



GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFTS

At this time of the year (Christmas), the shops are full as people buy gifts for their friends and family. The only person who doesn't get gifts is the one whose birthday it is meant to be—**Jesus**. People celebrate the holiday by giving gifts to one another—I read somewhere that the average spend on gifts is \$950, but it is something that people feel obliged to do, as society is caught up in the habit of giving gifts to one another.

As I was thinking of this time of year and what sort of message would be relevant, I got to thinking about what the Bible says about gifts, and I was astonished when I looked into it, about how much this subject is discussed. So today I'd like to look at some of the gifts mentioned in the Bible, and what we should do about them.

James 1:17 "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

The gifts we give aren't good and perfect, at least they aren't perfect. But there are some perfect gifts, and they all come from God. What are some of these gifts?

Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"

Possibly the greatest gift of all—the gift of Jesus for our salvation. On top of that—He will give us **all things**! That's a pretty good gift! Everything! It says in Revelation we will "inherit all things"—so God does plan to share the Universe, everything He has created, everything in the world, with us! He is a very generous God!

We could finish the service there, and go home happy and fulfilled, and it is a sermon in itself, that He is going to give us everything! But let's have a look at some more of the specific things He is going to give us.

Acts 1:4 "On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about."

A certain special gift they were to wait for and look forward to.

Acts 2:38 "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The gift of the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful gift!

Acts 8:20 Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!”

The gift of God—the Holy Spirit—can’t be bought.

Hebrews 6:4 “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit.”

There are many other verses about the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here’s one that calls the Holy Spirit “the gift of God”:

2 Timothy 1:6 “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame **the gift of God**, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

Here’s a verse explaining another aspect of the gift of God:

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Here is what you could call “A gift that keeps on giving.”

Revelation 22:17 “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take **the free gift of the water of life.**”

Ephesians 2:8 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

Grace, through faith, is the gift of God. The Greek word “charis” or “charisma” translated “grace” is also translated “gift.”

2 Corinthians 9:14-15 ¹⁴ “And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

Grace is simply an “indescribable gift”! We read more about this gift of grace in

Ephesians 4:7-8 “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”

It has been given to different people in different ways, “as Christ apportioned it”.

Verse 8 “This is why it says: “When He ascended on high, He took many captives and gave gifts to His people.”

He gave gifts to men. People don’t give gifts to Him at Christmas—but notice—He gave gifts to us! It’s amazing how much there is in the Bible about gifts God has given us. We’re only covering a small number of Scriptures today. You might like to study further yourself, looking up “gift” and “gifts” in a concordance.

It’s quite interesting to notice the way Jesus gave different gifts to different people. These are sometimes referred to as “spiritual gifts.” At the end of the year it is a good time for us to

look at these and take stock of what gifts God has given each of us and how we are using them.

Ephesians 4:11-12 ¹¹“So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

This is referring largely to gifts God gave the ordained ministers, but we read in Romans 12 about gifts He gave to all the members.

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Here’s a gift we can give God—everything! He gives everything to us—we can give everything to Him!

Romans 12:6-8 ⁶“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Each of us has different gifts. The fact that none of us has all the gifts means we really are all in this together and we need each other.

It’s good for us to think about ourselves and what our gifts are, and make sure we are using them. It’s a three-step process:

-  **Discover your gifts**
-  **Develop your gifts**
-  **Deploy (use) your gifts**

Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? The things you enjoy doing, the things you are good at. If you don’t know, your friends can probably tell you.

I quite like the way Charles Stanley portrayed the 7 gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8, in an article entitled “**Serving Through Our Gifts.**”

“In order to understand how this works, picture eight people having dinner together, and someone knocks over a glass of juice. The person with the gift of administration (leadership) starts giving orders for one person to get a mop and someone else to find cleaning supplies. The one gifted in teaching says “The reason it spilled is that you reached over the plate with the wrong hand.” The person with the gift of mercy says, “I’m so sorry you spilled it. You must feel embarrassed.” The believer with the gift of giving adds “Don’t worry about it. I’ll buy a new glass.” The gift of prophecy motivates a person to correct this situation; this believer says “You should have put your glass on the other side of the plate. Then it wouldn’t have tipped.” The exhorter says, “We have all knocked over a glass at some point. It will make you more careful next time.” And the person with the gift of service has already gone to get the mop, even before the administrator’s first instruction.”

Let’s notice another passage about gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:1 “Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.”

Verses 4-6 ⁴ “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

Some of the gifts we can have.

Verses 8-10 ⁸ “To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.”

Verse 11 “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.”

They all come from the same Holy Spirit, but different people have different gifts.



Verse 12 ¹² “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.”

The body of Jesus Christ is like the human body—different members have different functions, but they all work together as a team. And that’s what it is like here in our congregation. We are a small part of the body of Christ. We are here for a reason—Christ has put us here. We are different to any other part of the body. We have to think about what our place in the body is, what our function is, and try to do it better. Each of us has different gifts, and we work together.

Verse 7 “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

Our gifts are given for the common good of the congregation. We work together as a team, each contributing our gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:12 “So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.”

The Corinthians were especially interested in spiritual gifts. Paul doesn’t say that is wrong. It is good for us to have gifts and use them. But the ones we should value most are those that build up the Church. That should be our constant desire, to build up the Church of God.

Here’s another verse about spiritual gifts, not often quoted. It is amazing how much there is in the Bible about them. It is important that we think about our gifts and use them for the benefit of the Church:

Hebrews 2:4 “God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 ¹⁰“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”

At a time when the world is going crazy giving physical gifts, it’s good for us to turn our attention to the marvellous spiritual gifts God has given us, so that we can give them to the Church.

WHAT WE ARE IS GOD’S GIFT TO US.

WHAT WE BECOME IS OUR GIFT TO GOD.

