

The Greatest Gift

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Date: 21 December 2025

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[0 : 00] Go ahead and take your Bibles this morning to 2 Corinthians chapter 9, 2 Corinthians chapter 9 this morning.! The greatest gift of all time.

And, you know, we actually, when it comes to gifts and giving, you know, we naturally do love to receive gifts. There's something that it does mentally to us when you receive something. It's something that we enjoy. You know, gifts remind us of something very important. It's because when somebody gives you a gift, it reminds you that you're valued and that you're cared for. You know, that somebody's concerned about you. And, you know, God's gift to us is the same thing. It revealed that God is concerned about you. You know, the reality and the need of giving, you know.

And as Jesus said, you know, it's more blessed to give than to receive. You know, He declared this because God is in the giving business. You know, the gift is great, but God is in the giving business.

[1 : 25] And He gives so much to us as we look and consider throughout time because God is a great giver. You know, we can learn a lot about giving from Him.

Matter of fact, we cannot understand giving if we don't understand God's concept of giving. He's the initiator of it. God was a giver from the very beginning.

If you think about all the things throughout time, you know, God gave Adam and Eve a piece of skin from an innocent animal to replace the fig leaves and to cover their shame.

You know, God gave Noah a plan for the ark that would provide the saving of his household. And God gave Abraham a promise concerning his seed that we celebrate even today.

You know, you think about how He gave Sarah a precious child in her old age. He gave Isaac a ram to take his place on the sacrificial altar there at Mount Moriah.

[2 : 23] You know, God gave Jacob 12 sons who were becoming the leaders of the tribes of Israel. And He gave Joseph a minister in Egypt that he might save the people.

I mean, you think about the different items. You know, God gave the Israelites possession of a land. And He gave kings to preside over His people and prophets to plead with His people.

And He gave Scripture to tell us about His gift that was yet to come, who would come and deliver and to save. And God gave an announcement by the angels that Jesus was born.

You know, He gave a sign to the wise men, a star to lead them to the young Jesus there. And God gave Joseph the patience to understand the circumstances surrounding the child.

You know, God gave Jesus the place of sinners on the cross to bear our sin. You know, when we think about all the things that God gives. Giving is a continual thing.

[3 : 28] And God understands both the importance of giving and the gift itself. You know, because the idea of giving is good, but the gift that you give is important.

You know, here a few weeks ago, we had our gift white elephant gift exchange. And some of you may not have appreciated what you went home with. It was a gift, but it may not have been exactly what you wanted.

You know, when we understand that gifts carry a context with them. And you have gifts that you've been given throughout the years that you remember. You know, how many remember gifts from a kid when you were a little kid?

You know, something that stuck with you. You know, and things that you might have or keep over the years because they had substance or they had importance to that gift. But we know also there was other gifts that were just kind of passed by.

But you know, the Bible speaks about a gift. And we're going to look here this morning. If you found 2 Corinthians, let's stand together here for just a... We'll read one verse here this morning. And we'll pray and we'll get into the message and talk a little bit about this precious gift that we celebrate.

[4 : 36] Verse 15 says this, thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we just come before you this morning, Lord, we just thank you just for the gift that you've given to us. Lord, pray just have your hand upon each heart, each life here today. Lord, for all that you've given to us.

Lord, help us to always be mindful of it. Lord, let's consider the importance of it. But Lord, also just the blessing of it to us. And Lord, we pray just meet with each one in a mighty way, Lord, as we just spend time together with you today.

And Lord, we just give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. May be seated. You know, a very simple verse here. You know, thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

You know, consider that reality. It's a gift. An unspeakable gift. You know, it's a gift. That's the greatest gift that's ever been given. It's a gift beyond our comprehension, really.

[5 : 41] I mean, we can understand the basics of salvation, but the more you study it, the deeper it becomes. You know, to understand the complexity that God provided in this gift.

You know, so we need to understand what makes a great gift. You know, I think God describes to us what makes a great gift. And one is, the first thing is, is a gift that's remembered.

You know, when you remember the gift, it means it was something of significance. It's something that was there. You know, I remember as a child, you have different gifts that you were given, you know.

