

Six Unforgettable Gifts

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

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I am going to be speaking to you today from the book of 2 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians chapter two. And I would like for you to get your Bibles and plan to follow along as I speak from 2 Thessalonians chapter two.

We will begin with verse 13 and go through verse 17. Now here is the subject. I call this message, "Six Unforgettable Gifts." Six tremendous, unforgettable gifts of God for his people.

Let me read just two or three verses from 2 Thessalonians chapter two beginning with verse 13. Now you follow in the Scripture. Paul says, "But we are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth whereunto, to the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now Paul had left Philippi. You are familiar with the preaching at Philippi. That is where he preached to the Philippian jailer and his family. That is where God opened the heart of Lydia and brought her to know the Lord Jesus and to listen to the words of Paul.

Well, Paul left Philippi and went down to Thessalonica, down to this city of Thessalonica and there he preached for about three weeks. It says he preached for three sabbath days. And during that time the Lord called out a number of people, Gentiles and Jews to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ while Paul was preaching these three weeks in Thessalonica.

Paul described this great work of God in the hearts of the people in chapter one of 1 Thessalonians. This is the way he described that we would call it a revival, a refreshing from heaven, that time when Paul preached to them and like Lydia God opened their hearts and like the Philippian jailer God set them free.

And here is the way Paul described those people down in Thessalonica. He said, "First of all, our Gospel came to you not in world only, but in power. Our gospel came to you in the power of the Holy Spirit in much assurance. And, secondly," he said, "and you became followers of us and the Lord. You became followers, disciples, learners, students of the Scriptures. And you became examples to those about you. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, a new person, an example to others. And you received the Word of

God with joy not as the Word of man, but as the Word of God. You received it with great joy, with affliction and persecution, but with joy. And you turned from your idols. You turned from your religious idols and trinkets and traditions to the living God, to true worship and true faith and you are waiting for the return of his Son from heaven.”

Now that is what happened down there in three weeks. The power of God fell upon his servant Paul and he preached the gospel and the people heard it and God brought many of them to faith in Christ. And what a joy they were to the apostle Paul. He called them his crown of rejoicing, my crown of rejoicing. They were just a joy. And he sent Timothy down there, his son in the ministry, to minister to this church and to establish this church and to help these people.

And later he wrote these epistles, 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians. He wrote these epistles to be read in that church and all the other churches.

And my message today is taken from that second epistle of Paul’s to the Thessalonians, to the church at Thessalonica and I...he sets before us...I told someone earlier, actually about 10 unforgettable facts, but I don’t have time to give all 10 of them. I am going to give you six, six unforgettable facts that Paul sets forth here, six unforgettable gifts and tremendous gifts that Paul sets forth in this second book of Thessalonians and chapter two verse 13.

Now you know, you know this, of course, that most of the Bible was written to believers. That is right. Most of the Scripture is written to believers. About all an unbeliever, about all he has in the Scripture is condemnation and judgment. The promises of God are in Christ to believers. The Word of God is God’s Word of redemption to believers. The Word of God is God’s word of grace and mercy to believers in Christ. The Word of God is God’s Word of comfort to believers. He said, “Comfort ye my people. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, to my people.” And the Word of God is the promises of God which are in Christ to believers and the Word of God is the Word of life in Christ to believers.

So you who are listening to my voice today who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have received the Redeemer, you who rest in his glorious finished work, you who trust in his blood and righteousness, let me point out to you six unforgettable gifts God has given to us in Christ Jesus.

Look at the first one in verse 13. You heard me read it a moment ago. It says, “But we are bound. We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, you brethren, beloved of the Lord.”

Think of it, beloved of the Lord. I am my beloved’s and he is mine. We are beloved of the Lord. David wrote in the Psalms, “When I consider the heavens, the sun, the moon and the stars, the things which thou hast made, oh God, what is man that thou art mindful of him?”

Let me tell you something. Paul is saying here God is not only mindful of us, but God loves us. God loves us. That's right. He is not only mindful of us he loves us. And let me tell you what kind of love this is.

Don't talk ever flippantly and carelessly of the love of God. The love of God, how rich, how pure, how measureless, how strong, it shall for evermore endure the saint's and angel's song. God's love for his people is everlasting. He said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you," an everlasting love. He has always loved us, always loved us.

Secondly, his love is infinite.

"What do you mean, preacher, infinite?"

I mean indescribable, unspeakable, unexplainable. Christ said, listen. The Lord Jesus said, "Father, thou hast loved them as you love me."

