

# What Christmas Promises: Forgiveness

by Warren Wiersbe

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*The promise of Christmas is forgiveness, made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who solves the problem of sin through His ministry of dying for us, living in us, and coming for us.*

**Duration:** 38:03

**Scripture:** Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 John 2:24, 1 John 3:3, 1 John 3:5, 1 John 3:7, 1 John 4:9

**Topics:** "Sin Forgiveness", "Salvation Through Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the manifestation of God's love towards humanity through the sending of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the concept of sin and how it has become a popular topic in today's society. He explains that while our old nature remains unchanged, God implants a new nature in us through His Son. The preacher highlights three ministries of Jesus Christ in helping us solve the sin problem: His death for our sins, His indwelling presence in believers, and His promise to return for us. He concludes with a prayer for forgiveness and salvation for those who trust in Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

1 John chapter 3 verses 1 through 10 gives us another insight into the promise of Christmas. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Whosoever practices sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him does not practice sin.

Whosoever practices sin hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

He that commiteth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God does not

practice sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot practice sin, because he is born of God.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Jesus Christ was manifested to take away our sins.

This statement that the Apostle John makes in his first epistle, chapter 3 and verse 5, is one of four statements that he makes concerning the promise of Christmas. In chapter 1 and verse 2, Christmas promises life. The life was manifested.

In chapter 3 and verse 8, for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, the promise of victory. In chapter 4 and verse 9, in this was manifested the love of God toward us. That God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him, the promise of love.

And here in chapter 3 and verse 5, the promise of forgiveness. He is talking about sin. It is interesting to note that many people today are talking about sin.

The word sin has come back into our popular vocabulary once again. A leading psychiatrist writes a book entitled *Whatever Happened to Sin?* Sin is something that all of us have trouble with in one way or another. There is not a person listening to my voice right now who does not have to confess that he has a problem with sin.

This is understandable because of what sin is and because of where sin came from and because of what sin does. Sin is much more than a word in the dictionary. The word that John uses for sin is the word that means to miss the mark.

This is one of the favorite words for sin in the Bible, to miss the mark. God said, here is the target you ought to hit, and we hit down here somewhere, and we miss the mark. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

But he tells us there is another word for sin. In verse 4, it is transgression of the law. Sin not only means to miss the mark, but sin means to go over the mark that God has drawn.

God says, here is a line, you don't go any farther than this. We say, oh, and so we transgress lawlessness. Sin came from the devil.

That's what makes it such a difficult, dangerous thing. He that practices sin is of the devil. Sin is not weakness.

Sin is not just some kind of disease in our system. Sin is an ingrained, inborn rebellion against God. And it leads to death.

It led to the death of our Lord Jesus, who was sinless. No one here can afford to joke about sin, laugh about sin. It's so easy for us to say, well, this is the way I am.

This is my lifestyle. That word lifestyle covers a multitude of sins. Now, you can't change my lifestyle.

Well, God will change your lifestyle someday. And you'll discover that lifestyle may have been death style. What has the Lord Jesus Christ done for us to solve the sin problem? The basic problem in the world today, the biggest problem in the world today is the sin problem.

At the heart of every problem is the problem of the heart. And the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? What has Jesus Christ done to help you and me solve the sin problem? Well, according to 1 John chapter 3, verses 1 through 10, our Lord performs three very wonderful ministries to help us solve the sin problem.

And if you and I will just let him do what he wants to do in our lives, we can have victory. Now, what has our Lord Jesus Christ done and what does he do? Well, verse 5 gives us his first ministry. He died for us.

And you know that he was manifested to bear away our sins. The word that's translated here, take away, is the same word that John the Baptist used in John chapter 1, verse 29. Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

So the first ministry our Lord performed to solve that sin problem was the ministry of dying for us. You see, his death really explains his birth. If you begin at the manger, you had better end up at the cross.

If you begin with the shepherds, you'd better end up with the shepherd giving his life for the sheep. If you begin with people bowing low at the manger, you'd better come to the cross where our Lord said it is finished. His death explains his life.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus. Why? For he shall save his people from their sins. When Mary was rejoicing at what the Lord had done for us, she says, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

When dear godly Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was praising the Lord for the birth of his son, he mentions the fact that the Savior has come. Listen to what he says in Luke and chapter 1. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. He's talking about a Savior.

The angels said that. When the angels appeared to those frightened shepherds, they said, don't be afraid, we bring you good tidings, good news, evangel of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

When Mary and Joseph brought the little baby Jesus into the temple for his presentation, that godly old Saint Simeon met them. Here was a man who had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and he took the Lord Jesus up in his arms and he blessed God and said, Lord, now let us thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. His birth is explained by his death and he was manifested.

He came to us that he might be able to die for us. Now, need I tell a congregation like this that only Jesus Christ could die for us? There was no other good enough to pay the price for sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

John tells us why only the Lord Jesus could take away our sins. Chapter 3, verse 7, He is righteous. Chapter 3, verse 5, In Him is no sin.

Chapter 3, verse 3, He is pure. Now, you cannot point to any human being on the face of this earth and say, He is pure, she is pure, He is righteous, in Him is no sin. Only Jesus Christ is the sinless one.

He was sinless in His birth. Therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And He was not sinless in His birth because His mother was holy.

He was sinless in His birth because the Holy Spirit who generated His body was holy. He was sinless in His life. Which of you convinceth me of sin? He said to His enemies.

They had to hire false witnesses to lie in court to convict Him. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who could die for us and pay the price for our sins because He is the only one who is pure. He is the only one who is righteous.

He is the only one who never missed the mark. He is the only one who always hit the target. He is the only one who never rebelled against the Father.

I do always those things that please Him. I have come not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And He died for us.

And in His death, He solved the sin problem. You see, when Jesus Christ was here on earth, there was no sin in Him. In Him is no sin, says John.

But when He went to the cross, there was sin on Him. Not sin in Him. Sin on Him.

Had there been sin in Him, He never could have died for us. How could a sinner die for sinners? Oh no, only a Savior can die for sinners. And in Him is no sin, but on Him was all sin.

And God took all of the filth and all of the moral sewage and all of the godlessness and our lying and our rebelling and our lusting and our hatred and all of our wickedness and all of our unbelief and all of the respectable sins that society says are permissible. And God took all of these sins in one great burden and laid them on His Son on the cross. You say, what did Jesus Christ do to help you solve the sin problem? My friend, He died for you.

The theologians tell us that sin creates three problems for us. There is the penalty of sin, which is eternal judgment. And there is the power of sin that drags us down daily.

And there's the very presence of sin all around us. And when He died for us, He took care of the penalty. He took care of the penalty of sin.

Now, the Jewish people who were in the congregation that received this letter understood what John was talking about because for centuries, they had had a religious holiday called the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. And on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would get two goats. And one of those goats would die.

His blood would be shed and the blood taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat. The other goat was kept alive. And the high priest would come out and he would lay his hands on the head of that goat and confess the sins of the people of Israel.

And then a man would take that goat out into the wilderness. And typically, symbolically, that goat was bearing away the sins of the people. As far as the East is from the West so far, hath He removed our transgressions from us.

My friend, in this Advent season, I ask you this question. Has Jesus Christ taken away your sins? Have you trusted Him? Can you point to Him and say, Behold my Lamb of God who has taken away my sins, even as He's taken away the sin of the world. The penalty for sin has been taken care of.

He died for us. Someone says, but Pastor, if I trust Christ as my Savior and He forgives me and He takes away the penalty of my sin, I'm still a sinner. Oh, but not in God's sight.

When God forgives, God forgets, and God takes that record book that has all of the record of our sins, and across that record book He writes righteous in Jesus Christ, accepted in the Beloved. There's a second ministry the Lord Jesus performs for us in solving the problem of sin. He not only died for us, but He lives in us.

And this John discusses in verses 6 through 10. You'll notice when I read the Scripture, I gave the literal meaning of the Greek verbs. It's important here.

I doubt that any language has more accurate verbs than the Greek language. Whosoever abideth in Him does not practice sin. Now, he may sin.

In fact, John tells us back in chapter 1, verse 8, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Verse 10, if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. But that's no excuse for sinning.

He says in chapter 2, verse 1, My little children, these things write I unto you that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. John says a Christian is not someone who is sinless.

A Christian is one who does sinless. He does not practice sin. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he said, My brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, that happens.

Sometimes temptation swoops down upon us. Sometimes we find ourselves fighting a tremendous battle, and sometimes we give in. We don't want to, and our heart rebels against it, and we're broken after it.

A Christian is not someone who is perfect. A Christian is one who is accepted in Christ. But occasionally, he does sin.

Now, says John, what does the Lord do to solve that problem? Well, there is a new life down inside. Verse 9, Whosoever is born of God, that's the new birth, does not practice sin. Why? His seed, the divine nature, the implanted life of God is down inside.

When a person becomes a Christian, God does not change the old nature. God implants a new nature. And as long as you and I yield to that new nature and let Jesus Christ live in us, the old nature is subdued.

The old nature is crucified. The old nature is not cultivated and fed and encouraged. Every one of us has had this experience, I'm sure.

We trusted Christ as our Savior. We were born again. A new nature came within, and life became different.

The old things we used to love, we didn't love anymore. And the things we used to dislike, we began to love. The Word of God and prayer and being with God's people and doing the things that are right.

