



lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP




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the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ
 ΘΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΥ ΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
 ΤΟΝ ΘΝ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟ ΥΕ ΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΚΑΧΩΤΙΣ



VIDEO ANIMATION:

Advent is an old-fashioned word from Latin that means “to come to.” Therefore, to arrive, but in the sense of a great dignitary arriving before the people – like a king arriving for a public event. For centuries now, it has been used almost exclusively for the arrival of The King, the Word of Almighty God into the physical realm of mortal man. Specifically, His birth as flesh and blood dwelling among us.

It is also used in some circles for His return, the Coming of the Lord in power and glory – theologically the Parousia, or commonly the Second Coming.



You've heard the word in relation to the time leading up to Christmas Day, if not in a religious sense with the lighting of candles, at least as an advent calendar like the model house in *Christmas Vacation*. That's the primary sense, and perhaps you are aware of secondary sense as with the Adventist denominations, like the Seventh Day Adventists.



All of that to say, this is the final week of Advent, next Sunday is Christmas Day when we celebrate the momentous event of Christ's first arrival approximately 2,026 years ago.

Let's start today with a little Advent fun.

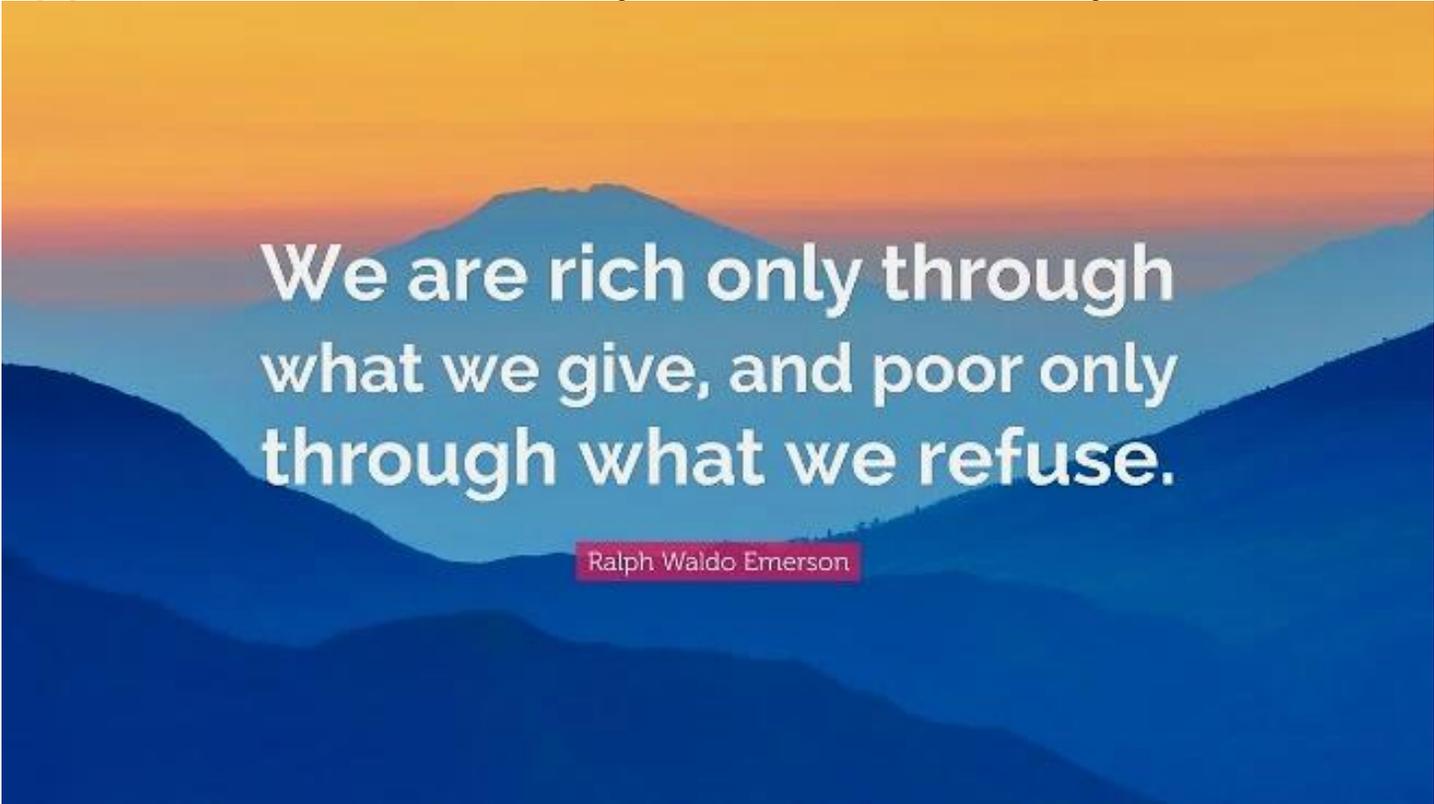


12 Days of Christmas VIDEO:

The season can be very stressful, but life itself is stressful and seemingly more stressful than ever. The one thing that should actually be the opposite of

stressful is the Advent of our Lord. That's what Christmas is – the arrival of God among us. That very event is the only thing that can ever give any human being any kind of real hope at all.

And therein lies the caveat, the added qualification, it is only hope to those who see it that way and so it is the opposite of stressful only to those who truly believe.



We are rich only through
what we give, and poor only
through what we refuse.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

That's the nature of an offer – that's the attribute of any gift – if accepted and embraced the benefit is realized, but there is always, created by the offer itself, the possibility of refusal. Rejecting a gift offered necessarily has its own consequences.

A gift is, by Biblical definition, something unearned. Romans 4:4 ESV as an example, “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.”

At Christmas you will no doubt give a gift to someone who deserves it in some way. If that’s the case, it’s not really a gift; it’s an obligation wrapped in festive paper with a colorful bow. In addition, you may give a gift and simultaneously receive one in return. If so, again, it’s not really a gift; it’s an exchange.



