

If Christ’s grace abounded to Paul in redeeming this “chief of sinners” and appointing him an apostle, then such a miracle of mercy is an example to us all that God’s gloriously, praiseworthy grace extends even to the very worst people. Jesus was born to save sinners. Hallelujah and Merry Christmas!

Introduction – Some of you know the story of how I became a Christian.

I. The First Christmas Gift: What Is It?

A. Jesus in a gift-wrapped box for the world (v. 15a)

A faithful, trustworthy, approved saying: the gospel of Jesus in one short sentence with two parts. The first part is about the miracle of the incarnation: “Christ Jesus came into the world”. Many theologians and sages throughout the centuries have concluded Christmas is the miracle of miracles. More amazing, more profound, more mysterious than God creating the world, Noah’s Flood, the parting of the Red Sea, even the resurrection of Christ!

B. Given to save the worst sinner (vv. 13, 15b)

The last part of the gospel summary is about God’s plan of salvation: “to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost”. The gospel gift of Jesus for the world can only be fully understood, appreciated, and embraced if you see as the backdrop your desperate need for this gift. The apostle Paul understood this to be true, so he offers himself to you as that backdrop. Here Paul confesses he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor of Jesus and the church, and an insolent man. Let’s examine each to see how Paul describes his former self as going from bad to worse to the very worst.

II. The Gift That Keeps on Giving: How to Receive It?

A. For the first time: believe in him for eternal life (v. 16)

To receive mercy, to receive the gift of Jesus and the good news of salvation, then you must be counted among those who will believe in him for eternal life. As the Bible says, repent and believe in Jesus Christ as the savior of sinners (even the worst), and you will be saved. You receive the gift that keeps on giving. How does that work? You’ll be appointed into the Lord’s service. You’ll be spiritually strengthened with faith for anything and everything you’re call to do in his service. And you’ll become an example to the world of God’s perfect patience with sinners like you.

B. Again and again: with thanksgiving, wonder, and worship (vv. 12, 14, 17)

Now I’m speaking to those of you who have already received God’s gift. Is there any blessing left for you? Are there still unopened gifts left under the tree of God’s saving grace? Yes indeed! Receiving Jesus Christ as Savior is the gift that keeps on giving. Again and again and again and again and... Here are just three of those gifts: thanksgiving, wonder, and worship.

Conclusion – (1) Thanksgiving: a sinner saved *gives* thanks with a happy heart because the Bible promises it is more blessed to give than to receive. (2) Wonder: because we’re supposed to view ourselves as the worst of sinners saved by grace, you will see that grace as *overflowing* to you “with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” To receive him again and again is to experience life with a renewed sense of wonder. (3) Worship: Look how Paul can’t keep himself from *bursting* in worship as he thinks about the gift that keeps on giving. “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen!” Keep receiving the first Christmas gift. Let your heart burst forth in praise to Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, of whom you and I are the worst. Hallelujah and Merry Christmas!