



December 19, 2010

*Looking A Gift Horse In The Mouth*

The old saying, “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.” is one that we understand to mean that we shouldn’t act ungrateful and find flaws in a gift when someone gives us something. That would be an ungrateful attitude and would not like to think of ourselves as acting that way. When it comes to God and the Gospel however that idea seems to get set aside. Those who profess a belief in Jesus Christ are quick to point out that Christ was sent so that all who would believe in him might have the hope and eternal life. (**John 3.16**) Others don’t think they need to do anything in order to benefit from God’s gift. God’s word, also a gift from the Lord, reveals that man was separated from God and only through the sacrifice of Christ can we be forgiven. We know that gifts have a specific purpose which cannot be altered and therein lies the problem. After the December holidays stores will be overwhelmed with folks returning countless gifts that did not perform the way they wanted or expected, or, that were just not what they wanted. Over the years, some things such as gift cards, have become popular because it provides a way to gift someone with exactly what they want. With this gift we realize that, as with anything else in life, there are limitations placed on them. There are limitations as to where and how the cards can be used or redeemed. Some resellers will not allow them to be redeemed for cash and some set an expiration date to the card so that it has to be used within a certain amount of time. We understand and accept that and are willing to work within the parameters someone else defines for us. Some, however, not accepting the terms and conditions of their gifts, will continue to argue and negotiate usages that are not within the intended scope of the item. God’s gift of his son, and Christ’s willingness to be the perfect sacrifice is freely given but there are conditions and restrictions that apply. There is a necessity to learn about Christ in order to make an informed choice as to whether we believe in him or not. As Christ stated those who do not believe in him will perish in their unbelief and rejection. (**Lk 13.3**). We must change how we think, a process known as repentance, and acknowledge our belief in him by confessing him (**Matt 10.32, Acts 8.36-37**). Finally, and this part gives folks a lot of problems, we must be immersed in water for the remission of our sins as the answer of a good conscience toward God (**1 Pet 3.21**). Then we must continue in faithful service to God each day of our lives, teaching and influencing others, keeping ourselves from sin, making corrections when needed, and attending services on the Lord’s day and other times we have the opportunity to assemble together. There are folks who are willing to believe Christ is the son of God and we can be saved through him, but that is as far as it goes. Others believe that we have to make our lives right by changing the way we live but don’t want to assemble with the saints or be “tied down” to any group. Others will commit themselves to a group but never complete their obedience by being baptized and practicing only the doctrine found in the New Testament. The problem is that salvation is a gift from God. Christ obeyed the will of the father by offering himself as the acceptable sacrifice. God revealed his will and conditions to us, and like a gift card or other present, there are conditions and limitations on how and what God will accept. Humans resist the idea of doing what the Lord has stated, substitute our ideas, and changing the conditions for acceptance. The problem is that God has not given us the right to do that. In essence we are being ungrateful to God when we refuse to accept his conditions and do things in the manner in which he has told us to do them. That’s one gift horse we don’t want to look in the mouth. He bites.

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