

The Greatest Gift

Romans 8:32 • 2020-12-24 • Christmas Eve



Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?

Have you ever tried to do the math to figure out what percent of your worth or of your salary you have given away as gifts? Some of us might create a budget at Christmas time and determine how much we might be able to give away as gifts. Time and money often limit what we can give. There are many things we simply can't give because we aren't able. Some parents might work hard to make sure their children can have a pony. To do this they have to move to a house with a bigger yard and spend lots of time and money. Other parents might give their children a new car that costs them a huge monthly payment and a big portion of their income. Or they might go out of their way to build a back-yard playground which takes hours to build with sweat and pain. Some friends or family members will go so far as to even give a body organ such as a kidney donation to someone they love. But we all have our limits. We can only give so much. What is God's limit of giving? This Christmas we see just how incredible the greatest gift from him is.

Think about all the things God has given to people in this world. Every part of the creation is a gift. The stars are there to light the night, to guide us around the world, and to mark the times and seasons for us. Various plants are all there for us for delicious and healthy food. God provided them at creation and continues to ensure the seasons and harvests occur year after year.

What do you have that you would consider a gift of God? Do you have a family, a place to live, food for each day, clothing? Do you have friends and a warm place to sleep at night? If you have anything that you are thankful for it is a gift from the Creator. The apostle James writes, "Every good and perfect gift is from above."

But how far should God go in his gifts to us. Where does his limit come and his budget for people end? Sometimes my children will get a toy from me or from someone else. That toy is first eyes with delight. But then sometimes that toy is found trashed and ruined by them. What was once a great gift can become a forgotten piece of plastic or a damaged treasure that was not treated with care. More often the gift is lost because they didn't carefully attend to it. How do you think I'd feel about giving them another gift if they didn't treat the last one well? How much more shouldn't God look at us and say "you've wasted your gifts. No more!"

Our God should hold back when you see how we have often responded to his gracious gifts. Consider how many days have you found you've wasted in life. Do you deserve more? Have you treated every day like a gift or sometimes squandered it for sinful or selfish use? Think about if you have always shared your time or if you have sometimes hoarded it greedily. When you look at the friends and family in your life, did you always treat them like a gift? Have you ever let food go to waste or abused it by overindulgence and waste? Have you always used your money wisely or sometimes spent it only on self for purely selfish goals? Think about the size of your "gifting" budget. Does it really make you look generous? If it's like most people's budget it will clearly indicate who is first in your life. For most that is not others. Why should God give us more than we already wasted?

But God had promised his greatest gift to us at the beginning of time. We needed more than something for entertainment and pleasure. We needed a rescue from a curse that leads to death and hell. Because the first man and woman despised God's gifts, all people fell into ruin. We lost what was good and damaged it forever by our foolish sin.

Did that mean we'd lose out on the greatest gift? No, God had promised to send someone who would make everything right and restore peace. It would be someone who would crush the devil and remove the curse placed on this world and on us because of our sins. God would not hold back or spare anything but would keep his promise.

God sent many gifts while we waited for his greatest gift. He sent his prophets and faithful leaders. Throughout history God also sent his holy angels and the hosts of heaven. They would interact on earth to protect and to carry out service to God's people. And God gave gifts to everyone on earth with his gifts of crops that grew year after year. God would care for his fallen creatures by mercifully providing rain and harvest. But the world still needed more than that while it waited for the greatest gift. Every other gift would always come short of what was needed.

Only one person could provide what was needed. It would have to be someone who was perfect. He would have to be without sin. He would have to be able to face the attacks of the world. He would need to be able to stand up to the temptations of the devil to turn aside from his mission. He would need to be someone who wouldn't squander his gifts but use them faithfully for others. He would have to be willing to lay down everything. He would have to be able to take the curse off of us and place it on himself. There is only one who could do all this -the Son of God.

With the Father from eternity, the perfect Son of God never left the glory he shared with the Father. He always existed from eternity in a bond of perfect love with the Father and the Spirit. Imagine if you were the Father. Would you give up your one and only, perfect Son? Would you hand him over to the world so that he might save it? Would you give

him up and allow him to lower himself so that he would walk in human flesh? Would you tolerate him to be mocked and treated with disdain? Would you allow him to tire and hunger and grow weary with his created beings? Would you be able to endure the thought of him taking the curse of sin upon himself in the place of sinners? The Father did.

That's what Christmas is celebrating. When Christ came into the world and was born in the flesh, the Father did not spare him. His grace and love for this world is so great that he gave his one and only Son. He did not hold him back.

Paul says that he gave him "for us all." Jesus came and was born around 2000 years ago for you. He took on human flesh for you. He lowered himself and humbled himself for you. The Lord had you in mind when Jesus entered this world in lowliness. And the Lord had you in mind when Jesus gave up his life and took the curse of sin upon himself. It was for your deliverance. What has God given you? It's the greatest gift: his one and only Son. He did not spare him but gave him up for us all.

Your God will withhold nothing good from you! He has promised to give you so much and will not spare anything. *"Will he not also along with (his own son) graciously give us all things?"*

He promises to give you everything you need and more than you could ever ask or imagine! Do you wish to have peace with you God? It is yours because he gave his Son. You are now adopted into his family. You were born in lowliness and deserve to die in lowliness outside the family of God. But he has made you part of his family. You will be in his family forever. That real and everlasting status as God's child comes with the greatest gift.

Do you want God to listen to you and pay attention to your life? He promises to be close to you and to listen and answer all your prayers because of Jesus. There may be times when those who are closest to you are too busy to give you their attention and time. But your God will always have the time and always give you his full attention. He will always answer and give you every good gift that you ask for. And he knows what is best for you so that he always is able to give just what you need.

Have you ever felt alone or like nobody cared about you because you were alone? God will never leave you. He gives you along with his Son the gift of the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit you can all out in faith and prayer with full confidence. You know that he will never forsake you who trust in the Lord.

Is your body giving you trouble and pain? He will give you relief and healing. We know this because God has promised he will transform these lowly bodies so that they will be like Jesus' perfect, glorious body. The gift of life eternal is ours and it is a gift that comes with new and perfect bodies.

Is there ever any cause to wonder if God will withhold any good gift? He has blessed us with his Son. He will give us along with him all good things!

Paul says he gives us graciously "all things." These things are what is good for us. They are true gifts which bring contentment and joy in a Christians life. We know God gives good gifts! If my children wanted a piece of fudge, and it wasn't right before dinner I would give it to them. But not if the timing was bad. I know that the gift is good but given at the wrong time it can cause harm. And I would probably give them a limited amount. Once again, I know that the gift is good, but too much might be more than they need or can handle. And I wouldn't give a piece of fudge to a child who has an allergic response to it if it were made with cream. How much more we can trust that our God gives us good gifts! The world didn't understand that the one born in such lowliness was the greatest gift. But God reveals how he was the greatest gift. The world doesn't understand how Christians already have and receive so many gracious gifts along with Jesus. But we see in faith how he gives us every good gift along with him.

Imagine that you had a wealthy friend who was the richest person in the world. Imagine if they told you that they wanted to give you whatever you wanted or needed. Anything money could buy would be yours as a gift. How would you like that? Now consider how the Lord of the universe has brought you to know his goodness and has assured you that all things are yours. He did not spare his precious Son. Time and money did not limit what he could give. The one without limit gave without limit.

And what we desire now is far different than what we once desired in sin. In sin we despised his gifts. In sin this world despised the gift of God's Son. But in faith we have seen how great the love of God is for us. And in faith we now desire his good gifts. Those gifts are ours in Jesus, the greatest gift.

