

God's Gifts To Go

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2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

When Jesus was born, he received three very special gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were very expensive and precious gifts. It seems likely that Mary and Joseph kept those gifts and used them well. How precious are the gifts that you have received? The gifts of knowledge, skills, understanding and others. How well will you use them?

Paul mentions three particular gifts from God that you have been given which are more precious than the gold, frankincense and myrrh, and which we hope you keep with you and use well all your life. Three gifts from God to go with you wherever you go.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

You were baptized into this grace. You were brought up in this grace. You were taught this grace. Now, spend your life in his grace.

In the first half of the Psalm David describes the glorious joy that is ours as we live in God's grace

**Psalm 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered.**

This is the quintessential Christian experience. This is the reason that we worship the Lord, the reason we come to church, the reason we love Jesus. Because we know that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive." Every time we come to church or read his word in the right way and with the right attitude, we hear and receive that forgiveness. Our sins are washed away, and we become those who are "blessed" because their "sin is covered."

**Psalm 130:3-4 3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord,
who could stand? 4 But there is forgiveness with You, That
You may be feared.**

How beautiful it is to have a God who does not mark or count or list our sins against us.

There was a sitcom where the husband would go and secretly write down everything his wife did wrong. He kept a list of all her wrongs. We are very good at keeping lists of wrongs. Our whole lives are filled with marking wrongs. We keep lists of how others have wronged us and others keep lists of our faults.

What joy and blessedness to know that the Lord does not keep lists.

This blessedness you received from the Lord when you were first baptized. You have received this grace, this gift your whole life. Thus David describes the blessedness of those who know the Lord

The love of God

For the Jewish people who do not know Jesus, one of the most important passages in scripture is **Deuteronomy 6:5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.**

This is a command that you ought to love God. But when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, he turns that passage around. The most important thing is not the command to love God, but the gift that God loves you.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son

How must is this love of God worth?

Jesus attempts to picture God's love for us in numerous different parables. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father rejoices to receive the lost son back despite all the wickedness he has done. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, the Father is pictured as forgiving 10,000 talents, something like 13

billion dollars. In the parable of the hidden treasure a man is willing to sell everything he owns because it is so great a treasure. The good Samaritan, the lost sheep, the wedding feast, the lost coin and other as well, all of these parables attempt to give us some picture of the immeasurable love God has for us. It is a love which is beyond our experience.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

When the Israelites were wondering in the wilderness God gave them bread from heaven. They said, “what is this?”. Then they called it “manna” meaning "what is this." They called it manna because it was a type of bread they had never tasted before. It was beyond their experience.

So also, John declares in our text that this love which is from God is something that is beyond our experience. “What is this love?” John writes. In this context this is an expression of puzzled amazement. He is puzzled because it is beyond our experience. He is amazed because it is too good to be true. In the same way the disciples, when they saw Jesus calm the storm exclaimed (matt 8:27) “who can this be that even the wind and waves obey him.”

The greatest love we experience on this earth is the love of a parent for their children. Yet even this is not equal to the love of the Father for his children.

Isaiah 49:15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you."

God's love for us is beyond our experience. Our experience teaches us that people love us if we earn their love, God loved us when we didn't deserve it. This is a love beyond our experience which makes us the children of God.

The communion of the Holy Spirit

The Lord promises you a helper who will be at your side.

It is good to have friends you can count on. For our graduates as you look back on your years of school, hopefully, you remember lots of good times with good friends. Hopefully you'll find more friends in the years ahead. But none will ever be as good a friend as what we have in Jesus. As the hymnist wrote. "What a friend we have in Jesus."

The word communion in our text is the Greek word KOINONIA, it means participation, association, a community which shares. In the book of Acts, we are told that the early church in Jerusalem "had all things in common," and that no one lacked anything.

I helped move my brother Nate on Friday. There are many things that were too heavy for one person, but with two or three or more people they were quite easy to move. The more people you have to share a burden the easier it is to bear. For that very God wants his people to come together on a regular basis to share one another's burdens.

Paul reminds us that we have someone far stronger than each other to help bear our burdens. We have God himself. The Holy Spirit share all things with us. This is why the scriptures urge us constantly to share all things with God, so that he might carry our burden.

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God

1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

There is an old story you may have heard before. A guy driving a pickup truck stops for a hitchhiker with a heavy pack on his back. The hitchhiker jumps in the back of the pickup but doesn't set his pack down. The driver yells back at him. "You know that truck can carry your pack also." Let God carry your burdens, you don't need to carry them yourself.

Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the paraclete. That word is often translated as comforter, but it means one who stands by your side to help. This is the fellowship that we have with the Holy Spirit that we have one to carry all our burdens.

These are the gifts you have from God. They are more precious than anything else you will receive. Keep them with you always.
Amen