in order to curb their sin nature, we must **Slide** “...bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4 NASB) However, this does not answer how people are responsible for their sins if they are not able to come to God, if God has not called them. I will attempt to answer this difficult question. **Blank**

Have you ever thought your explanation was clear and made perfect sense, but the people you are sharing with did not understand at all what you were trying to explain? I hope this is not one of those times – so here we go. Take a lion, lions are carnivores, and if you place a dish of oats or a bail of hay before him, the lion will not eat it. Why not? Is it not physically possible for the lion to eat oats? The answer is yes. But it is not the lion’s nature to eat oats and it will starve before it will eat oats. It is physically possible for a lamb to eat meat, but a lamb will not. It is

man's fallen nature that prevents him from seeking God and by his fallen nature he is totally deprived of true spiritual knowledge. Man does not seek God on his own any more than a lion will eat oats or a lamb will eat meat. It is possible in a sense for man to seek God, but his fallen nature is so complete that he will not and therefore, since it is possible, but he will not, then he is responsible for not seeking God. I did not say man is deprived of spiritual knowledge, but of true spiritual knowledge. There are many false spiritualities; Satan, deism, false religions and worship of many ungodly things and many try to label them as godly. The truth is found in Paul's letter to the Romans, **Slide** "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD." (Romans 3:10-11 NASB) Here Paul is referring to Psalms 14 and 53, and Ecclesiastes chapter 7. Here in these verses of Romans and of their source in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit inspired writers to express man's total inability to find or please God. In our moral lives without God both society and individuals slide into depravity over time – we just have to look around us. God constrains wickedness by His general or Common Grace and it is this that limits man's wickedness. We have great intellects in our world and yet here we see that none of these intellectual giants understand true wisdom. We have free will within the boundaries set by God – He may let you choose which desire of yours to follow - to a teacher, mechanic, police officer or artist. But, the scripture is clear that in man's will, in his fallen deprived state, there is absolutely no desire to seek God. **Slide** James Montgomery Boice explained it this way, "Someone who does not hold to a Reformed doctrine might say, 'But surely the Bible teaches that anyone who will may come?' Of course! But that is not the point. On that we are all agreed. Certainly, anyone who will may come. **Slide** But who wills to come? The answer is: No one except those whom the Holy Spirit has already performed the entirely irresistible work of the new birth so that, as the result of the miracle, the

spiritually blind eyes of the natural man are opened to see God's truth and the totally depraved will of the sinner is turned about to enable him to embrace Jesus Christ as his Savior." We understand by Adam's sin all mankind are born sinners and

Slide "...the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23 NASB) All mankind deserves to perish, but God chooses some to come to Jesus, this is an act of pure grace. If you believe the Bible is completely accurate and true, as I do, and then it is true when it says all people are dead in their trespasses and sins and that you cannot come to Jesus apart from a miracle. This miracle is entirely the work of a sovereign God who chooses. You have no hope, unless, unless God intervenes in spite of your having no desire for Him and He chooses to save you by His pure grace and for His pleasure. **Blank**

This brings us to verse 37 the **Slide** "Election" of God. For if verse 36 teaches that left to himself man is totally deprived and completely unable to believe in Jesus Christ or come to God as we have just learned - then it is equally true and a miracle of grace that God does not leave all people in their fallen state and fate of eternal hell, but God acts, in spite of mans will, to save some. Verse 37 declares, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." It is because of this wonderful truth that I can preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Americans are raised and taught that we are self-made, captains of our own destiny and we can choose any direction in life. This is not true. We do have choices or free will within the limited sphere that God allows us to choose. This verse is telling us a greater truth and that truth is that God holds us in His hands in relationship to everything of importance, whether we are believers in Jesus or not. As Christians, as soon as we encounter the doctrine of "Election" we must all acknowledge that we are in way over our heads. This is a place of mystery, a place that gives rise to many questions and all the questions land us in the same place,

“How do I reconcile God’s divine sovereignty with human responsibility?” It is because both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are found in the Scriptures, I must teach both and while teaching both, I must emphasize that when it comes to salvation the Scriptures teach “Election” or the sovereignty of God. Salvation is all of God and His grace and His mercy and is nothing of man’s ability to be righteous.