Some, when we received gifts, some of them you might have appreciated, but the duration wasn't very long, you know. Some of you might have grown up in the era when you, at Christmas time, it was the mid-year, school year refresh.

You get the underwear and socks. You know, and that was all, you could guarantee that was one of the gifts you were going to get, you know. And, or you had gifts that were throughout, you know.

[6 : 41] You maybe have a tradition of giving PJs, you know. And all those things of everybody running around in matching clothes. You know, you always have those type things that go on, you know.

They might have been appreciated, but the duration of them were pretty short-lived. You know, they didn't have a remembrance to them. And, you know, when we receive a gift, something that makes a great gift is one that's remembered.

You know, think about 2,000 plus years have gone by and we still remember the gift that God gave. That's a gift that's remembered. You know, we find in Luke chapter 2, it tells us this, as she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in his swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the end.

You know, when you consider that Mary placed that precious gift in the manger that day, it wasn't without, it was without much fanfare. I mean, sometimes at Christmas we think about, you know, Christmas programs and Christmas pageants.

I mean, and all the different things you've seen over the years. And you think about, you know, all the things that's going on. Oftentimes we think it all happened at the same time. You know, when Mary gave birth to Jesus and laid him in that manger, it was a pretty solemn evening.

[7 : 55] It was pretty quiet. It was kind of a serious dynamic if you want to be truthful about it. As she would lay him there, there was no parades.

There was no flashing lights. There was nothing that would have told anybody much at the moment of what was taking place. Just a couple of young kids there taking care of a gift that was carefully placed in a manger.

You know, I doubt Mary and Joseph understood what was taking place all fully. I mean, we have trouble comprehending it today. I can't imagine them trying to process all that was taking place.

That what was happening that night would be something that would be remembered because of the substance of God's gift. God's gift was one that was to be remembered.

It's definitely a great gift is one that's remembered. One that we recall. One that we keep in mind. But you know, another element we find of a great gift is that it's useful. It has a purpose behind it.

[9 : 02] You know, it has some substance with it. And we've all received gifts that are not essential or useful. You know, sometimes we'll receive a gag gift or you get something that sits around or you have.

I mean, you probably all have stuff in storage. Well, somebody gave it to me, so I want to keep it. Say, preacher, now you're meddling. It's like, you know, we have these different gifts.

You know, they're not essential or useful. Or then you become grandparents and then your fridge is filled full of wonderful gifts. You know, scribbled artwork. They're precious, but they're not necessarily useful.

They're valuable, but not useful, you might say. You know, we might have got a silly gift that caused us to laugh. And, you know, when we're reminded of those things.

You know, we're reminded that though the idea of gifts is important in what God gives to us. Gifts that are going to be useful are good gifts.

[10:03] James tells us this in James 1.17. He says, You know, that perfect gift comes down from God.

The one, those gifts that are essential and they're useful. But the most useful gift that God gave was himself. When we consider what God gave that day and what Jesus was preparing to do.

Because he sent a gift. You know, oftentimes today, I think in culture, we get caught up in the fact that there was a babe in a manger. But, you know, that gift didn't come to stay a babe.

That gift didn't come to just grow up and to be an example. That gift was given because it was useful. It was beneficial.

It was very beneficial for us. You know, you think about what Jesus said in Luke chapter 5 in verse 32. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

[11:10] You know, that's usefulness. Jesus said, I didn't just come for the sake of it. I came to be useful, to be purposeful in what was accomplished. You know, later on in Luke chapter 24, verse 47, it says, And repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

You know, the gift that God gave that night was a useful gift. It was a gift that's going to be beneficial. It's still beneficial for us today.

You know, it's not only, it was useful not only to call sinners to repentance, but to provide for that sinner to be made clean. You know, oftentimes we don't, we forget the importance of the usefulness of the gift.

It wasn't just to let us know that we're a sinner, but that that sin was taken care of. That God provided a way for us. And God brought those things in line that we might be saved.

You know, Hebrews chapter 10 tells us this, But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.

[12:20] You know, it was a useful gift. It served a purpose, a very direct purpose for us. You know, it wasn't only useful in the call and the sacrifice, it provided a way for us to be reconciled.

