

Genesis 1:26 - 2:7

Introduction

Gifts are an important part of relationships. They tend to reveal the heart of the giver toward the one the gift is given to. Husband, this is why gifts can be so meaningful to your wife - - it's not the amount of money you spent on her that interests her, but the amount of time and thought that were invested in the gift, because time and thought reveal your heart in a way that money never really can!

Gifts are an important part of your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift from God to you; after you are saved, God the Holy Spirit gives you each one or more supernatural gifts. Gifts that God gives always speak to us of His Grace - - of His unmerited favor. God's gifts cannot be earned or merited or deserved; they are by and because of His Grace.

In our text this morning we learn that Creation is God's gift to you:

Genesis 1:29 "And God said, See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food."

God's Creation was given to man; it was a gift from God. Even after man's sin in the Garden of Eden, we read in Psalms 115:16, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men."

Just as our own gifts to one another reveal our heart, God's gift of Creation reveals *His* heart toward mankind:

Psalms 145:16-19 "You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them."

Acts 17:24-28 "God...made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth...He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being..."

The gift of Creation is intended to remind mankind of God's grace in a way that prepares the heart to receive the gift of salvation when the Gospel is presented!

It is true that what we call Nature seems cruel, violent, unforgiving, and merciless; just ask the people who live along the shores of the Mississippi River!¹ Nature must have seemed just as cruel, violent, unforgiving, and merciless when David wrote Psalms and when Paul preached to Greeks - - yet *they* appealed to God's Creation as a universal witness of God's grace. The forces of nature are only a small part of a larger picture. When the whole picture is seen objectively, there is the irrefutable evidence that the universe has a design which requires the previous self-existence of a Designer! The Designer is the God of the Bible Who sustains all life on earth, Who holds the universe together by His power, Who does so freely and on account of His grace toward men - - even unsaved men.

Since Creation is God's gift to mankind, we can say at least two things about our text in Genesis 1 & 2 - -

#1 Creation Is Proof Of
God's Grace Toward You

#2 Creation Is A Picture Of
God's Grace Toward You

#1 Creation Is Proof Of
God's Grace Toward You
(1:26-31& 2:4-7)

We left off last time during the sixth 24 hour day of Creation. God had created and made a universe as the backdrop for the earth; He created the earth as an environment for man. Now He creates man.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

¹June/July 1993 - - worst flooding in 500 years!

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Man is said to be both "created" and "made." "Created" is the word "bara" - - to create out of nothing. "Made" is a word that usually indicates forming something out of previously existing materials. It is possible that God uses these words interchangeably, with essentially the same meaning. It is also accurate to describe man as both "created" and "made" in this sense: His body was "made" out of the same materials God had called into existence on the first 24 hour day of creation, but he was "created" in God's "image" and "likeness" in a way not shared by any other living thing.

Man was created with an eternal spirit, with a moral consciousness, with the ability to think abstractly, capable of understanding beauty and emotion, and with the capacity of will to love and to worship God. Whatever else might be intended in the words "image" and "likeness," it all boils down to one thing: Man was uniquely created to know God and enjoy fellowship and relationship with Him!

"Male" and "female" will be discussed in more detail in chapter two. Mankind, male and female, means Adam and Eve - - two uniquely created and made individuals. It is not a reference to the evolution of previous ape-men. Famous ape-man evidences, such as Piltdown Man, Nebraska Man, Neanderthal Man, Pithecanthropus Erectus, Peking Man, Homo Habilis, and Zinjanthropus Man, have been discredited by careful objective scientific analysts. They are the remains of either animals or of true human beings, not a transition between them.² Nebraska Man, for example, was the subject of the famous Scopes Trial. Nebraska Man is one tooth! Later it was found to be the tooth of an extinct pig. Later still, researchers discovered that the pig was not even extinct!³ Another of these ape-men was bent over in a position that evolutionists said indicated that he was on his way up from walking on all fours like a monkey. Later analysis of the skeletons showed that the population suffered from disease, causing them to stoop! They were not on their way up - - they were on their way down!

²John Whitcomb, The Early Earth, p. 128

³Ken Ham, Genesis 1-11 Video

Much has been said about man's "dominion" over God's creation. What does it mean?

The answer is in a careful look at Jesus Christ! In Hebrews we are reminded that God gave man dominion but that it was lost:

Hebrews 2:6-8 "But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. *But now we do not yet see all things put under him.*"

Whatever "dominion" Adam and Eve had was marred in their sin - - "we do not yet see all things put under him." What we do see is Jesus, Whom the Bible calls "the second Adam," Who has reclaimed dominion for the human race:

Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."

What does this mean in terms of you and I and "dominion?" Jesus will fully exercise His dominion in His Second Coming, when He restores the earth for 1,000 years as He rules from Jerusalem. You and I return with Him and we rule with Him.

In the mean time, we exercise "dominion" in the same way that Jesus did in His *first* coming! In submission to the will of His Father in heaven, Jesus often exercised dominion over nature - - calming storms and controlling schools of fish, curing diseases and casting out demons. His followers throughout the centuries have done the same - - always in submission to the Father's will! Dominion doesn't make you and I a little 'god,' as some teach.

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.

Genesis 1:30 "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.

God was the first environmentalist! Here He states His program for the environment: procreate, cultivate, and consider.

"Be fruitful and multiply" - - procreate;

"subdue" - - from a root word meaning 'to cultivate'; man was a groundskeeper, not a god!