A grace gift Biblically speaking is a self-sacrificing effort on behalf of another who neither earned, nor deserved the gift, and perhaps most importantly, has no way of

ever repaying the generosity. That's why Jesus said in giving, "do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." (Matthew 6:3 NASB).

Let's say that you decide to offer such a gift... By doing so you set up a condition for the potential recipient. It is impossible to make such an offer without putting the other person on the spot to make a choice concerning the offer. They are forced by the offer itself to either accept or reject. Whichever way they go there will be a new consequence for them.

You might say, nothing changes if they reject the gift. They didn't have it before, and they won't have it afterward. It's not true, because it's one thing to not have a gift that didn't exist and quite another to not have a gift that could have been possessed. Beyond that there is also a relational change. A rejection of a gift is also, by extension, a rejection of the giver. You may not think so if you are the one rejecting an offer, but believe me, you will if you are the one rejected.

On a sidenote think about that. When someone offers you something and you pridefully reject it, you reject them. Let's not forget the other side of the equation. When you offer someone something, you force them to

make a choice that they might have been happier not making.

What I'm saying is that it is impossible to make such an offer to someone without creating both the opposite of judgment and judgment itself – both the opposite of condemnation and condemnation itself.

Let me elaborate, or I guess belabor, the point. If you give someone a no strings attached, zero-expectation offer, you have gifted them something without judging their worthiness to receive it. Now, I know we humans don't ever really do that – we always expect something, even if we are not consciously aware of it, but let's pretend. No expectation at all – just freely giving because you want to give freely.

In that, there is no judgment of the person's merit and that's what Jesus was talking about when He said in John 12:47, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." It is a gift without judgment. So, again, we see that there is no judgment at all of the person's merit, but honestly, there is a judgment of their need.

We don't typically make an anonymous donation to the richest person in town. We give to those who we think

need a blessing and that is judging them. That's what Jesus was talking about when He said in John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." It's a little subtle, but it's there. The one believing "has passed out of death into life." That means that they were previously dead. That means that there was a need. The judgment is that there is a need.

