

Well it has crept up on us all of a sudden. Time seems to escape our grip more and more each year as the months seem to be summed up in a few weeks that we are able to remember. Yes it is Christmas, at least almost, and if you are a parent I can hear the groans from here. Thankfully, as Christians, we can say that this time of year does have some wonderful meaning, especially if we manage to avoid the grip of the commercial vipers that reach into our homes through our televisions, radios and the insidious internet.

HOW DOES ALL THIS fit in with our series of studies on Psalm 23? Well if you have been following with me on our encouraging journey, you will remember that last month we looked at the last



PRAISE the Lord for:

- Our team of writers, volunteers and Board members who have done a fabulous job this year. They are an integral part of the team and we couldn't function effectively without them
- His faithfulness throughout 2021. Thank you Lord for using the Challenge paper so effectively around the world
- A great response to ordering our Christmas edition of the paper. We trust the Lord for great things as people read about the reason for the season
- Recommencement of our Kenya edition of Challenge, working with our partner organisation Genesis Aid based in Perth

part of v5. The shepherd anoints the head of his sheep with oil to protect his flock from nasal fly infestation and from snake bites by putting a ring of oil around snake burrows.

We realised that this is a picture of our need to be anointed by God the Holy Spirit on a day-by-day basis, to enable us to walk with God. How did this all come about?

It really goes back to the first Christmas when Jesus came in the fragility of human flesh on a rescue mission from God. Why? Because it was a rescue mission that was a MISSION IMPOSSIBLE for any man or woman to complete. It was beyond mankind's ability, skills or talents to deliver from the bondage of sin.

Christmas is all about bringing the message of forgiveness and mercy to mankind, which are the most amazing gifts that we could ever receive. They are gifts that no one else but God can give through the baby Jesus. They are unique and freely given gifts to those who are willing to receive them by faith.

Many are disappointed at Christmas that they have not received a particular gift, or received none at all. The gift of salvation, which means to be made whole spiritually, emotionally and physically, is a gift that is made available to every man, woman, teenager and child free of

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charge. This does not mean that the significance or quality of the gift is devolved. In fact it makes the gift all the more valuable because God does not discriminate as to who can experience and / or receive it.

I find it interesting that some people are absolutely horrified that a loving God would send any one to a place like Hell! The truth, of course, is that God sends no one to Hell. Rather we need to understand that Hell is the logical outworking of choosing to reject God's Christmas gift of salvation. God has done everything necessary to make sure that anyone who wants to come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and thus secure eternity in heaven, can freely do so, because of the finished work of Calvary.

Once we have accepted this gift we can claim Jesus as our shepherd, our provider, our carer and protector. As we see this we can have a real sense of confidence that God's goodness and mercy shall follow us no matter where we go on this planet. We can have confidence that we will experience this goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. It is not something here today and gone tomorrow, like many of the gifts that are given

PRAYER needed for:

- Every paper distributed over this Christmas period, that the paper will continue to be used of God in opening people's hearts and minds to Jesus
- The Challenge team as they head off for a couple of weeks rest away from the office.
- Editions being produced and distributed – Australia, USA (Main and Spanish); South Africa + Zimbabwe + Malawi; Prison Edition (South Africa + USA); Military; Kenya; Creole for Haiti, first Philippines edition
- A good response (orders placed for using Challenge) from recent Tasmania trip

at Christmas. Salvation is an eternal gift, and with it comes an inheritance that does not fade or disappear.

I love the psalmist's declaration of the security of salvation. I find it interesting when people tell us that we can be saved one moment and then not the next. This sort of teaching denies the very eternal nature of salvation. Salvation is eternal and those who partake of it by faith also partake of its eternal character. If you can be saved one moment and not the next then it cannot be eternal. The psalmist was under no illusion that he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The word house is really a metaphor for being in Christ, and it can be applied to dwelling in heaven forever also.

As you go through this Christmas season you can rejoice in the fact that it is all about bringing peace into our lives even in the midst of incredible upheaval. It is about experiencing the most amazing gift that anyone could ever receive.

The Challenge team want to wish all of our users and supporters a joyful Christmas and a blessed new year.

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