

## Earning Your Christmas Gifts

The title of this article is an “oxymoron,” a contradiction in terms. We can’t earn a gift. We can only receive a gift. Today we are celebrating the greatest gift ever given—the gift of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and what he accomplished for us. Often, we just don’t feel worthy of this gift or the love and grace of the Father, from which this gift sprang. When we respond to the gift with our own efforts to earn it by overcoming sin in our lives, we, in effect, deny the completed works of Jesus! He accomplished our salvation, including our healing and our deliverance from the power of sin and the enemy. When we go back to trying to “die to ourselves,” we deny the truth that our old sinful nature already died with Christ.

*We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.* Romans 6:6-7 (NLT)

This doesn’t mean that we ignore our sins, or say we have none. Rather, it is an admission that we are saved by the sacrifice of Jesus, so we are dead to sin, and fully alive "in Christ." If you’ve been unsuccessfully struggling with sin and trying to die to yourself--consequently feeling unworthy of God’s grace and his gifts, this Christmas Day I ask you to truly receive the fullness of the gift God offers. Receive Jesus in your heart **and** receive what he did for you and his promise to you. Focus on the promise of this gift and on who you really are in the Kingdom because of it! Your mind is the battleground in the war of sanctification. When we focus on trying to die to sin, we give up territory on the battleground that has already been won for us. Don’t do it! If you give up the ground, you stay stuck in sinful patterns. Instead, claim your victory by faith! You are saved (and sanctified) by grace through faith! Don’t allow unbelief in the reality of the new you steal your sanctification. Receive your ultimate Christmas gift with joy and thanksgiving, claim your identity as a son of God and joint heir with Jesus, and glorify God that you are the righteousness of God in Christ! Then live, fully alive!