That creates a double blessing in a way. First the gift is generously offered without strings, and secondly it is offered because there is a need. That's why Jesus repeatedly said that He came to Save and not to Judge. To liberate and not to condemn.



He gave, without expectation to those who were undeserving and unworthy, to those who could never repay, to those in desperate need, a self-sacrificing gift of incomparable value, without judgment or condemnation – a gift that then goes on to erase judgment and condemnation for all eternity.

That creates the other hand. For anyone rejecting the gift and, by extension, the giver, there is both judgment and condemnation in the sense that they refuse the benefit of the gift and repudiate the right relationship with the giver. We can take that a step further in this instance because the gift offered is a resurrection from the dead. A rescue from an eternal torment that has

been both earned and deserved. That's judgment 2.0 – first there is no benefit received in rejection, second, the original judgment that the person was under has been confirmed by their choice to reject rescue.

For those who reject the Savior Who came to us, it amplifies the stress of this world and, in the end, will make all the stress of this world seem like “just a walk in the park, Kazansky.” (That was for Sage). Jesus brought with Him Salvation, but as I said a while ago, Salvation implies that there is something that one must be Saved from, ergo, if one refuses the proffered Salvation, then one has doomed themselves to their original unsaved fate. They remain dead.

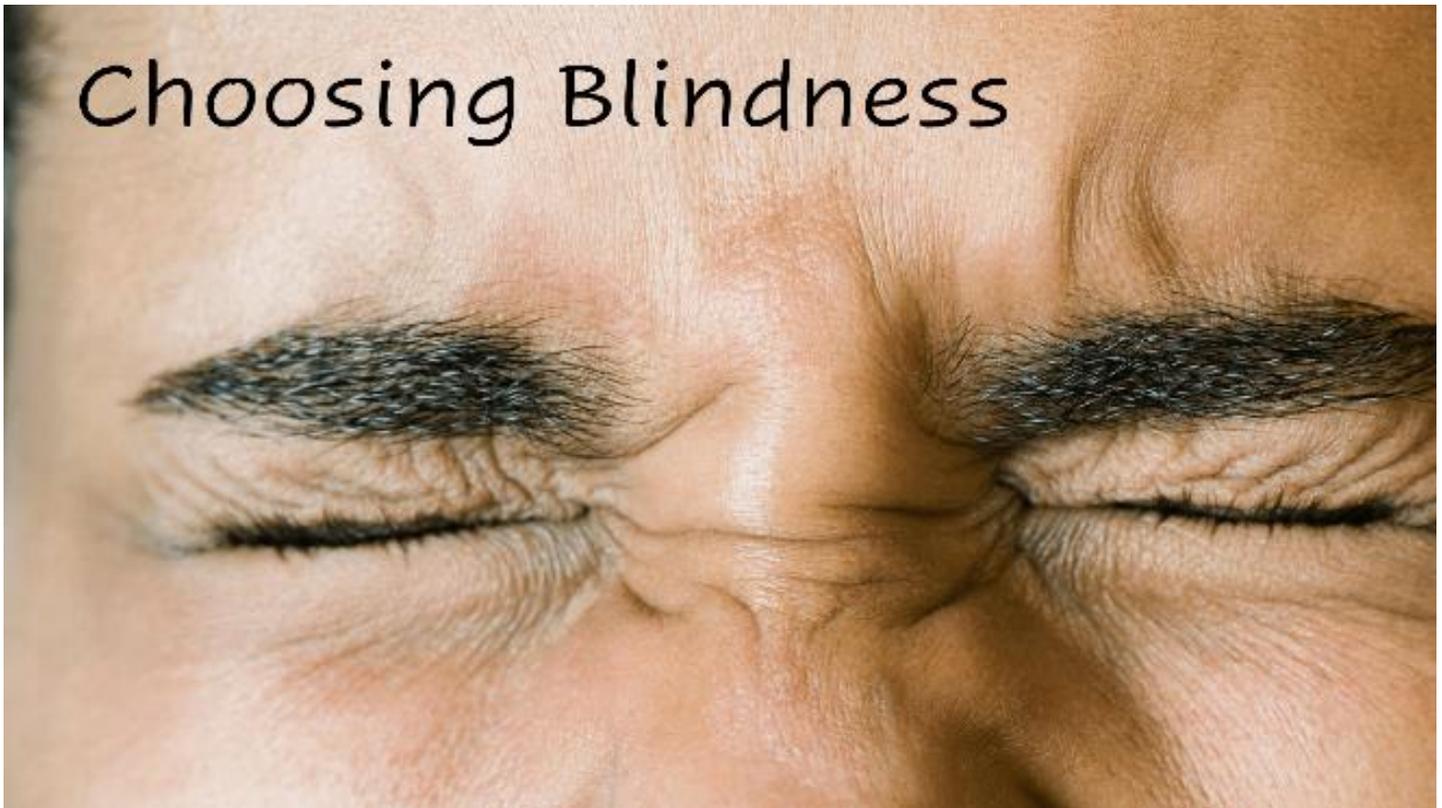
When Salvation from death is offered, it is the greatest gift imaginable, but the offer itself carries with it judgement and condemnation. Because as an offer it can be refused. That's what Jesus was talking about in John 3:19, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.” As well as in John 12:48, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” As well