Can you imagine how much the Father loves the Son? And yet he loves us the same way. That is what he said, infinitely. And God's love is the greatest love. He says, "Greater love than this hath no man that a man lay down his life for his friends."

And God's love is undeserved. We didn't love him. Herein is love, not that we love God. We didn't love God. We loved ourselves. We loved our sins, but we didn't love God, but he loved us. It is unmerited. It is undeserved. It is unreturned. It is unsolved, the perfect love of God.

And let me tell you this. This love of God is in Christ. Nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Don't look for God's love outside of Jesus Christ. The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hands. He that hath the Son hath life. He that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him, not the love of God. It is in Christ.

All right. Here is the second unspeakable, unforgettable gift. First God loved us and the he said in verse 13, same verse, "Well, we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." God loved us and God chose us. He chose us to salvation.

One day our Lord said to his disciples, "You didn't choose me. You didn't choose me. I chose you and I ordained you that you should go forth and bear fruit."

Who chose us? God did. God chose us.

Moses said, "Lord, show me your glory."

God said, "I will cause my goodness to pass before you. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. God chose us. God chose us.

Listen to Ephesians one verse three. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus according as he chose us.” In Christ he chose us.

When did he choose us? Before the foundation of the world. You see this verse I just read? God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation. When is the beginning? In the beginning God created the heavens. That is when he chose us, before the foundation of the world.

And the question comes. How did he choose us? In Christ.

They hymn writer put it this way. “Christ be my first elect, God said. Then chose us in Christ our head.” Christ is the first elect. He calls him mine elect. He chose us in Christ.

Why did he choose us? Why me? Why you? Why us? Gentiles, aliens, enemies, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel. God chose us. Why?

I’ll tell you why. “Even so, Father, it seemed good in thy sight.” That’s the answer Christ gave. He said, “Lord, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, it seemed good in thy sight.”

And Paul twice in the first chapter of Ephesians says, “According to the good pleasure of his own will.”

What is the results? “I am bound to give thanks for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you, from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” That’s the results. Salvation, life everlasting, life everlasting.

God had chosen us not to service, to life, to salvation.

The hymn writer said, “Chosen not for good in me, wakened up from wrath to flee, hidden in my Savior’s side and by his Spirit sanctified.”

Look at the next verse, the third unforgettable gift. God loved us.

David went in one day and sat before the Lord and he said, “Lord, who am I? Who am I? And what is my people that you should show such mercy to us? Who am I?”

He loved us. He chose us.

Thirdly, he called us. Listen to verse 14. “Whereunto he called you by our gospel.” God called us by his gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was and the glory which thou gavest me I have given to them. He called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He called you.

My friends, the Bible is full of examples of our Lord calling his people, calling them out of darkness into his marvelous light, calling them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, calling them out of sin itself and self righteousness to Christ, to faith in Christ, faith in his Son, God calls him.

Abraham, 75 years old, son of an idolater, an idolater himself. "Abraham, get thee out of thy father's house and go to a land I will show thee." God called him.

Moses, 80 years old, 40 years he spent in Egypt, son of Pharaoh's daughter finally refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter he set foot into the wilderness, stayed there 40 years. One day as the bush burned and was not consumed the voice of God said, "Moses, Moses, take off your shoes. You are on holy ground. I have got a meeting with you Moses. You are going to lead my people out of Egypt."

Isaiah, in the year that King Uzziah died Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple."

"Matthew, follow me."

"James and John, follow me."

"Zacchaeus, come down."

Our Lord calls his people. Whom he foreknew he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, whom he predestinated he called, he called. And whom he called he justified and whom he justified he glorified.

The old timers used to call it the effectual call, the effectual.

And you say, "What does the word effectual mean?"

It gets the job done. It gets the job done, the effectual call. Abraham, God called him. He followed. Matthew, he arose and followed Christ. James and John left their nets and followed him. When he calls men respond.

I can call all day and every preacher in this country can call all day, but when the Spirit of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ calls, my sheep hear my voice and they follow me. And the old timers called it the effectual call.

They said, "There is a general call. There is the law written in the heart. There is a conscience." A man knows good from evil. There is the...God is known by the things that are made. The heavens declare the glory of God. But these are not saving calls. Providence, judgment, law, conscience, nature, the effectual call is through the Word.

The Samaritan woman, you read it many times. Our Lord crossed her path. He created an interest. He spoke to her about heavenly, eternal, spiritual matters and he revealed himself to her, his Word, he called, he called.

All right, here is the fourth, unforgettable gift. God loved us. God chose us. God called us by his gospel to faith in Christ and God taught us. Look at verse 15. “Brethren, beloved of the Lord, loved of God, chosen of God, called of God, brethren, now stand fast, hold fast to the things that you have been taught, taught by word and epistle.”