You know, that word reconciliation. You know, think over in Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1, we find that the reconciliation was part of that gift, a means to be restored to God. That restoration is very critical in what was provided. It was not only useful in just a substance, but in reconciling us together.

It says, and you who were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. You know, that word reconciled means bring together.

You know, one of the things that we celebrate at Christmas is people come together. You know what God did? He set forth to bring us to Him. To bring us together, to be able to once again have fellowship with Him.

[13:35] This great gift is remarkable in that it was remembered. It's a great gift because it was useful. You know, those are two very important things of a gift. But you know, another important thing about a gift is timeliness.

Timeliness. You know, timeliness. Timing is critical in many things in life. You know, when we understand that good timing keeps things flowing smoothly.

You know, there's all sorts of areas. We understand timing. You know, we realize that timing of a good joke, you know, if you don't get your timing right when you're telling a joke, it just ruins the whole thing.

You know, if you miss those things of timing, you know, but things are important on timing, arriving at the right time. You know, nowadays if you go to the airport and you don't arrive at the right time, you're in trouble.

You know, you miss the plane or you miss where you ought to be. You know, when it comes to just nature itself, knowing when to plant at the right time or to harvest at the right time.

[14:41] You know, sometimes it involves just asking at the right time because timing is what keeps things in sync. It helps things to move and to flow at the right means and the right sequence of events.

And oftentimes we forget the importance of God's timing. This gift is important because it was exactly on time. It was at the exact moment that it could accomplish completely what God sent forth His Son to do.

You know, look over to Galatians chapter 4 for a moment. You know, you see here in Galatians chapter 4, it's a verse that, you know, we often speak of and you hear oftentimes, but you know, I want you to consider the timing of this.

It says, but when the fullness of time was come, God set forth His Son made of a woman made under the law to redeem them that were under the law that they might receive the adoption of sons. I want you to understand that when God sent forth Jesus, it was at the right exact time. You know, when you begin to study history, the world was, the stage of the world was set to perfectly accomplish what God had set forth.

[16:00] When you see how God allowed things to come into play, that timing was absolutely perfect because God had set up a means to get the gospel throughout the known world, throughout the world so people could hear.

Because many times in history, as you understand, that sometimes division and conflict keep people from being able to move or to communicate. You know, when Jesus came forth, it was a time of peace.

Historically, it's called the Pax Romana. It's Roman peace, almost 200 years of general peace throughout the region. And you say, well, why is that important?

You know what? It allowed for commerce. It allowed for interactions. It allowed people to freely move. Ideas were exchanged. And you know what?

It opened the door for the gospel to go forth. It provided a way, Roman roads, for the messengers to walk upon. It had a common language because of that.

[17:07] It had a common business language that people could communicate with one another. God's timing is impeccable. It says in the fullness of time was coming.

In other words, God said at this moment is the perfect moment that Jesus was to be born. He put those things in place very carefully.

You know, we oftentimes don't consider how God allows even wicked men to be used of him. You know, oftentimes we think of Caesar, you know, and you think about the cruelty of the Romans. But you know what? God allowed them to set some things in place and allowed them to continue. One of the quaint things of history is the Romans had some rules that played into things, but Jews had an exception.

The Jews were the only ones who didn't have to openly offer sacrifices to Caesar. They had given them an exception throughout the Roman Empire.

[18:09] You say, preacher, why is that important? It's important because when the message of Jesus began to spread, you know what the Romans didn't look at as a new religion?

They just looked at it as a branch of Judaism. What did it do? It gave protection of law, that it might be spread and move forth. It's amazing as you begin to study God's timing, the things that God had in place.

It wasn't just random. God just put his finger on a moment in time and said, I'm going to send Jesus Christ. Ah, about there.

I want you to understand, that wasn't what happened. God had this timing planned out perfectly. His timing is an amazing thing when it comes to the birth of Christ.

It was at that perfect moment when everything was in place. His coming was a strategic timing, providentially set by God.

[19:07] His coming was not one day before or behind the appointed time. You know, when we understand that God had this timed out perfectly. When you think about in the hearts of the people, God's law had done its work.

It had shown that men are sinners. You know, when you understand the gospel was built upon the truth of the law of God. You know, the law is our schoolmaster, Paul tells us.