as the verses we'll see today in our ongoing study in John's Gospel.

At the Christmas season we should be quick to point out to everyone that God is, in actual fact, pure and perfect love. He isn't sending anyone to "H – E – double toothpicks." People are eagerly and enthusiastically driving their car down the "Highway to Hell," instead of simply taking Jesus' hand, abandoning their stupid car, and allowing Him to lead them up the "Stairway to Heaven." (Couldn't help it, sorry).

My point is that God's not the jerk! Every person who continues spitting on His selfless gift of Himself to them, is a jerk... As we are told in Philippians 2:6-8 NLT, Jesus, "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." Now, Jesus did that in order to offer a gift that every person actually needs. A precious and priceless gift offered without any judgment or condemnation. That then means, my friends, that the opposite remains true. Nothing but judgment and condemnation remain

upon those who refuse – those who reject an intimate relationship with their Creator through His appointed means.



That's why, to such people, Jesus can just as accurately say in... John 9:39–41, 39And Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” 40Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?” 41Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.



Now, we understand the nature of rejection. Clearly it is personal pride that distorts the reality that I have a need. In this case... that I have a need for a Savior on His terms. Pride tells me that to some degree I don't need Saving, or that I can Save myself, or that I'm so special I deserve Saving, or at the very least, that if I do need some help, it's only a little and so I can get it on my terms. The prideful thinking is that if God wants me, I have a say in what that looks like. It is so very American. Kids tell parents, "I didn't ask to be born," with the implication that you owe me. We treat God that way. "You created me God." "You created me the way that I am, and therefore if anyone is to blame, it is You." "You owe me."



In a poll, the number one thing that men seek in a wife is someone who will accept them for who they are. In other words, men want a woman who will not try to change them. What that means is that men think that they are perfect husbands just the way they are – which I can tell you is one of the biggest egotistical lies ever conceived.

If as a man, you are not going to change in order to accommodate your wife, please, please, please, do yourself and all of the rest of us a huge favor and do not get married – and while we're at it don't procreate either. First of all, to do so, unmarried, is a sin. But with

such an egocentric attitude, you won't be any better at as a father than as a husband.



Since it's Christmastime let me bash the ladies as well – an equal-opportunity, look in the mirror, slugfest. What women want more than anything is a man. What I mean, is that what a woman wants in a man, is a man – a manly man. Then once they get a man, they do everything in their power to de-man him. That doesn't have much to do with the point today – but I didn't want the men to feel singled out.



No sense leaving it on a negative note – what's the answer? Both parties must grow, meaning change, not only for an ever-improving marriage, but for God's purpose for marriage to be accomplished. Men must become more civil, and women must become less idealistic. There's your marriage counseling for the day.