This is what I will attempt to answer by looking at “Election” from several different angles. To begin with, if all are held in the hands of God, what then is the fate of those whom God has not chosen? I will give but a short reference, but for you to have a deeper understanding I ask that you read **Slide** Jonathan Edwards sermon entitled “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” it is easily found on the internet. One statement Edwards says in this sermon is that, **Slide** “There is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose this morning, but that God’s hand has held you up.” We all want to think we are in charge of our own destiny and that our salvation is, at least in part, our own doing. But the truth is all that you are - is solely by the pleasure of God. **Blank**

The second thing we want to take notice of here in verse 37 is the great grace of God that He chose to give some to Jesus Christ by His mercy. He not only held back His wrath, but He has blessed them and guaranteed their future. John speaks in more depth of the surety of believer’s futures in chapter seventeen, which we are steadily pushing towards. Verse two of chapter seventeen is one of several verses recording Jesus, the Son, saying to God the Father, **Slide** “even as You gave Him (Jesus) authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him (Jesus), He may give eternal life.” Who are those given to Christ by the Father? Paul answers this question in Ephesians and as we know Paul often uses long sentences so I will only

put part of this sentence on the screen, ³ “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, **Slide** ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3-6 NASB) Praise God that out of His grace and mercy He chose you for salvation! You are the “elect” of God. **Blank**

The third idea in this verse is the great transaction or agreement between God the Father and Jesus, God the Son, that took place in eternity past of those who will be saved and that this agreement will take place and come to completion over time in history. We see this in contrast between tenses of the major verbs. The Son is waiting for those the Father has already given; John uses the tense of the present to the future. However, in verse 39, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” Here John’s tense use is from the past tense to the present meaning that Jesus will lose nothing given to Him by the Father. As sinners we come to Christ with absolutely nothing to offer and we receive everything from Christ and when we become Christ’s we are His forever.

Slide A. W. Tozer, a great man of God, wrote in an attempt to reconcile the seemingly contradictory beliefs of God’s sovereignty and man’s free will, he wrote “An ocean liner leaves New York bound for Liverpool. Its destination has been determined by proper authorities. Nothing can change it. This is at least a faint picture of sovereignty. On board the liner are scores of passengers. These are not in chains, neither are their activities determined for them by decree. They are completely free

to move about as they will. They eat, sleep, play, lounge about on the deck, read, talk, altogether as they please; but all the while the great liner is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port. Both freedom and sovereignty are present here, and they do not contradict. So it is, I believe, with man's freedom and the sovereignty of God. The mighty liner of God's sovereign design keeps its steady course over the sea of history." (*Knowledge of the Holy*) **Blank**

I hope this has helped in understanding Total Depravity, Election and Predestination. It is also God's will that people come to know Him by the preaching of His gospel. It is why I preach. Have you heard God calling you this morning? Have you heard God calling you for a period of time, but you think you are not among those He has chosen? Maybe you are thinking to yourself, "If I am **not** among those whom God has given to Jesus, I cannot come." That is a true statement. But do not question if you are called by God or not, for this thought process is unproductive. I would argue that the very fact you are concerned about God calling you and have your thoughts focused on God and His salvation is an indication that He is calling you. The true and right question is, "Will you be obedient?" God clearly tells us though the Apostle Paul and Prophet Moses, **Slide** "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:8-9 NASB) I know there are difficulties in understanding how all that I have talked about this morning works, but will you trust in God, for He will not let His plan fail and He will not let you go – He will hold you in His hands forever.

This brings us to the last point in verse 37, **Slide** "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." All that the Father has given Christ will come and all that

comes can never, never be lost. This is an encouragement to me as a preacher. As Paul wrote, **Slide** “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14 NASB) God will save whom He has called in spite of my shortcomings and failures, I am called to be obedient and preach the gospel. God will save those He has called in spite of your failures also. All of you are called to share the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus. The question is, “Will you be obedient? God says your labor will not be in vain. **Blank**

God’s offer of salvation is the greatest offer ever given to mankind – it is a promise given by the Rock of Ages. It does not worry about whether you are young or old, rich or poor – God is calling – come! At this point you might be thinking, “What must I do?” I say stop doing – as sinners we have ruined ourselves with doing and trying. The question should **not** be “What must I do?” but the question should be “What has God done?” The answer to this question is God has done it all! Christ died for you! The work is finished! You only need to let go of your trying to be in control and earn salvation by your own efforts and fall into the gentle outstretched arms of the Savior.

If you would like to pray with me, then come after the service and we will pray and talk together of our great and mighty God, and I am confident you will belong to Him.

Let me close with the same verse I closed with last week. **Slide** “Now to Him (God) who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24-25 NASB)