"dominion" - - in this context it means to study and apply the knowledge gained; to consider God's creation and wisely tend to it.

We also learn that all of the animals and man were originally vegetarians. Later we'll learn that God allows us to eat meat (Genesis 9:3 - *after* the flood).

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

There is no room in Genesis One for decay and death before Adam's sin in chapter Three. We also note that even the angels are all still "good" up to this point; Satan is still Lucifer.

Before we look at the seventh 24 hour day of creation, we want to finish talking about God's creation of man. Genesis 2:4-7 is a summary of chapter one, with particular emphasis on man.

Genesis 2:4 This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

Genesis 2:5 before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;

Genesis 2:6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

What God said so succinctly in chapter one, He says even more briefly here! This is not anything new - - not another creation. We do get two additional details:

In the pre-flood world, called "antediluvian," it never rained! The vapor or ice canopy surrounding the earth made for a very different water cycle than the one we have now. God built in a sprinkler system!

We also see something wonderful about God's making and creating of Adam.

He was made from "the dust of the ground" - - from the same basic materials as the earth. This seems absurd; modern science has proven it to be true! Suppose you wanted to make a human body. You would need 58 pounds of oxygen, fifty quarts of water, two ounces of salt, three pounds of calcium, 24 pounds of carbon, some chlorine, phosphorous, fat, iron, sulphur, and glycerine. Dust and water!⁴ You'd have a hard time, though; a mere piece of skin the size of a postage stamp requires three million cells, a yard of blood vessels, four yards of nerves, one hundred sweat glands, fifteen oil glands, and twenty-five nerve endings!⁵

God "formed" these materials into man. The word is the same one used of a potter working with clay - - one of Scriptures most precious metaphors. These earthen vessels have something else: God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." Man was an earthen vessel - - dust - - filled with the life of God!

Whatever else we might say about the wonders of all this, we must say that it all reminds you of God's Grace! Creation is God's gift to man.

God Gave His Life To You - -

The plants and animals God created were alive, but only Adam and Eve shared God's very life! God gave them life; some 6,000 years later He would *give* His life on Calvary so that you and I might be able to receive His gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Just as God "breathed" into Adam, Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, "breathed" life into His disciples: John 20:22 "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." When you trust Jesus as Savior, God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in *your* body - - God's breathe again filling the earthen vessels!

⁴John Phillips, Exploring Genesis, p. 49

⁵Ibid., p. 49

Life apart from sharing God's life through His Spirit is only soulish and carnal.

God Gave You Labor - -

Adam had productive work to do, work whose purpose was to honor and glorify God. *You* are described as being saved by God's grace unto good works which He has before ordained for you! Pursuits and purposes that are not in God's will for you are empty and prove meaningless. It is tragic that so much of science and art exclude God and the great themes of His grace!

God Gave You His Love - -

Creation reminds you of the grace of God in His love for you. In 1:26 the Tri-une God held a council to create mankind. This was not the first council! Prior to creating man, prior even to the creation of the heavens and the earth - - called before the 'foundations' elsewhere in Scripture - - some other things had already been discussed:

John 17:24 "Father... You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

Rev 13:8 [Jesus is the] "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

1 Peter 1:20 "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you..."

Luke 11:50 "... the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world ..."

Ephesians 1:4 "...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love..."

Before the foundation of the world that we have read about in Genesis One, before Adam ever sinned, Jesus had been set apart to die for the sins of the world in the body of a man. This message was to be proclaimed by men to other men at great personal cost; but many would respond and be saved!

Creation is proof of God's grace when all of this is understood!

#2 Creation Is A Picture Of God's Grace Toward You (2:1-3)

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.

Genesis 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

Genesis 2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

The seventh 24 hour day, called the sabbath, is a subject of controversy. It is essentially a picture to us that, just as creation was God's gift to man, so salvation in Jesus Christ is also God's gift - - received by faith and not by works. Mankind did nothing to earn or to deserve or to merit God's grace in creation; neither can you earn or deserve or merit God's grace in salvation.

We are clearly told that the sabbath is a picture, in Colossians 2:16-17

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

The "substance" of the sabbath is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The sabbath is only a picture for us to understand this spiritual truth.

Hebrews 4:1-10 is important. The writer mentions two pictures of God's rest, the seventh day of God's rest, and the promised rest-land of Canaan. Both the weekly sabbath and Canaan were pictures of something spiritual!

The point he makes in Hebrews 4 is that unbelief kept the Jews from ever entering God's rest - - even though they kept the sabbath and even though they entered Canaan! He shows that David, in Psalm 95, spoke of a future rest that both the sabbath and Canaan only pictures - - a rest you and I enter into by believing, by grace through faith, in the work of Jesus Christ.

The seventh 24 hour day of creation is a picture representing salvation by grace through faith. It speaks to you of your response to God's grace and of your responsibilities in God's grace.

Adam's response to God's gift of creation was to receive it by faith. His responsibilities were to be faithful in work and in worship - - working for six days, worshipping on the seventh.

Your response to God's gift of salvation is to receive it by faith! *Your* responsibilities are faithfulness in work and in worship!

Having trusted Christ, in our work we experience His power; having trusted Christ, in our worship we experience His presence. These we do every day, having fully entered into His salvation rest and having ceased from our own works.

Conclusion

Creation reveals the Glory of God...Creation reflects the Goodness of God...Creation reminds you of the Grace of God!

While we must never worship creation, when we properly understand creation we are led to worship the Creator.