The reason I brought up men wanting to be accepted for who they are and not wanting anyone to change them, is it's a nice example of pride creating a false narrative that keeps a person from being saved. In the example, a woman is endowed by God with the potential to change a man into a far better version of himself – to, in a sense, save him from remaining an ogre like Shrek, or on the other extreme, remaining a boy like Peter Pan. A wife, rightly engaged, can make a male, a man, a confident and kind, self-controlled, and gentle, man.

For that to happen, the guy needs to humble himself enough to face the fact that he does need to change

and that he cannot do that on his own. So, you can see, it is pride that prevents that from happening. What's even sadder is the pride is actually only a façade to cover the underlying fear. Fear that things won't go the way I think that they should.

Back to our point – that is the point. We humans, male and female both, are so full of self that we cannot keep from being fearful and so we take control in whatever way we've learned works for us.

It might be aggressive dominance, or it might be subtle undermining. It might be playing the martyr, or the victim, or the hero. There are a whole host of ways that we use to get our way, which only stands in the way of God's way.

It prevents us from accepting Jesus on God's terms. That's how Jesus started the passage we read, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

Now, of course, Jesus just miraculously gave sight to a man who had never seen – to a man born blind – hence, the metaphor. Metaphorically, blindness is that

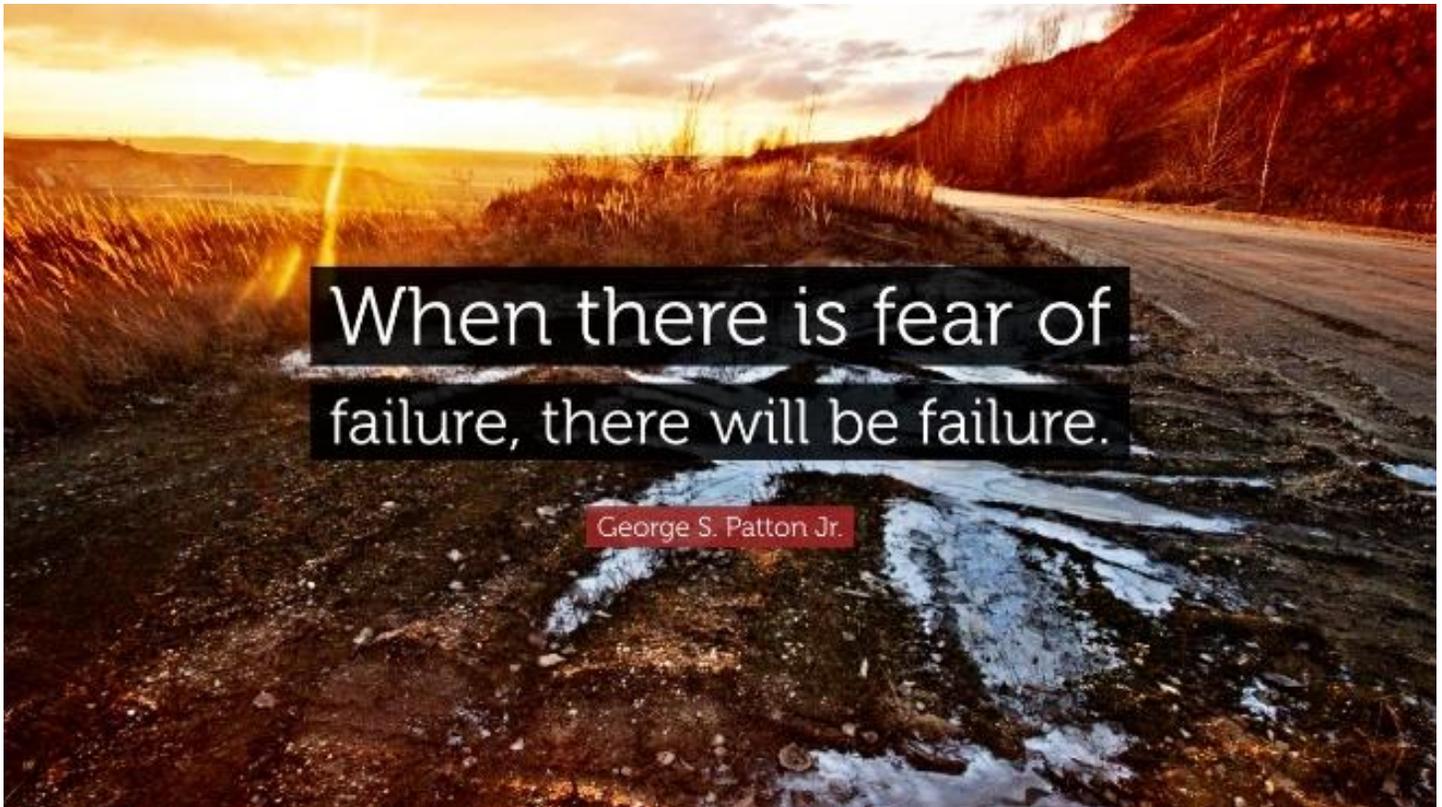
exact same fear-driven pride that prevents people from seeing, accepting, embracing, believing in the Truth – here the Truth personified.

