

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 9:8-15

### *Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift – v. 15*

We have entered into a season for this time of year in which gift giving is very common. Some of the greatest challenges we face is trying to figure out what to get for that person who has everything and needs nothing. During such times as these it's good to reflect on the truth that God has certainly bestowed many gifts upon His children. *Every good gift James tells us and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* Every favorable providence – is traceable to our heavenly Father.

Every day in which we enjoy good health – comes as a gift from God. Every day in which we enjoy good weather – comes as a gift from God. Every day in which we enjoy good food comes as a gift from God and every day in which we find the strength to rise from our sleep and engage in our labor is cause for thanksgiving.

But the New Testament also specifies some other things as being gifts from God:

- The Holy Spirit is specified as a gift from God - Acts 10:45 *And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out **the gift** of the Holy Ghost.*
- The living water of life is called a gift - John 4:10 *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest **the gift of God**, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*
- Our righteousness is called a gift - Romans 5:17 *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of **the gift** of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*
- Eternal life is specified as a gift - Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin [is] death; but **the gift** of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
- Our faith is a gift from God - Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] **the gift** of God.*

As you study the things that are specified as gifts in the New Testament you also see a couple of terms that describe these gifts – In Romans 5 we find these gifts described as *being free*. The very concept of a gift suggests that it's something given – but perhaps on account of our slowness to grasp that truth it is emphasized to us that when God gives – He gives freely.

- Romans 3:24 *Being justified **freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*
- Romans 8:32 *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also **freely** give us all things?*

Anything we've received from God we have received freely. We could never lay claim to anything from God. We could never say that God owes us anything – but on account of Christ He freely gives us all things.

So the gifts of God are described as free gifts. And then we come to the words of our text in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 9:15 where the gift of God is described as *unspeakable*.

*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*

Nowhere else in the New Testament do we find this word – *unspeakable*. We find a similar word that is translated *unsearchable*. This word occurs twice. It describes God's wisdom in Rom. 11:33 – *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*

And then we find the riches of Christ described as *unsearchable riches* in Eph. 3:8 – *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

The emphasis in the thought of being *unsearchable* is that we can never plumb the depth of God's ways or of Christ's riches. In the book of Job – Zophar certainly spoke the truth when he asked – *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what can'st thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*

The term *unspeakable* conveys much the same meaning but the emphasis in this term is on the truth that God's gift defies not only what we can search out but also what we can describe. We cannot adequately express in words the value of the gift of God. This concept of being *unspeakable* is brought forth by Paul when he describes in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12 his experience of being caught up to the third heaven. *I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

There are things received from God – in this case Paul's experience of being caught up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven which could not be described – the very attempt to put such things into words would be to defile them.

Now in our text – 2Cor. 9:15 – the reference must be to Christ. He is God's *unspeakable gift*. He is the source through which every good gift and every perfect gift flows. It is because He is our mediator that we are able to be the recipients of the gift of righteousness, and the gift of eternal life, and the gift of faith. This gift from God – the gift of Christ is both *unsearchable* and *unspeakable*. We will never plumb the depths of the reasons why God would give such a gift and we'll never be able to adequately express in words the greatness of this gift.

**I'd like to share a couple of thoughts on what makes the gift of Christ an unspeakable gift.**

The gift of Christ we could say is unspeakable:

## **I. In Terms of It's Value -**

Who could measure such a gift as this? *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.* God could give many things should He so choose. He could give us mountains of gold. He could give us untold material wealth. He could give us abundant health so that we might live to be 100 years old and beyond. He could give us all the wisdom of Solomon enabling us to speak in such ways that people the world over would come to hear our wisdom.

But as Solomon himself tells us – the kind of wisdom he received brought with it much sorrow. And the kind of wealth Solomon accumulated could exalt him in this world but could do nothing to redeem his soul for the next. If our souls would be redeemed – then we need something more valuable than silver or gold. Silver and gold is corruptible and our redemption requires something incorruptible – so God gave us His Son – His only begotten Son. He gave us a gift that was unique. The value of a gift is often determined by how rare it is. Would you notice the emphasis in that familiar text that *God gave us His only begotten Son.* There was only one.

It's not so hard, I suppose to part with a gift if you have more than one. It takes added generosity to give a gift that can be found nowhere else in the world. And when God gave His Son – He gave His **only** Son in order that those who would believe on Him might be saved.

So God gave His Son – and Christ gave His life blood. The value and virtue of His life was in His blood. *For the life of the flesh is in the blood* (Lev. 17:11). And in contrast to gold and silver that perishes Christ's atoning blood is called *precious blood* in 1Pet. 1:19 – *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

So the gift of God defies description in terms of it's value. We're redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. But think next that the gift of God is unspeakable:

## **II. In Terms of It's Benefits –**

It's possible, you know, to give somebody a gift that might be very expensive and yet have little practical value. I don't suppose the ladies will appreciate much what I'm going to say when I point out that jewelry is like that.

How much could you spend on a ring or a bracelet or a necklace? I dare say the sky is the limit. I'm always kind of amazed to hear the bargain prices that are suggested by

some of the jewelers who advertise on the radio. If the prices they're quoting are the beginning low level prices – I can't imagine what the top price would be.

It would make for an interesting project for someone to take up sometime. How much money could you spend on any single item of jewelry in a jewelry store? The value, of course, comes through the message you're sending to the one you love. And here comes the catch from the jewelry store: How can you put a limited dollar amount behind the message – *I love you*.