It reveals to us that we're sinners that need to be saved. When we understand that the law had been, the picture had been set forth in the law of all the sacrifices that pointed to Christ.

Those things were ingrained within the people to understand what was taking place in regards to it and the need for it. You know, when we understand that the world fully knew that it couldn't keep and had proved it could not keep the standard God had set. of God's standard of holiness. God set forth these things at this right moment. When we understand that the world was full of people spiritually famished and the worship of self and pleasure and false gods and philosophical ethics that served no longer seemed useful. [20 : 30] His timing was there. And you know, that's the important part about a gift is timing. God's gift to us of His Son was at the perfect time.

It was set forth. It's a gift that's remembered. It's a gift that's useful. It's a gift that's timely. But I want you to understand, God's gift goes above and beyond because it does something few gifts could ever do and none can do to this magnitude and that's life-changing.

It's a gift that changes somebody's life. You know, oftentimes today, you'll hear people say, you know, well, that was a life, something life-changing that happened in their life. You know, or they talk about life-changing amounts of money that somebody might inherit or to win. You know, that's going to change their life. You know what? It might alter their life, but I don't believe it changes their life because the gospel does something nothing else of this world can do. It changes an individual. It's life-changing. You know, a few gifts will change your life and most just alter the day or the weeks after but soon fade away.

[21 : 48] But, you know, consider, look over to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, we find that the gift that God gives is something unique and that because he says this, you're no longer who you were, you are now different.

Not just your circumstances, not just the situation of life, but when you call upon him as Savior, you are different. Look what it says here.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is what? A new creature. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become what? New.

You know, I call that a life-changing gift. You know, when you think about the change that happens, you know, Ephesians chapter 4, look over to Ephesians 4 and verse 24.

The Bible tells us this. It says very clearly that you put on the new man after which God is created in righteousness and true holiness. There's a change that takes place, a change that transforms us from a lost sinner to one that is redeemed, a child of God.

[23 : 01] It changes men and women from an enemy of God to a friend of God. It changes the direction of not only our present, but changes direction of our future.

It changes what's ahead. You know, think about what the Scripture tells us. Let's go to Romans chapter 5 for a moment. Romans chapter 5, look down in verse 15.

It says this, but not as the offense, so also is the free gift, that though the offense of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, that the gift by grace, which by one man, Jesus Christ, had abounded unto many.

And not as it was by one man that sinned, so is the gift. For the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification.

For if by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.

[24 : 06] Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men under the justification of life.

You know, think about the change, the new life, you've moved from death to life. The gift of eternal life, the gift of God's righteousness placed upon us.

The things that take place, God's gift to us is a wonderful gift. It's a life-changing gift. It's a gift by grace, God's unmerited favor.

You know, when you understand what God gave to us, what He offered to us is a life-changing gift. A gift that alters everything, a gift unto justification, you know, that remission of sins, that being absolved from guilt.

In other words, you're no longer guilty, but you've been pardoned. That's life-changing. You know, the last few years, pardons have made the news a lot. You know what? Pardons change somebody's life.

[25 : 10] There's no doubt a pardon changes somebody's life. It alters everything. It changes what they can do, where they can go. It changes their liberty.

It changes all sorts of elements about their life. It flips their life upside down. That's an earthly pardon. A heavenly pardon is even greater.

It far exceeds, but it gives us that picture of what Christ has done. We're justified, but we're not just justified, we're made righteous. In other words, God says, I don't just take care of the problem, I put something better in its place.

That's His righteousness. That's the conformity of us to Him being made right in the sight of God. When God looks at one that is saved, He no longer sees our sin.

He sees His Son. Because the Bible tells us that we put on His righteousness, not our own. That's a picture that changes everything.

[26 : 14] You know, a gift is just that. A gift is remembered, it's useful, it's timing, it's life-changing. But you know, one important thing about a great gift is it's lasting.

Lasting. A gift that is great will last. You know, not every gift lasts a long time. You know? Some gifts are great for the moment, you know?

One of the great things you can give is, you know, like dark chocolate bars. You know? You enjoy it, it's great. The problem is they're not very lasting.