You know, my friends, in 1 Corinthians chapter two Paul said, “The princes of this world did not know who he was. If they had known who he was, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. As it is written eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, the things God has prepared for them that love him.” But God hath taught us. God hath revealed himself unto us. By his Spirit God hath taught us and revealed unto us who Christ is and where he came from and what he did and why he did it and where he is now. All that has been revealed by the Spirit of God through the Word of God as God teaches his people.

He said, “I will give you another Comforter and he will teach you. He will take the things of mine and show them to you. He will not speak of himself. But he will speak of me. He will glorify me. And he will take the things of mine and reveal them to you.” That is what God does. He teaches us.

One day our Lord said, “I am the bread from heaven.” And a bunch of these religious fellows said this. They said, “How can he be the bread from heaven, the Lord from heaven when we know he is Jesus and we know he is the son of Mary,” and they said, “The son of Joseph. And we know his brothers and sisters? How can he be the bread from heaven? How can he be the Lord from heaven?”

Do you know what our Lord answered them, how he answered them, what he said? He said, “Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, believe on me, see my glory, understand my mission. No man can come to me in faith except my Father draw him.” And it is written in the prophets, “They shall be taught of God. He that hath heard and learned of the Father comes to me.”

God has taught us who Christ is. I know who he is. You do, too, don’t you? Many of you. I know what he did. He came to this earth, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. He died on the cross bearing our sins, ascended up to heaven as our intercessor and our mediator. Oh, my. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard and who shall they hear except they be taught of God? Learned of the Father.

Oh, the Son of God hath come and given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. And we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and this is eternal life, understanding, learned, heard and called.

That's the reason that I speak to you in a teaching fashion because you need to be taught. God's people need to be taught. They need to hear and to learn the mysteries of God, the Word of God.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ by his mighty Spirit hath taught us.

All right. What is the fifth unspeakable, unforgettable gift? Look at verse 16. God hath given us a good hope. He has loved us. He has called us. He chose us. He taught us and now he has given us a good hope. Look at that verse. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father who hath loved us hath given us everlasting comfort and a good hope through grace.

You know, people need to be taught not only to read the Word of God, but how to read it. And I am going to give you a little lesson here. Now you listen carefully. The best way to profit from the Scriptures is to read the Scriptures slowly and carefully thinking upon each word and remembering it is the Word of God, not the words of men. And it takes the Spirit of God to reveal these words.

Now let me read that verse again, verse 16. Now look at it and listen carefully. Here is how to read God's Word.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Who is that? That is the Messiah. That is our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the God man, our representative, our substitute, our Savior. And God even our Father, they are one, the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. He said, "I and my Father are one." They are one in purpose, one in essence, one in will. So what the Lord Jesus Christ does his Father does.

So now our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father, he is our Father in Christ. He is Christ's Father. That makes him our Father because he is our brother. Who hath loved us. See, this is the basis of all that God has given us, his love, his mercy. Everything God gives us is because he loved us. For God so loved the world he gave his Son. Christ didn't come to get God in the notion of loving us. He came because God did love us. He hath loved us and he hath given us an everlasting comfort.

You see, everything God does is everlasting. Ecclesiastes says, "I know that what God doeth, it shall be forever. Nothing can be put to it. Nothing can be taken from it because God does it."

So God has given us everlasting comfort. That is God's comfort. It is everlasting. It is not spasmodic, here today and gone tomorrow. And he has given us a good hope, a good hope. It is a good hope. It is a living hope because Christ lives. It is a good hope because Christ in you is the hope of glory. It is a blessed hope because we are going to be like him. And it is a good hope through grace. And because it is by his grace it is certain and sure. If it were not by grace it would not be sure.

Now here is the last unforgettable gift. God loved us and God chose us and God called us and God taught us and God gave us comfort, everlasting comfort and a good hope through grace in Christ.

And verse 17 says, “And the God of comfort encourage you, strengthen you, make you steadfast and keep you faithful and establish you, establish you, set you.” Like concrete sets.

You know, people who are always changing their doctrine can't be taught of God. People who are always changing directions can't be taught of God. People who are always changing their methods and their message can't be taught of God because he establishes us in faith, in grace, in Christ, in his Word, in works of faith and labor of love.

“And I am confident of this,” Paul said, “That he that hath begun a good work in you shall finish it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Oh, unspeakable, unforgettable...I call them facts. They are facts. But they are more than facts. They are the gift of God, the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ by his grace.

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