*I love you so much that I'm not going to pay the bills for the next year because I bought you this diamond ring instead. I love you so much that I don't know how we're going to eat for the next six months. And when we forfeit the mortgage and are out in the street looking for food and shelter – our shoes being worn and our clothing being tattered – be sure to look at that diamond ring to remember how much I love you.*

Such a venture may seem very romantic though not very practical. When God, however, gave us His unspeakable gift of Christ we gained things that were of tremendous practical value.

We gained righteousness. We cannot enter into heaven without it. *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven* – Christ said. Where could we gain such righteousness? All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags – Isaiah tells us. Our righteousness was the sure means to hell.

But Christ has given us His righteousness – *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness*. Here's a gift then that has gained us heaven. But not only does this gift of righteousness gain heaven for us but it enables us to reign in our present lives –

*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17).*

So we gained righteousness through God's gift of Christ. We also gained life where previously we knew only death. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We knew spiritual death and we were facing physical death with no hope. We were doomed to everlasting death on account of our sins – and then God gave us the gift of life through His Son.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

God also through Christ and on account of Christ gave us faith to believe the gospel. *By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8,9).*

What good would the gifts of life or of righteousness been to us if we had no capacity to receive them? How useful would it be to give a man an expensive home theatre system if that man was deaf and blind? When God purchased us to Himself by the blood of His Son – He also purchased for us the faith we would need to appropriate the gifts He would give us. Hence He gave us the Holy Spirit – to open our blind eyes, and unstop our deaf ears, and subdue our rebellious hearts and enable us to receive Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.

God's gift then – is unspeakable in terms of the benefits that gift bestows upon us. We enjoy the benefit of everlasting life. We enjoy the benefit of sins forgiven. We enjoy the benefit of perfect righteousness and we enjoy the benefit of faith. These things are all conveyed to us through Christ and on account of Christ. It's no wonder God's gift of Christ is called *an unspeakable gift*.

But would you consider with me next that the gift of God is unspeakable:

### **III. In Terms of It's Durability –**

You can give someone a gift that is very expensive and yet not very durable. Have you ever seen a fancy ice sculpture? It may initially look like a large and expensive piece of crystal carved out into very precise detail. It may be very large and impressive and it may demonstrate the artist's phenomenal talent and skill. But after a few hours it melts. It's durability, then, is determined by how strong your memory is to retain it. In substance – it's a puddle of water or less.

Not so with God's unspeakable gift. The life that is given to the sinner is *everlasting life*. *I give unto them eternal life* – Christ says in Jn. 10:28. And then He goes on to say what that means – *And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Here is a durable gift indeed – one that is secure – one that is guarded by the omnipotence of Christ Himself as well as the omnipotence of His Father. The same thing may be said of our righteousness. Because it is Christ's righteousness imputed to us it is an everlasting righteousness.

This sets it apart from the righteousness of the church of Rome. Rome offers a righteousness too. Rome says that a man is justified by faith but that man gains a very fragile or flimsy righteousness – one that is easily tainted and shattered by your sin. You must constantly return to Rome to repair and cleanse the broken down righteousness that she gives. But the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer and received by faith is a righteousness that is as secure as Christ Himself is secure on His throne. It is a durable righteousness.

And so is the faith that Christ purchased for us a persevering faith. Temporal faith has no power to save or to keep us. Paul speaks of those in Hebrews who tasted the good

word of God and the powers of the world to come. He says of them that it's impossible to renew them if they fall away. His word came as a stern warning to them during a time of temptation and then he went on to say of them *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak* (Heb. 6:9).

Paul knew that their faith would endure. Faith that is planted by God endures. It may struggle, it may grow weak, it may seem to be undetectable at times – but it can never be actually or completely extinguished. For as faith is a gift - Romans 11:29 *For the gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance* – i.e. God will never change His mind about a gift He's given. He will never take back a gift that He has bestowed.

And so the gift of Christ is an unspeakable gift. It's unspeakable in terms of it's value, in terms of it's benefits, in terms of its durability. Could I say finally that it's unspeakable:

#### **IV. In Terms of It's Contrast to What We Deserve –**

This perhaps more than anything renders God's gift unspeakable. How can we express the value of such a gift when God gave us Christ?

At the time we deserved hell – God gave us heaven in Christ. At the time we deserved death and indeed were dead – God gave us life in Christ. At the time we were sinners against God and possessed no righteousness of our own – God gave us the righteousness of His Son. And at the time we stubbornly refused to believe that we were sinners or that we were damned or worthy of condemnation – God gave us His Spirit to open our eyes to the truth of our condition and what we must do.

You begin to see why God's gift is unspeakable? – How His grace is magnified by the giving of His Son! At the very time we deserved His wrath – He instead gave us His Son. At the very time we merited His worst – He gave us His best in the person of His Son. Now our text says that God's gift is *unspeakable*. We cannot adequately describe it. Words fail us when it comes to magnifying His grace – and yet the text does give us something to say. *Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*

We stand, in a sense, dumbfounded in the presence of God. What can we say when we realize what we have been and what provision God has made for us through His Son? As the Psalmist expresses it in Ps. 116:12 – *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* But then the Psalmist answers his own question by saying – *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.*

This is what we must do in worship and in prayer – We call upon His name with humble and yet grateful hearts. We acknowledge the benefits we've received from His good and gracious hand and we offer to Him our thanks – *thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift*. May your hearts then be filled with Christ and may you be enabled during this season to simply express your gratitude to Christ.