

# UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

For our communion services we pause from our 'regular' series of Bible studies and present a devotion on a name or title of our Lord, Jesus Christ. There are more than seven hundred such names or titles. To narrow it down we have arbitrarily used the English alphabet. We take each letter of our alphabet and find a name or title of our Lord.

Our letter this month, the letter 'U', presented a challenge in the NKJV. Time to return to the mother of all Bibles and crack-open the KJV and turn to Second Corinthians 9:15.

[2 Corinthians 9:15](#) Thanks *be* unto God for his **unspeakable** gift.

The NKJV translates the word *indescribable*. The word could be translated *incapable of being spoken; inexpressible; unutterable; unable to be told out, or not expounded in full*.

The word modifies the word **gift**. Paul was trying to describe Jesus as God's gift when he found no words to express it. One writer said, "Loving... has no other speech... Love finds it's very life in giving itself away."

Language fails to describe Jesus' giving and God's gift because it is itself a kind of language. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the gift of Jesus Christ cannot be uttered with all the words ever invented.

I should pause and discuss the context in which we find this wonderful title of our Lord. Paul came to Corinth during what we call his second missionary journey. He spent eighteen months establishing the Church there. After leaving Corinth he had reports of immorality in the Corinthian Church and wrote a letter to confront it. This letter is lost to us; it is not First Corinthians, but is referred to in First Corinthians.

The first letter was lost; the second was First Corinthians. Paul wrote a third letter that was harsh and disciplinary in nature after he

received reports of divisions among them. This letter has been lost as well.

That letter was sent by the hand of Titus. While Titus took the letter to the Church at Corinth, the apostle remained in Ephesus, anxiously waiting to hear what the Corinthians' response would be. While he was waiting, trouble arose in the Ephesian Church. This trouble is recorded in Acts nineteen. There, the silversmiths caused a great commotion in the city, and Paul was threatened with being dragged before the Roman judges. He escaped and decided to go on to Macedonia to meet Titus, who would be coming up through Macedonia on his return from Corinth, and because his anxiety over the Corinthians was so great, he could wait no longer for news. He also intended to raise money there for the relief of the Christians in Jerusalem, who were suffering from a famine. With these two concerns weighing heavily on his heart, Paul went to Philippi in Macedonia.

There Paul met Titus and received word that the sharp letter he had written to the Corinthians had accomplished its work. The majority of the Corinthian Christians had repented of their rejection of his ministry and had begun to live again the life of Jesus Christ. A minority was still unyielding, however, and continued to rebel against the authority of the apostle. So, from the city of Philippi, Paul wrote this letter, Second Corinthians, a letter that expresses so much of the anxiety and agitation of heart that he experienced.

In the opening chapters Paul bares his heart to them. He gets intensely personal.

Several chapters in the middle of the letter are intended to prepare the Church for his arrival and to receive the offering they had promised to receive for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Our title for Jesus is found in that portion.

In chapter eight Paul told the Corinthians [give yourself to the Lord](#) (8:5). What does that mean, exactly? How do I apply it in my daily walk?

You need something practical to think about when it comes to giving. So in chapter nine Paul said to model your giving after the example of the farmer and his field. In verse ten he said that God **supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food**. God provides the farmer with a certain amount of seed. Some of it must be sown; some of it must be held back to be ground into flour to make bread. It's up to the farmer to determine the quantity he'll sow, and the quantity he'll save. The farmer can't sow all of the seed or he'll starve. But he knows that the more he sows now, the more he'll reap later.

When it comes to giving, **you** are the farmer and your life is the field. God provides you with a certain amount of "seed" in the form of resources. Some of it must be sown; some of it must be held back to provide for yourself. It's up to you to determine the proportion.

You should base your decision on the understanding that,

**2 Corinthians 9:6** But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Sow as much as you can, holding back as little as you need, and you will see God **multiply the seed you have sown**.

Giving is like sowing seed into your field. The more seed you sow, the greater the yield at harvest time. By starting with this principle, Paul elevates your thinking. It's not a matter of how *little* you can give; it's a matter of how *much* you can give! The farmer wants to sow as much as he can. You should want to give as much as you can. Just how much is up to you.

**2 Corinthians 9:7** So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Paul isn't saying that God only loves givers; he's saying that lovers give to one another. Giving is the natural response of love for another. When you want to know if God loves you, you remember that **God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...** Your giving to God is a response of love from your heart to Him.

**Cheerful** is from a root word where we get our word *hilarious*. The receiving of the offering should be the most hilarious moment of your week!

These verses clearly are about giving money, but I want to expand the principle of sowing and reaping for just a moment. Survey your various “fields”: Marriage... Family... Job... Church... These are all fields you sow into. The more you sow into each of those fields, the greater your harvest of fruit will be. How much time, energy, and effort are you sowing into your marriage? Into raising your kids? If you lack fruitfulness, it could be on account of your lack of sowing into those fields.

**2 Corinthians 9:8** And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.

**All, always, and abundance** are the words that jump out at you from this verse. **Sufficiency** means *adequate resources within*. It is a promise of spiritual adequacy, not material prosperity.

Verses nine through fourteen continue to discuss and describe your giving to God. As I mentioned, this whole section – beginning in chapter eight – is a discussion of the New Testament principles for giving.

- being changed to bring change -

Christians are drawn to *figures* and *formulas*. Paul has accommodated us to a certain extent:

1. He’s given us a figure – the farmer sowing his field.
2. He’s given us a formula – sow bountifully and you will reap bountifully.

As he closes, he elevates our thinking beyond figures and formulas. In a sense, all you really need to know about giving is what he said in verse fifteen:

**2 Corinthians 9:15** Thanks *be* unto God for his **unspeakable** gift.

Salvation is God’s gift, but here Paul is talking about Jesus – the One through whom and in whom we have the gift.

As far as I can tell this word is only used this once in the New Testament. It does appear after this letter was written in some writings of the early Church. There are scholars who therefore suggest that the apostle Paul may have coined the term and then other believers began to use it in their writings.

I am drawn to the idea that Paul – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – came up with a brand new word. It seems somehow fitting that words fall short of describing Jesus Christ. The very fact that we can identify so many names and titles teaches you that He can never be fully described.

*You have to invent a new word just to say you can't think of any words to describe Him!* You of course want to speak but find no words and must say He is **unspeakable**.

Unspeakable has come to be used in a dark and negative context in the English language. I associate it with the phrases, *unspeakable horror* or *unspeakable acts*. Maybe I'm the only one!

Paul obviously intended it as a superlative. Jesus is ultimately unable to be fully expounded; that's the idea. Were you the greatest intellect, the greatest orator, and in command of all the world's languages, you could not even begin to fully tell the wonders of the gift of His life, love, and salvation.

It's not wrong to try to describe Him. It's not wrong to speak about Him. *We're compelled to!* But we must remain humble in our descriptions, reverent in our discussions of His nature and character.

Jesus came in the volume of the Book – the Bible. We read it, we study it, because in it we can see Him and come to know Him. Just remember that, as you are speaking about Him, you always fall short in describing Him. He is too wonderful for words – God's unspeakable gift.