And each of us had some area in our lives that bothered us, some habitual sin. Or some weakness. And we began to get victory over that as we prayed and as we walked with the Lord.

And perhaps you've been saved a year, two years, ten years. And then one day, pow, that old sin came back again and you fell. Lots of people have this experience.

And we go running to the pastor or to someone and say, how could this have happened? I haven't lost my temper like this for five years. I haven't used these words in ten years. How could this have happened? And the answer is, my friend, your old nature is just what it was ten years ago.

Just what it was twenty years ago. And what it will be twenty years from now if the Lord doesn't return. He does not change the old nature.

He implants the new nature. His seed remaineth in Him. And He cannot practice sin because He's born of God.

He may occasionally fall into sin, but He cannot practice sin. And there are those today who live lives of immorality and say, oh, but we're saved. We believe the same way you believe.

But our lifestyle is different. My Bible says we don't practice sin because He lives in us. One of the beautiful themes in 1 John involves three little words, as He is.

Over in chapter four, verse 17. Herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. You couldn't find a simpler statement.

As He is, so are we in this world. As He is in heaven, so are we in this world. Now just trace as He is through 1 John.

Look at chapter one, verse seven. If we walk in the light as He is in the light. Now the unsafe person can't walk in the light.

He's in darkness. But we've been saved. We have the new nature.

And so we walk in the light as He is in the light. Chapter two, verse six. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.

As He is. How was He? He walked in righteousness. We walk in righteousness.

Chapter three, verse three. Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure. As He is pure.

As He is in the light. As He is righteous, He says in verse seven. He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous.

And the ultimate is we shall see Him as He is. So we are in this world as He is up in heaven. And the victory He won, we can win.

And the righteousness He possesses, we can practice. And the light that He is, we can walk in day by day. Now, how do we do this? Well, He tells us in verse six of chapter three.

Whosoever abideth in Him does not practice sin. Now, abide in Him. What does it mean to abide in Him? Once again, if you'll just take this beautiful book of 1 John and see what he says about abiding.

I'm looking, for example, at chapter two and I'm looking at verse 19. Chapter two, verse 19. John is talking about people who left the church.

They left the fellowship. They went out from us. But they were not of us.

For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. And that word continued is the word abide. But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Is everyone whose name is on a church roll saved? No. No. John said there are people who went out from our fellowship.

They didn't lose their salvation. They never had it to begin with. They were in us, but not of us.

One of the ways we abide in Jesus Christ is by abiding in the fellowship. Don't you write off the importance of fellowship with God's people. I know you have a radio and a television set and you have a cassette recorder and a large library, but that's no substitute for the fellowship in God's church.

And I have seen it over and over again. When people get careless about their worship of God with God's people, they stop abiding. And when they stop abiding, they start sinning.

So we abide in the fellowship. Over in chapter 2, verse 24, we abide in the Word. Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning.

If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father. Oh, no time for the Bible. No time for meditation.

No time for study. No time to get into the Word. But plenty of time for sin.

How do we abide in Him? We abide in Him through the Word. How do we abide in Him? We abide in Him through the Holy Spirit. Walking in the Spirit, verse 27.

But the anointing, that's the Holy Spirit, the unction from above, the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you. And ye have no need that any man teach you. Now, he's not discounting teachers and preachers.

What he's saying is I can't teach you spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit has to take what I say and make it real to you. That's what he's saying.

Otherwise, it's secondhand. You need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you of all things and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, you shall abide in Him. How? Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

When did you get that? When you were saved. Abide in the fellowship. Abide in the Word.

Abide in the Spirit. And you shall abide in Jesus Christ. And when we abide in Him and He lives in us, we don't practice sin.

We walk in victory. I've said this so many times, I'm sure people don't hear it. But I'll say it again because somebody may dare to believe it.

The life of victory is the life in the Word, in the Spirit, in the fellowship of God's people. And if you don't take time every day to fellowship in the Word, through the Spirit, in prayer, there's going to be defeat. He lives in us.

Now, there's a third ministry our Lord performs. He died for us. That takes care of the penalty of sin.

He lives in us. That takes care of the power of sin. Sin shall not have dominion over you as you walk in the Spirit.

Chapter 3 of 1 John, the first three verses. Here's His third ministry. He is coming for us and this will take care of the very presence of sin.

Behold, what strange kind of love, says John, what peculiar foreign kind of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. And many manuscripts add at this point, and we are. Beloved, now are we the children of God.

Now. Oh, but you can't know if you're saved until you die. Don't wait that long.

Now are we the children of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we know.

Over 20 times in this little letter, John uses the word know. K-N-O-W. We know, we know, we know.

Oh, but that's arrogance. No, it isn't. It's confidence.

Oh, but that's pride. No, it isn't. It's assurance.

We know that when He shall appear, when, not if, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. For we shall see Him as He is. The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is just as certain as His first coming.

You could trace through the Old Testament scriptures the plan of His first coming. And He came according to plan. You can read through the New Testament scriptures and find the plan for His second coming.

And He's going to come according to plan. Just as He kept the Old Testament prophecies, so He will keep the New Testament prophecies. Just as He came as He promised, so He will come again as He promised.

It's that certain. And we know that when He shall appear, not if. Now when will He appear? We don't know.

What signs are we looking for? None. My understanding of scripture is that no signs have to take place before Jesus can come. He could come today.

I would that He did. The last prayer in the Bible is, even so come, Lord Jesus. And He's coming for us.

And this is going to take care of the very presence of sin. He's coming for us because we're His children. This world is not our home.

God's children are not of this world. The world doesn't understand us, and the world doesn't even want us. We are not of this world, even as Jesus is not of this world.

We don't belong here. We are left here to be lights in the world and salt in the earth. We are left here to witness and to win.

But this isn't our home. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again. He comes for us.

And when He comes for us, He's going to finish what He started. He died for me. That takes care of the very penalty of sin.

He lives in me. That takes care of the power of sin. He comes for me.

That will take care, say the theologians, of the very presence of sin. My body will be transformed to have a glorious body like unto His. I'll have a new home, a whole new atmosphere, a whole new environment where everything will be pure and glorious and holy and righteous and loving and splendid.

All of the glory of God when He comes. Now, it seems to me that our Lord Jesus Christ has done a very, very fine job of solving the sin problem. Moses didn't solve the sin problem.

In fact, Moses, in giving the law, accentuated the problem. By the law is the knowledge of sin. And all that Moses could do is say, don't do this and don't do that, but do this and do that.

And people cried out and said, we can't. God said, I know you can't. That's why I gave you the law, to let you know you could not.

Now, by grace, I want to save you. Moses didn't solve the sin problem with the law. And yet, people today are trying to solve the sin problem with law.

John the Baptist didn't solve the sin problem with baptism. I've met many people who've been baptized, and I believe in baptism, but they've never been saved. And they think that by being baptized, they're going to solve the sin problem.

John the Baptist didn't solve the sin problem. Jesus did. John himself said to our Lord, in those waters, in this manner, said Jesus to John, in this manner, we shall fulfill all righteousness.

In what manner? Through death, burial, and resurrection. How did Jesus bring in righteousness and solve the sin problem? Death, burial, and resurrection. He was manifested to take away our sins.

This is the only solution for the sin problem. He was manifested to take away our sins. Now, you know this.

John says so. John says, and you know. You know that He, Jesus, was manifested to take away our sins.

You know this. What have you done about it? You say, what should I do about it? Well, you should trust Him. You should come to Him and say, Lord Jesus, I believe that You died for me.

I believe that You bore my sins in Your body on the cross, and I will trust You now as my Savior. I will receive You. Implant that new nature within.

Forgive me. Take the record of my life, and across that record, please write, accept it in the Beloved One. Wash away my sin.

And then, once we have been saved, we come to Him and say, Lord, I want to abide in You, and I want You to abide in me. I'm going to abide in the fellowship and abide in the Word and abide in the Spirit, because I want You to give me victory over the power of sin. That like as Christ was raised up from the dead, so also we should walk in newness of life.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

No reason for us to stumble and fall. When Jesus Christ lives in us, and then we spend our thoughts and our mind and our heart lifting them upward to heaven and saying, you know, He's coming for me. The return of Jesus Christ is a tremendous motivation for godly living.

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. And now little children abide in him, that when he shall appear, not if, when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. Ashamed.

But Lord, that was my lifestyle. Ashamed, ashamed. He was manifested to take away our sins.

The greatest problem in the world today has been solved. The sin problem. Because he died for us, he lives in us, and he's coming for us.

The son has solved the sin problem for you. Now, will you receive him and trust him? Our Father and our God, if our hearts were somehow projected on a screen, and we, let alone others, could see what our sins are really like, oh God, how we would cry out for mercy. Forgive us, Lord, because we have covered sin, we have whitewashed it, we have redefined it, we have sometimes even approved of it.

We've argued about it, we've excused it, but oh Lord, the one thing we need more than anything else is to be saved from it. And I pray that today people will come and trust Jesus Christ and be born again and receive the new nature and find in Christ forgiveness. I pray for believers.

Lord, you know the needs of our own hearts. We need to walk as he walked and be as he is in this world. I pray that during this season and every season, we might live as those who have a Savior and who are looking for him to come again.

I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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