



THE GIFT EXCHANGE
"Trading Guilt for Grace"

Introduction: "The Naughty List"

The 2023 Advent Series: The Gift Exchange: Trading Doubt for Hope • Trading Sadness for Joy • Trading Worry for Peace
Trading Anger for Love • Trading Guilt for Grace

Today's Theme: "Give God Your Guilt and He'll Give You His Grace"

I. The Heavy Load: Sin, Guilt, and Shame

e.g., *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan (1678)

The Weight of Sin, Guilt, and Shame

- SIN is a constant reminder: "We are missing the target of God's standards. We were made for something better." (Romans 3:23)
- GUILT is a constant reminder: "We are making a huge pile of mistakes"
- SHAME whispers to our burdened hearts: "I am a mistake. Maybe it would have been better if I was never born."

Our Shame:

Job 3:1–4 – "Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job said, 'Let the day perish on which I was to be born, and the night which said, 'A boy is conceived.' May that day be darkness. Let not God above care for it, nor light shine on it.'"

Job 3:11 – "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?"

Jeremiah 15:10 – "Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me as a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land!"

God's Answer:

Jeremiah 15:11 – "The Lord said, "Surely I will set you free for purposes of good..." (cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10)

II. The Gift Exchange: Trading Our Guilt for His Amazing Grace

Romans 3:23–24 – "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Matthew 11:29–30 – "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Ephesians 1:7 – "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

Titus 2:11–14 – "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

Titus 2:11 – "The grace of God had appeared (Greek: *epiphano*)." (cf. John 1:14)

- **Jesus is the Christ of Christmas PAST**...bringing salvation to sinful humanity that is loaded down with sin, guilt, and shame.
- **Jesus is the Christ of Christmas PRESENT**...instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.
- **Jesus is the Christ of Christmas FUTURE**

Titus 2:13–14 – "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

This passage presents:

- The grace gift of salvation before the foundation of the world
- The grace gift of sanctification on earth
- The grace gift of glorification in heaven

2 Corinthians 9:15 – "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

III. The Varied Responses to the Gift

Response #1: Some of Us are Trading Our Crippling Guilt for Cheap Grace

Salvation was costly (cf. Romans 6:19; 1 Peter 1:19)

- Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.
- Cheap grace is grace without the Cross.
- Cheap grace is requesting forgiveness without requiring repentance. (cf. Romans 6:1–2)
- Cheap grace is grace without discipleship.

“Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of the church. Our struggle today is for costly grace.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Response #2: Others of Us are Trading Our Crippling Guilt for His Free Grace

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 as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Result #1: Trading our crippling guilt for the free grace of God enables us to accept ourselves as God accepts us.

Regarding the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:2–8; 2:4–7; cf. Colossians 1:27)

Result #2: Trading our crippling guilt for the free grace of God enables us to accept others as God accepts them.

Ephesians 4:32 – “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Romans 15:7 – “Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

IV. The Fullness of a Life of Grace

John 1:16 – “For from His fullness we have all received: grace upon grace.”

1 Peter 1:2 – “May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.” (as opposed to Hosea 10:10 regarding “double guilt.”)

“I am trading a googolplex of guilt for an eternity of grace!”

The Eternal Son of God became the Incarnate Son of Man so that the Guilty Sons of Men could become the Guilt-Free Sons of God.

The Life of John Newton (1725–1807)

“I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be in another world, but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”

(On his deathbed at the age of 82) “Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly. I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.”

Conclusion: The Tale of Two Christmases.

1. A Christmas filled with sin, guilt, and shame that says, “I can’t be forgiven but I will keep trying on my own, until I give up.”
2. A Christmas filled with grace that says, “I am forgiven even though I don’t deserve it. It’s a free gift.”

‘Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace...’

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTION ITEMS:

1. Before trusting in Christ how did you deal with sin, guilt, and shame?
2. Describe the weight that was lifted off your shoulders when you trusted in Christ alone for your salvation.
3. What are some of the positive results of exchanging your guilt for His grace?
4. What did you get most out of this message?