You know? If you get them for Christmas, they might make the week. Great gift, but not much duration. You know, a gift can be great, it can be enjoyable, but if it misses the duration, God's gift to us is one that's lasting.

The Bible calls it everlasting and eternal. You know, consider what John 3.36 tells us. It says, He that believeth on the Son hath what?

[27 : 20] Everlasting life. It has a duration to it. You know, when we see here, he tells us this, that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

I want you to understand that if you don't call upon and accept God's free gift, God's wrath is also permanently abiding because it's life changing, but it's lasting.

John chapter 5 tells us this in verse 24. The Bible says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath what?

Everlasting life. And shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. 1 John chapter 5 tells us this in verse 12.

It says, He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have what?

[28 : 23] Eternal life. That you can know that you have it that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. God's gift is a great gift.

It's a gift that you have to do something with because like any gift, it's not a gift that just can sit there and look pretty. It always amazes me when you go sometimes you'll see people they'll wrap empty boxes so they have plenty of gifts looking around.

you know, but they're not gifts of substance. They're not gifts that'll ever be received. They're not gifts that are ever going to be enjoyed. When we understand that God has the greatest gift, but you know, sometimes people are going to choose to ignore God's gift.

You know, when somebody goes to give you a gift, you have a choice of what you're going to do with it. You can take it or you can leave it. A gift is by nature has that option you know, you can ignore it, you can reject it.

You know, even today when it comes to the greatest gift ever given, you find that many mock it. They try to downplay the greatest gift that God has ever given to us.

[29 : 38] The greatest gift that was given for us. You know, oftentimes I think we forget how great a gift God has given. The greatest gift that was ever given for you and for me.

You know, what are we going to do with the greatest gift that God has given? Because all of us have a choice. How are we going to respond to the things that God has given?

Especially the greatest gift He's ever given because that gift was given for you. It was given specifically for me and for you.

this gift is one that's remembered without a doubt is the greatest gift ever given. It's lasted a duration. It was promised and it was revealed.

Without a doubt was the greatest gift that the world has ever known. We know it was useful because it had the power to remove the guilt of sin.

[30 : 45] It was a very useful gift. It had a purpose behind it. We know it was timely. It was timely then. But you know what?

It's timely today because it's just as pertinent as important today as it ever was. What's somebody going to do with it?

Because what you do with it is important. Because the time we need it is right now. Because we need to understand that it's life changing.

You know think about the lives that have been transformed by God's gift. The people who have been changed at destinations of eternity have been changed.

Things of this life have been changed. Families have been transformed. Lives have been made anew and a promise of a great future.

[31 : 41] We know it's a great gift because of the lasting nature of God's gift. You know this morning I'm just going to ask you a simple question. What have you done with God's greatest gift?

God's gift that He gives freely. You know as we think back to where we started out look back there to 2 Corinthians chapter 9 look there at verse 15 I want you to consider that.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. What have you done with God's gift? Have you called upon Him? You know this morning if you know you're saved what have you done with it?

Are you appreciative of God's gift? The most precious gift He could ever give. A gift that was right on time for you. A life changing gift.

A gift that lasts for eternity. As heads are bowed and eyes are closed this morning. What about you today? I want to encourage you to take a moment just to consider God's unspeakable gift that He's given.

[32 : 49] Maybe you just need to take a moment and say thank you for what God has provided. Maybe you're here today and don't know for sure where you would spend eternity if you don't understand the gift that God's given.

If you haven't received God's gift of salvation, eternal life, what about you today? No greater day than today to be thankful for God's unspeakable gift.

Heavenly Fathers, we come before you this morning, Lord, we just thank you and praise you for the day, for the opportunity. Lord, as we meet together here, Lord, just be thankful. For the gift that you've given, a gift that is really incomprehensible to us as we don't fully understand all that took place and what you have provided, Lord, but we understand that you made it simple to understand what the need was and what you supplied, what you took care of.

Lord, I pray just work upon each heart, each life here today that we might not leave here unthankful for the unspeakable gift that you've given to us. Lord, as we take a moment just to consider these things before you, Lord, we ask it all in your precious name.

Amen. As piano plays, what about you? as