# God's Unspeakable Gift

**THE APOSTLE PAUL,** when writing to the brethren at Corinth concerning their privilege of giving material aid to their less fortunate brethren of Judea, climaxed his remarks with the statement, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." (II Cor. 9:15) God is continually bestowing his benefactions upon his human creatures, the worthy and the unworthy. Jesus said concerning his Heavenly Father, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."—Matt. 5:45

In Jesus, we have the greatest of all God's gifts. No member of the fallen race is worthy of this gift, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Although unworthy, we do have the privilege of accepting this 'unspeakable,' or indescribable, gift, and being enriched thereby. By accepting this gift, we receive life and all the joys that accompany it. This fact is simply stated in the Bible—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

It is appropriate when receiving a gift to examine it in order to more fully appreciate its value, and the more heartily give thanks to the giver. Should we not also examine God's greatest gift to us? Indeed, the better we learn to know God's 'unspeakable gift,' the more we will cherish him, and the greater effort we will put forth to be like him.

Jesus is prophetically described as the One "altogether lovely." (Song of Sol. 5:16) There was nothing unlovely about Jesus. Depending upon our own inclinations, we may see and appreciate in Jesus certain praiseworthy traits of character and think of him almost entirely from these limited viewpoints. If we are of a mild, gentle disposition, it is likely that we especially admire in Jesus his kindness and gentleness; if by nature we are combative, we will note with approbation Jesus' encounters with the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus was indeed gentle and kind. The "gracious words" which fell from his lips must have warmed the hearts of many who heard them. (Luke 4:22) He was also bold in his stand against the false teachings of the "blind guides" of his day. (Matt. 23:16) Being able to read the hearts of those with whom he came in contact, he did not hesitate to expose hypocrisy wherever he found it. Where there was no willful intent, Jesus was ready to extend mercy to the erring. He was 'altogether lovely,' and the more we see of his loveliness the greater should be our appreciation of God's unspeakable gift.

One of the lovely traits of Jesus' perfection was his unswerving devotion to his Heavenly Father. This always had been true of him, even in his prehuman existence. Speaking through the prophet

concerning his Creator, the Heavenly Father, the Logos said, "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."—Prov. 8:30

When the Logos was "made flesh" (John 1:14), and while waiting until he reached maturity under the Law, he sought out the doctors of the Law in the Temple to ask questions and reason with them. Chided by his mother for leaving his parents, Jesus replied, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—Luke 2:49

He probably learned from his elders in the Temple that according to the Law he would not be entitled to enter upon any special ministry for God until he was thirty years of age. So, when he was thirty, he immediately went to John at Jordan, to be baptized. The sentiment of Jesus' devoted heart at that time was, as expressed by David, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."—Ps. 40:8

## "LOVELY" IN PRAYER

Some like to think of Jesus almost exclusively from the standpoint of his life of prayer. Surely he did delight to commune with his Heavenly Father in prayer. In a prayer beside the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said to his Father, "I knew that thou hearest me always." (John 11:42) Jesus knew that in every situation of his life of sacrifice he needed the guidance and strength that he could obtain only through communion with his Heavenly Father. Since he was assured that his Father's ear was always attuned to hear his every word of thanks and his every request for help, what delight Jesus must have experienced through prayer!

Too frequently, prayer is looked upon as the need we have of going to God in times of distress and trouble. And surely every Christian will seek the Heavenly Father's help and comfort in such times. Actually, however, we need the LORD's assistance as much when the circumstances of life are favorable, as when they are calamitous. Is everything going well with you? Are you popular with your friends, and as far as you know, have no enemies? If so, you need to go to the throne of heavenly grace asking your Heavenly Father to help you realize your need of him.

Jesus understood this. Surely he must have placed himself in a very favorable light before that multitude which, by a miracle, he had fed with loaves and fishes. Altogether there were about "five thousand men, beside women and children." What did Jesus do? The record says, "When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."—Matt. 14:21,23

We do not know the nature of this prayer. At the moment Jesus was riding a wave of popularity. When tempted by Satan to use his God-given power to turn stones into bread to satisfy his own hunger, he refused to do so. Now he had used that power to create food for the multitude. Would their appreciation and praise turn him aside from his own course of sacrifice? These thoughts may have gone through his mind. In any event, at such a time he realized his need of communing with his Father.

## FOR GUIDANCE

The prayer life of Jesus is again brought to our attention in connection with the selection of his apostles. We read, "It came to pass in those days, that

he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."—Luke 6:12,13

Jesus was confident that the Father, in answer to prayer, guided him in the selection of his apostles. Later, in another prayer, he referred to them as those whom the Father had given him. (John 17:6) What a lovely example of belief and trust! True, Judas was among those whom the Father had given to him, but Jesus made no exception. At times we may seek the LORD's guidance, and yet, if our experiences are not such as we would prefer, we would be inclined to doubt. But he who was altogether lovely had confidence in his Father's wisdom and in his ability to direct.

Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, . . . because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. 11:25,26) Here again we find Jesus completely in harmony with his Father's judgment.

From the human standpoint, Jesus may have preferred the friendship and cooperation of the elite of his day, the scribes and Pharisees, the doctors of the Law, and other professionals in Jewish society. But since the Father did not reveal the Truth to these, they were in bitter opposition to him.

Those to whom the Father did reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven were, for the most part, the unlearned, the fishermen, publicans and sinners. (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11) It was these, therefore, who became his followers and friends. But they were simple people, honest at heart, and appreciative

of the message. He loved these and thanked his Father for choosing them.

Jesus' interest in his apostles, and in those who would believe on him through their ministry, is evidenced in his prayer on their behalf. He said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."—John 17:9-17

What depth of interest Jesus thus displayed in those whom the Father had given to him to be his brethren and friends! Through this prayer we can see another aspect of the glorious character of the One who is altogether lovely, the One who is the Father's 'unspeakable gift' to us, and, by and by, to the whole world.

The love of this lovely One embraced the world, and this is revealed in his prayer life. Even when

praying for those whom the Father had given him to be his ambassadors, he did not hide his interest in the world. In praying for them, Jesus added, "That they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—John 17:21

In that precious text, which tells us of God's loving gift of his 'only begotten Son,' we are informed that 'whosoever believeth in him' will not 'perish, but have everlasting life.' So, when Jesus prayed that the 'world may believe,' he was petitioning his Father for the life of the world. This is in keeping with the prayer he taught his disciples: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) This, in reality, is a prayer for the blessing of the world. Jesus was interested in the world. He came to give his life that all mankind might have an opportunity to live.

## JESUS' LOYALTY

Just as in his prehuman existence Jesus, because of his loyalty, was daily the delight of his Father, so he was also during his earthly ministry. Soon after his baptism, Satan attempted to swerve Jesus away from his course of obedience, but failed. First, it was suggested by Satan that Jesus use his God-given power to turn stones into bread in order to satisfy his hunger. His reply was, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Matt. 4:4

We will appreciate the absolute obedience of God's unspeakable gift a little more by noting his insistence on the need, and importance, of every word uttered by his Father. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of many of Jesus' professed followers,

who, in their weaknesses, seek out and obey only those instructions of the Bible that harmonize with their own ways of thinking and doing. But the perfect Jesus was alert to obey every word, regardless of what the cost might be to him. In the circumstance under consideration, the cost of obedience was hunger and the increased antagonism of his "adversary the devil."—I Pet. 5:8

Failing in his first attempt, Satan approached Jesus from another standpoint. "If thou be the Son of God [Satan said], cast thyself down [from the pinnacle of the Temple]: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."—Matt. 4:5,6

Here was a temptation to disobedience supported by a misapplication of scripture. It was an appealing temptation for it suggested a way of suddenly attaining popularity and notoriety. One who could demonstrate that he enjoyed the protection of angels, even though he defied the laws of nature, could have the world in his hand.

In less spectacular ways, many since have yielded to this type of temptation. It is, in principle, the temptation to make a display of great and wonderful works as proof of heaven's blessings. (Matt. 7:22)

The perfect Jesus, God's unspeakable gift, did not yield to this temptation. His reply again was, "It is written." Every word that had been written must be brought to bear for the guidance of his lovely life. This word that he here applied was "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—Matt. 4:7

Only forty days prior to this, Jesus had heard the voice of his Father in those reassuring words, "This

is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17) With this assurance there was no 'if' in Jesus' mind concerning his Divine sonship. Therefore, to expect his Father to say or do more to convince him would have evidenced his own lack of faith, hence tempting God to withdraw his favor from him.

Jesus was not concerned as to whether or not the world believed that he was the Son of God, although he probably knew that this issue would eventually lead to persecution and death. But that did not matter, for the very purpose of his being 'made flesh' was that he give his humanity in death for the life of the world. He knew that he was the Son of God, and this was all that mattered. How heart-searching this example should be for us!

Satan's third approach was again different. As "prince of this world" (John 12:31), he offered to share his authority with Jesus. The condition was, "If thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Matt. 4:9) No scripture was used here. It was simply a vicious attempt to lure Jesus into disobedience. But every word by which Jesus lived was brought to bear by him in resisting the temptation. The Master's reply was, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."—Matt. 4:10

Jesus, God's unspeakable gift, had come into the world to be a king. He knew that in his Father's due time the uttermost parts of the earth would be brought under his dominion. But Jesus also knew that first he must sacrifice his life to redeem mankind from death. His rulership was to be over living subjects, not those condemned to death and dying. There was only one way to obtain this position in his Father's plan, and that was by humble obedience.

He had no desire to take any other course, for this One, who was altogether lovely, loved God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength.

## DIRECTED BY THE WORD

Jesus loved the world—all the world. His natural desire would have been to bestow blessings or healing upon, and proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom to, all—Jews and Gentiles alike. But in this also he put aside what might have been his own preferences, and served in harmony with every word of his Heavenly Father. When he sent his disciples into the ministry he forbade their going to the Gentiles. "Go rather," he said, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:6) Later, when a Gentile woman sought a blessing from him for her daughter, he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."—Matt. 15:24

This woman persisted, and Jesus explained further, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." To this the woman replied, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." (vss. 26,27) Jesus' heart of sympathy was touched by this display of humility and faith, and he granted the woman's request. The fact that Jesus made this exception emphasizes the restriction that the Father's Word had placed upon his ministry, a restriction that he respected and obeyed.

The obedience of Jesus to his Heavenly Father's Word is further revealed through his observance of the times and seasons in the Divine plan. The enemies of Jesus, who desired to put him to death, were concentrated more particularly in Judea.

Knowing this, he was conducting his ministry in Galilee. "His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest." Jesus' reply was, "My time is not yet come."—John 7:3-6

Jesus was still in Galilee when Lazarus died. After two days he announced to his disciples that he was returning to Judea. They reminded him of the dangers involved. He replied, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" indicating his consciousness of time. (John 11:6-9) In Matthew 26:18, we find Jesus saying that his time had come. So he did not then hesitate to return to Judea, even though he well knew that he would be arrested and put to death. Thus his observance of the Father's times prevented him from recklessly throwing away his life, and also challenged obedience to his covenant of sacrifice when his hour did come.

## JESUS' HUMILITY

Another lovely trait of Jesus' character was his humility. "Never man spake" as this man did, yet he was glad to testify, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 7:46; 14:10) "My Father is greater than I," Jesus testified. (John 14:28) Again, "I can of mine own self do nothing."—John 5:30

Another display of Jesus' humility was in his willingness to leave the glory that he had with the Father in his prehuman existence, to become a man. As a man, he humbled himself still further by becoming a servant and suffering the humiliating death of the cross. Paul's way of expressing it was that Jesus made himself of "no reputation," and that he "humbled himself,

and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. 2:5-8

Jesus was also humble in his willingness to admit his lack of knowledge with respect to some of the time features of the Divine plan. When asked about the time of his Second Advent, he humbly acknowledged that he did not know. He said that at that time only his Heavenly Father knew this. (Matt. 24:36) How this contrasts with the attitude of many of his followers, who, even though they do not know, would like to have their brethren think that they know a great deal about the times and seasons which have not yet been revealed to the LORD's people in general!

In this end of the age, when we are living in the *parousia* [Greek for 'presence'] of our Lord, all the consecrated are properly concerned as to how long it will be before the last member of the church passes beyond the veil, and the kingdom is established. This is the question most frequently asked by the LORD's consecrated people. The majority admit, as Jesus did, that they do not know. Others, apparently hesitant to admit their lack of knowledge, will speculate about it, setting one date after another. How much better it is for all to follow the example of Jesus in this respect, and admit outright that we do not know. Truly this lovely One, who is God's unspeakable gift to us, is an exemplar in every aspect of true godliness, which we should endeavor to imitate.

## JESUS' SUBMISSION

Jesus was submissive to whatever the Father's will was for him. Submission is closely allied to humility. It involves humility in the face of severe trial and suffering. Peter wrote concerning Jesus, "When he

was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."—I Pet. 2:23

Jesus knew that not a single experience, bitter or sweet, could come to him without the Father's permission. He did not, therefore, seek retaliation against those who persecuted him, but simply looked to his Father for wisdom to learn whatever lesson might be involved, and for strength to accept the buffeting with that humility which would enable him to look up to his Father and say, "Not my will, but thine, be done."—Luke 22:42

## JESUS' COMPASSION

Jesus was sympathetic and compassionate. We read, in Matthew 9:36, that when he "saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." An exhibition of the manner in which Jesus' compassion moved him to sacrifice time and strength on behalf of the multitude, is given us in connection with his miracle of feeding the multitude.

This occurred on the same day, and very shortly after, Jesus had said to his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." The reason for this invitation is explained thus: "For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." (Mark 6:31) In an attempt to escape from the crowd to be alone and rest, Jesus and his disciples entered into a boat and crossed to the opposite shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was apparently near the end of the Sea, and many, noting what had happened, hurried around the edge

of the water reaching the opposite shore in time to greet the Master when he arrived.

The attempt to escape the multitude failed. What did Jesus do about it? He could have directed his disciples to sail the boat back into the middle of the lake so that there they could rest. But he did not do this, and the record explains why. We quote, "Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34) This was at a time when he was tired, needing rest. But his compassion for the multitude would not permit him to rest. After teaching the multitude 'many things,' he then performed that marvelous miracle of feeding them by causing the increase of the few loaves and fishes.

How does our attitude toward the service of the LORD compare with this? Do we serve the LORD merely when it is convenient, and when we feel up to it? Or are we willing to forego needed rest, give up our personal plans, and ignore our personal preferences because our compassion for those whom we have the responsibility and privilege of serving compels us thus to deny self by sacrificing the flesh and its interests? This was Jesus' attitude. He was truly a "man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3), not on account of his own circumstances in life, but because of his sympathy for the sin-sick and dying world.

In the shortest verse in the Bible we are told that "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) This was when he was standing beside the tomb of his friend Lazarus. Surrounded by mourners, and realizing that the great enemy Death would continue to claim its victims for a long time to come, spreading sorrow and

suffering everywhere, the sympathetic heart of Jesus was overwhelmed.

## ZEALOUS

Jesus was consumed by the zeal of his Father's house. (Ps. 69:9) He said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4) Again he said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34) Later, within the shadow of the cross, Jesus said in prayer to his Heavenly Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."—John 17:4

This statement was made by Jesus with the knowledge that his active ministry had been completed. He was still to be tried. He would still need to bear up under mocking and scourging. Even when hanging on the cross, he witnessed concerning his coming kingdom and the paradise conditions that it would restore worldwide. Finally, when his last bit of strength was gone, he looked up to his Father and said, "It is finished." "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," my life.—John 19:30; Luke 23:46

Faithfully, even unto death, this unspeakable gift of God had exemplified all those commendable aspects of perfection, the sum of which had made him the One altogether lovely. In his death there came his greatest accomplishment, for it provided an opportunity for life to all who believe on him. It was for this that the Heavenly Father had sent his Son into the world, and now Jesus had vindicated his Father's trust in him.

So, when we think of the birth of Jesus, let us remember that he would have been born in vain unless

he had been willing to day down that perfect life which was his in birth. Let us thank God for Jesus' birth, but seek his mercy, guidance, and help through the merit of his sacrificed life. Rejoicing in the birth of God's unspeakable gift, let us remember our life-time privilege of emulating him in obedience and devotion; in prayer; in loyalty to the Word of God; in resisting temptation; in humility; in submission to the Father's will, and in sympathetic compassion for the entire groaning creation. As with Jesus, may the zeal of our Father's house continue to consume us until the last ounce of our energy has been devoted to his work and glory! ■