

On the Special Gifts of God.

by Thomas Reade

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, the value of God's gifts, and the stability of God's promises, highlighting the New Covenant and the character of the true believer.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 55:3, Isaiah 55:11, Jeremiah 32:40, Ezekiel 36:26, Luke 11:13, John 3:16, John 14:3, John 14:27, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 1:27, 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, 2 Corinthians 1:20, 2 Timothy 1:14, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 4:6, 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Eternal Life"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the special gifts of God, emphasizing the immeasurable worth of His gifts, including His Son, the Holy Spirit, a new heart, inward peace, the Holy Scriptures, and eternal life. He highlights the stability of the new covenant, assuring believers of God's unchanging promises and faithfulness. Reade stresses the importance of humility in contemplating Jehovah's purposes, pointing out that true wisdom comes from above and that pride leads to unholy speculations and vain deceit. He concludes by exalting the eternal love of God as the source of believers' happiness and the final glorification of the saints.

Transcript

ON THE SPECIAL GIFTS OF GOD.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY IN CONTEMPLATING

THE PURPOSES OF JEHOVAH.

THE STABILITY OF THE NEW COVENANT.

How precious are the gifts of God; no human mind can estimate their worth; their value exceeds an angel's computation. With overflowing gratitude let us hourly bless our heavenly Father:

For the Gift of His Son- "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

For the Gift of His Holy Spirit- "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

For the Gift of a New Heart- "A new heart will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you."

For the Gift of Inward Peace Through the Son of His Love- "My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you."

For the Gift of the Holy Scriptures- "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

For the Gift of Eternal Life- "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God, who is infinite in love, does not give and then take away. Of the endlessness of his gifts we have abundant assurances in his Holy Word. Jesus said to his disciples, "If any man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." God has secured, by promise, the stability of his people- "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Peter has affirmed, "The Word of the Lord endures forever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

And Jesus to complete the full assurance of hope, has declared, "If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. Father, I will that they whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." On what an immovable rock does the believer in Jesus rest all his hopes of heaven. The eternal truth and faithfulness of Jehovah are engaged in covenant, to secure the final happiness of his people.

But, does God never recall any of his gifts? He does indeed frequently reclaim what he has only lent; such as health, riches, friends, and other temporal comforts; and often in righteous judgment, he hides his face from us. But his 'new covenant blessings', which he gives in, and with, and through his beloved Son, he gives forever; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

Hence, Paul could say to the Corinthians, "You come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." To the Philippians he gave the same blessed assurance, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is fit for me to think this of you all, inasmuch as you are partakers of my grace."

Happy, thrice happy is the man, who, like Mary, has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from him. These truths may be called the children's bread. They are the never-failing support and cordial of holy souls, who know by sweet experience the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, the blessedness of being rooted and grounded in love, and the consolation arising from a firm hold of the promises made to them in Christ Jesus.

Those who know not the Truth, through the teaching of the Spirit, may abuse these privileges of the true believer, by sporting themselves with their own deceivings, and throwing the rein upon the neck of their lusts. But, must we on that account withhold the heavenly manna! Must the children perish for lack of bread, because some vitiated hearts may destroy its wholesome quality? Shall fragrant flowers no longer scatter their perfume, because a few of them may be converted to pernicious purposes? Would we desire the Almighty to withhold his providential blessings, because they are often perverted and abused? As it was in the days of the Apostle, even so it is now; the carnal mind turns food into poison, and blessings into curses.

O that we may have grace to draw out of the precious truths of God, all the benefit and blessedness, which they are designed to convey.

The character and state of redeemed sinners are most admirably delineated in the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England. Their election in Christ being declared, their spiritual state is thus described- "They are called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due, season; they, through grace, obey the calling; they are justified freely; they are made the sons of God by adoption; they are made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." This is a beautiful epitome of the Christian's walk to glory, which the Apostle has so fully revealed in his various Epistles, by the unerring pen of inspiration.

Whatever poisonous consequences may be drawn by the corrupt heart, from the sweetest truths of God's Word, of this we are certain, that all is good which comes from God, and all is done right, which is done from a principle of faith in Christ, and in obedience to his will. While we cultivate this holy frame, our duties will be pleasant, our delights will be pure, and our hopes will be sanctified.

Let us then think often on the nature, the extent, and the influence of the love of Christ- what designs it formed- with what energy it acted- with what perseverance it pursued its object- what obstacles it surmounted- and what sweetness it imparted under the severest trials. And then, let us remember, the present and eternal portion of every believer in Jesus is still the same Almighty, efficacious love- free, sovereign, and everlasting. It is your portion, even yours, O sinner, if you have laid hold on Jesus; if you have fled to him as your only refuge from the storm; if you have received him into your heart by faith.

There is nothing more clearly revealed, or more frequently insisted upon in the Holy Scriptures, than a holy walk and conversation, as the fruit and evidence of a justifying faith. Without this blessed work of the Spirit, religion is but a lifeless form, unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to man.

When the sinner changes his state before God, through faith in the atonement of Christ, he changes also his character before men, through the renewal of the inner man. He becomes a new creature and walks in the newness of life. His views, intentions, and designs are new. His affections are placed upon new objects. His will receives a new bias; and in the language of Paul- "Old things pass away, and all things become new."

The true believer is a decided character. He does not halt between two opinions. His choice is deliberately and firmly made. The Divine Spirit has convinced him of his danger, and taught him where to find pardon, peace, and joy. He wholly relies on the power and grace of Jesus, receives strength equal to his day, and though encompassed with infirmities, and groaning under the burden of the flesh, he runs the race which is set before him, and, through grace, obtains the prize.

How different from all this is the formal professor of Christianity. His heart is cold and comfortless, while that of the true believer is lively and joyful. The one, has the Spirit of a slave; the other, that of a child. The one, serves God through fear; the other, from a principle of love.

Though we see as through a glass darkly, yet quite enough is revealed to us in the Bible, to condemn us if we miss the road to heaven. What we need is, a humble mind to receive the great truths of the Gospel as practical truths, which were revealed, not for the purpose of making us disputants, but disciples of Jesus Christ; not, that we may indulge our speculative opinions, but that we may be made wise unto salvation.

However extensive may be our knowledge, or however animated our feelings, it will avail us nothing, while we remain destitute of those scriptural marks which designate the children of God, and which can alone prove us to be among the chosen in Christ Jesus. This truth shines as with a sun-beam in the page of Revelation, that the people of God are a holy people, each possessing that inward purity which manifests itself by outward acts of piety.

It is painful to think with what unhallowed freedom some people speak and write about the Divine Decrees. They assert their opinions with an authority most bold and daring; and are ready to anathematize all whose views do not accord with their own. This state of mind is the offspring of pride.

The further advanced the real Christian is in the grace of the Gospel, the more he possesses the spirit of a little child. He becomes more humble, more teachable, more submissive, and more dependent upon the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit. He knows his own nothingness, and the Divine Immensity. This bending of the mind and will is the blessed effect of the Spirit's teaching; for, how is it possible that a finite creature should grasp Infinity; or, that a mind, so contracted as ours, should comprehend the Eternal Jehovah, in all his purposes and decrees? What created being can unfold those mysteries of grace which were treasured up in the Divine Mind, before time began, and which can only be known, as the Spirit has been pleased to reveal them to us by the Prophets and the Apostles.

Being commissioned to preach these wonders of redeeming love, the indefatigable Apostle declared to the Corinthian church the source from where they came, "the wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God, which was hidden in former times, though he made it for our benefit before the world began. But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would never have crucified our glorious Lord. That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths."

This important declaration of Paul, puts the seal of inspiration upon his communications to the churches, and makes his writings to be the Word of God. It is also a fulfilment of the Savior's promise to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Thus the Gospel dispensation is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit. May our hearts overflow with gratitude for this revelation of redeeming love. O Spirit of Truth, by whose power the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified, shine into our hearts, and give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Open our understandings to understand the Scriptures, and mold our souls into the holy image of our God and Savior.

Man would be wise above what is written; taking reason for his pilot, he loves to launch into a sea of theory and conjecture. Pride swells his canvass; and while in quest of some discovery, which he fondly hopes shall immortalize his name, his vessel, freighted with vanity, is driven by every wind of doctrine, until at length it sinks amid the rocks of infidelity.

Knowing the danger of such unhallowed speculations, Paul, with apostolic faithfulness, thus warns the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." He also cautions Timothy, "Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge."

Were our minds duly humbled under a conscious feeling of our ignorance, we should seek for wisdom from above, that we may know what is good to be known, and experience the sanctifying influence of the truth upon our hearts. However we may wish it, we cannot reach beyond the limits which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed. Even within that boundary line, there are many things hard to be understood. Humility and obedience will guide us, through the Spirit, into all truth; for, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Mutability is inscribed on every earthly thing; but, "the counsel of the Lord stands forever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations." This divine stability and unchangeableness was the rock upon which David built his hopes, "It is my family God has chosen! Yes, he has made an everlasting covenant with me. His agreement is eternal, final, sealed. He will constantly look after my safety and success." Happy saint-

"Who can sink with such a prop,

Which bears the world and all things up!"

This truth comforted the afflicted Jeremiah; "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying; Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Isaiah was honored to be the bearer of this divine consolation to the suffering Church, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you."

A time of trial is the time when the promises of God are peculiarly precious. The Lord, whose grace is sufficient for us, has grace in store for suffering seasons. "As your days so shall your strength be." This was experienced at a period of national judgment, when the king of Babylon was commissioned to carry away captive the idolatrous house of Judah. During this season of distress, the prophet Jeremiah was favored with a divine declaration of faithfulness and mercy. It would seem to the eye of sense, that the promise, made to the house of David, was about to be cancelled by the overwhelming desolation. But God will never disappoint the hopes of his saints, who rest upon his Truth. They may partake of the general calamity, but not of its penal character; for while the wicked are made to drink of the cup of divine indignation, the righteous shall be refreshed with abundance of peace. At such a period, the Lord, as he has graciously promised, will be a little sanctuary to his people; a refuge from the storm, when the blast of the terrible ones is a storm against the wall.

To these hidden ones, thus says the Lord- "If you can break my covenant with the day and the night so that they do not come on their usual schedule, only then will my covenant with David, my servant, be broken. Only then will he no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. The same is true for my covenant with the Levitical priests who minister before me. And as the stars cannot be counted and the sand on the seashores cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David, my servant, and the Levites who minister before me." O! how firm is the promise of Jehovah. He might well say, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

But as his promise is true to his people, so are his threatenings to his enemies. The rebellious Jews had sent to Egypt for help against the Chaldeans, and no doubt they rejoiced in the success of their worldly policy; for, "When the army of Pharaoh was come forth out of Egypt, and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem." Inspired with hopes of deliverance, they began to think- 'Now we shall see what will become of Jeremiah's predictions; neither we or our land shall fall a prey to Nebuchadnezzar.' Trusting to an arm of flesh, they despised the Word of the Lord, and indulged the infidel hope, that his threatenings would prove abortive.

The Almighty God, who searches the deep recesses of the heart, sent this message to his unbelieving people. "Thus shall you say to the king of Judah; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt, into their own land; and the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight again this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus says the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, the Chaldeans shall depart from us; for they shall not depart."

Now mark the impossibility of defeating the purposes of Him, who can destroy a wicked people by the weakest instrument, "For though you had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire." O that rebellious sinners would lay this to heart; for neither wisdom nor strength, however matured or combined, can defeat the purposes of Jehovah. The weaker the means which are employed, the more is the power of God manifested thereby. The locusts, the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm can reduce a land of plenty into barrenness, as expeditiously as the devouring sword; sooner than the Word of God shall fail. Jesus has assured us, that the stones would immediately cry out. Human projects are uncertain in their results- not so the Divine counsel, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words," said the Omnipotent Savior, "shall not pass away."

As the judgments of God overtook his enemies, so do his mercies encircle his people. When the famine was desolating the land of Israel, the prophet Elijah was sustained by that Almighty hand, which in all ages protects and feeds the saints- "Hide yourself by the brook Cherith- I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." O afflicted believer, whatever be your straits and trials, God has means to help and deliver you, as he did his suffering servant. When the brook was dried up, then came the word, "Arise, get you to Zarephath, behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain you." It was not a king or a noble who was to preserve the life of this holy Prophet. No- it was to be a poor widow, who, with two sticks, was about to bake her last cake for herself and her son that they might eat it, and die! Let these instances of God's providential care, and miraculous preservations, shame us out of our unbelief and mistrust of his goodness- "for the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah."

The Bible is full of wonders. This delightful Book would arrest the attention, and attract the admiration of mankind, were it not for its holy character. Its light is too pure- its standard is too exalted- its statements are too humbling, for the pride and wickedness of the natural heart. In the Bible, truth shines with unclouded luster. Wherever it is received in faith and love, there, darkness flies before it. At the glorious Reformation, its Holy Light, concealed in cloistered cells, shot forth filling those nations with unnumbered blessings which embraced its heavenly doctrines. O may we never by our sins provoke our God to withdraw His Truth from us.

Protesting against Papal errors and Infidel blasphemies, let us rally around the Word of God- that standard of Eternal Truth. Clinging to the cross, and confessing Christ, let us ever, with fearless integrity, maintain

our Gospel principles, and earnestly contend for that faith, once delivered to the saints, which is founded upon the bible- the whole bible- and nothing but the bible.

Whatever infidelity may assert, this truth is written as with a sun-beam on the page of Scripture, and in the Book of Providence- that all the purposes of Jehovah, whether of mercy or of judgment, shall have their full accomplishment. The puny arm of man can neither turn aside the burning wrath, nor suspend the shower of blessing.

We naturally expect great effects to arise from what we conceive to be powerful causes. So did Naaman, when he esteemed the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel. "But, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. My strength is made perfect in weakness. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?

This truth, so humiliating to our vanity, Paul boldly declared to the Corinthians- "Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

For this reason he was not ashamed to say- "Dear brothers and sisters, when I first came to you I didn't use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God's message. For I decided to concentrate only on Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. I came to you in weakness--timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. I did not use wise and persuasive speeches, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among you. I did this so that you might trust the power of God rather than human wisdom."

Though honored to preach the Gospel of his grace, this humble servant of Christ sought not glory from men. Ever desirous to exalt the Savior, he told the Corinthians, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Humility is inseparable from the Christian character. Pride was not made for man; yet man is a proud sinner- a fugitive from God. His darkened understanding, his perverted will, his corrupt affections, his polluted memory, his seared conscience, his defiled imagination, all prove him to be a creature fallen from original righteousness, obedient to some other power, and pursuing an end, the very opposite to that for which he was created. Satan being entrenched in his self-love, obtains an easy conquest over him. The artful foe whispers to his heart the flattering tale, and he receives it with complacency. Listening to this hellish fiend, he boldly eats of the forbidden fruit, and braves the vengeance of Omnipotence.

Truth is too bright for his diseased intellect- too stern and faithful for his fastidious ear. He slights the monitory warnings of his truest friend, and fondly cleaves to Satan and his lies. O what a blessing is a humble mind, a teachable Spirit, a dependent frame of heart. This happy state of soul contains within itself the abundance of peace. Jesus dwells in such a lowly bosom, and beautifies the meek with his salvation. Happy shall we be, if our wills are made conformable to the Will of God. Then however dark may be his dispensations towards us, at evening-time it shall be light. Then, when heart and flesh shall fail, Jesus will be the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

"Would that my heart were fully bent

To serve you, Lord, in faith and love;

That my desires were all intent
On heavenly joys, and things above.
Vouchsafe with energy divine
To visit me and make me thine.
Oh Savior, with your presence cheer
This heart, and chase the gloom away
Rise, Sun of Righteousness, and here
Light up an everlasting day.
Your grace dispels the shades of night;
Wherever you dwell, there is light.
I seek you in affliction's hour,
When every earthly comfort fails;
I seek you when the tempter's power,
Against my feeble heart prevails;
My burdened bosom breathes its sigh
To You, and knows that you are nigh.
Dear Lord, I shall not ask in vain,
For you have taught me how to pray;
Here I will wait till I obtain
Your grace to take my sins away
My helpless soul with pity see,
And let it now be filled with thee."

Chapter 22.

ON THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD, THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEVER'S HAPPINESS.

THE FINAL GLORIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.

The unchangeable nature of the promises of God in Christ, which are YES, and AMEN, to the glory of his grace, gladdened the afflicted Apostle under all his troubles. By the inspiration of the Spirit, he was enabled to lead his Christians to the one only source of all their holiness and happiness- the eternal purpose and love of God in Jesus Christ, through whom their souls were redeemed and

sanctified. The sweet Psalmist of Israel struck his harp to this inspiring theme- "Salvation belongs unto the Lord; your blessing is upon your people." O may we catch the sacred fire, and feel our every power glowing with holy love. None but ransomed sinners can fully estimate the blessings of redemption. Salvation springs altogether from the grace and sovereign will of God, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that shows mercy; who dispenseth his blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, as seemeth good in his sight. All blessings in time and eternity must be traced to 32374CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 375this infinite love of God the Father, in, and through, his beloved and co-equal Son. The heart of Paul glowed with holy fervor whenever he dwelt upon this theme of mercy. Angels delight to look' into this mystery of love. Devils tremble at the amazing sight of man's redemption. None but unhumbled sinners turn from it with disgust! 1Vhen writing to the churches, the divinely-inspired Apostle kept back nothing that was profitable; neither did he shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Ministers who are swayed by interested motives, easily forsake the path of rectitude. Instead of preaching those truths which would be profitable to others, they preach such doctrines as are profitable to themselves., Paul was a man of another spirit. He had tasted that the Lord is gracious; to him Christ was precious; and his heart's desire and prayer to God

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