“Those who do not see,” are those with enough humbleness to change.

Think about that for a moment.

To see something unfamiliar, to accept something new, to embrace something different, to believe in a hitherto unknown Truth, requires by very definition, the willingness, and the need, to change.

Change itself means an admission that something was previously off... It is an admission to being blind. Right? You give me a completely new way of doing math. For me to adopt your way is to change the way I currently do math.



When there is fear of failure, there will be failure.

George S. Patton Jr.

That stems from the fear that I've been wrong all along, the fear that I might have to start all over again. Fear that I might make mistakes learning a new way. Fear that I'll look foolish or need to be corrected. My pride won't allow that and so, I reject the notion out of hand.

I say, "I don't need to see a different way; I see fine the way I am." The sentiment, "leave me alone, I see perfectly," prevents the person from seeing the new way.

Jesus "came into this world" to offer a gift. A gift that can never be earned, a gift that can never be

deserved, a gift that can never be repaid, a gift that every person desperately needs.

The mere offer paints every person into a corner. Every person has the same problem due to the simple existence of the offer... Will you admit your blindness and accept His healing touch to give you sight for the very first time? Or will you insist that you see fine, just as the Pharisees did, and remain blind to the greatest gift ever offered?

Put simply, what will you do with Jesus?

When I ask people that question, I usually get excuses. Whether it's irrational rationalizing, open hostility, verbal abuse, or some form of self-justification. It's all delaying tactics, deflections, and objections. Whatever the form denial takes, none of it changes the fact that there is an offer from God on the table.

The offer is Jesus Himself. So, I ask you again, what are you going to do with Jesus?

Sometimes it's hard to hear it from me... Here's another voice...



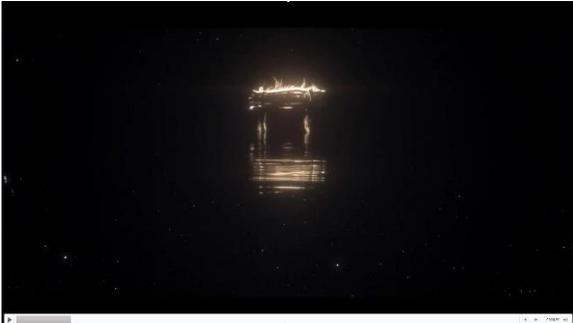
Rant VIDEO:



Why Scott, why would you make us uncomfortable when all we really wanted was to watch the kid's presentation? Because God hired me to do precisely that because He loves you and does not want you to waste your physical life in the pursuit of distractions.

He really doesn't want you to miss eternity in perfect harmony with Him – that's why. Won't you spend just a little time this season reflecting on what's actually

important? If you'll consider it, I'll close on a high note...



Fire and Ice VIDEO:

