

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 24 September 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Giver of the Unspeakable Gift

This morning we sang a hymn which may have been new for some of you—the hymn “**Give of Your Best to the Master.**” This hymn was published in the year 1902; and its lyrics were written by a Baptist pastor named **Howard Grose**. Grose lived a fervent life of service to God—not only as a pastor, but also as a teacher and educator. He served as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Poughkeepsie, New York, and of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the 1880’s and early 1890’s. He later served as the president of the University of South Dakota, and then as a professor of history at the University of Chicago, where he influenced many students for Christ. He was also the assistant editor of *The Watchman*; the editorial secretary for the American Baptist Home Mission Society; and the editor of the *American Baptist Home Missions* journal.ⁱ

Pastor Grose impacted many people’s lives; but probably the biggest impact that Grose had was with *young people*. Grose was very involved in The Christian Endeavour Society—a Christian youth movement which began in 1881. The theme verse of the society was **Romans 12:1**, which says, “***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.***”ⁱⁱ Based on the teaching of this verse, Christian young people made the following pledge:

“Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever He would have me do; I will make it the rule of my life to pray and to read the Bible every day; I will support the work and worship of my church in every way possible; I will seek to bring others to Christ; and so far as I know how, throughout my whole life, I will endeavour to lead a Christian life.”

Every time the Christian Endeavour Society met, they sang from a hymnbook called *The Endeavour Hymnal*; and “Give of Your Best to the Master” was a hymn that Grose specifically wrote to be included in this hymnbook. In this hymn, Grose urged young people to surrender their lives fully to Christ. It was written as a sort of “soldier hymn”—as an exhortation to engage in spiritual warfare.ⁱⁱⁱ In the song, young people were urged to “give of your *best* to the Master”; to throw their soul’s “fresh, glowing ardour into the battle for truth”; to give Christ “first place in your heart”; to “consecrate every part”; and to “give Him the best that you have.”^{iv} To the innermost core of his being, Grose believed in full surrender to Christ; and the incident which *inspired* him to write “Give of Your Best to the Master” demonstrates this fact. Grose’s son explained it this way:

“My father was the organist and choir director of our church. One evening at choir practice, a young man wandered in late, interrupting what was going on, as he slid past other singers into his place. When my father asked why he was late, he simply shrugged, and had no answer. At which my father stung him - and set the bar for all of us - by saying to the latecomer, ‘The Lord doesn’t want your spare time.’”^v

Brethren, God truly does *not* want our spare time, spare change, or spare anything. He doesn’t want the “scraps” of our lives, after we’ve gotten everything out of life that *we* want. It is *this* truth that we will be focusing on in this year’s missions conference. In the coming weeks, we will be learning about how God wants to make His people into givers, just like His Son Jesus. Folks, this truth is not just for *young people*; it is for *every believer*. You cannot talk about missions without talking about giving—because taking the Gospel to the uttermost part of the earth requires *loving, cheerful sacrifice* on the part of every Christian. Yet, before we talk about our need to give to God and others, there is something that everyone

in this room must first understand. You may have put some money in this offering box this morning. You may have even given something to missions. However, if you have not personally received the precious gift of salvation, all this talk about “giving” means nothing. You cannot even begin to please God until you are saved from your sin, and enter into a personal relationship with God. To be a true *giver*, you must first receive *the Gift* that God has provided for you. That is what we will be talking about in this morning’s message, which is entitled *The Giver of the Unspeakable Gift*.

I. Why life is not a game

No doubt, everyone in this room has heard the expression “the game of life.” In fact, most of us have, at some point or another, probably played the game board called “LIFE.” The creator of this board game, Milton Bradley, chose to call his boardgame “LIFE,” because that is precisely how most people think of life. Most people think of life as though it really *were* some kind of “game.” However, I am here to tell you that life is *not* a game! Before we talk about the matter of giving, we first need to understand what *life itself* is all about, and what it is *not* about; and to that end, I would give you three biblical reasons why life is *not* a game.

First of all, life is not a game because **a game has no real purpose**; but *your life* has a profound purpose!

Read Matthew 10:29-31.

My friend, God gave you your life for a *reason*. To God, your life is extremely valuable; and the reason it is valuable is that you are *His* creation. God created you for *His* own purpose, to accomplish *His* will through you. A game, on the other hand, has no real purpose. When you’re done playing a game, you have a collection of toy money, toy houses, and toy cars; but then....you’re done. And what good did your toy money do you? None. What a contrast to our *lives*, which have *profound* purpose! God has a *reason* for giving you your life. God gave you your life because He wants to use your life to serve Him!

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

It is important to remember that Paul wrote these words to Christians in the church of Corinth; and the city of Corinth was notorious for its immorality. The temple to the goddess Aphrodite was Corinth’s main attraction; and the worship in that temple was dedicated to prostitution. The pagan expression “*Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats*” summed up how most Corinthians lived their lives—namely, for sexual pleasure. Yet, in the midst of this darkness, God raised up a people unto Himself, to live for righteousness! These Corinthian believers had once been separated from God, and under His wrath. They had once lived in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness, covetousness, and idol worship, just like all their neighbours. But then, they heard the Gospel, and responded to it in faith; and they were saved from their sin, and made into new creations. Now that they were saved, they knew that God had a *purpose* for their lives: and that purpose was *not* to see how many lovers they could “score”! Their purpose was now to glorify God in their body and spirit, which belonged to God. The Corinthian believer knew that life is *not* a game. Nonetheless, Paul wrote this exhortation to them to *remind* them of this purpose, lest they forget.

Now, there is another reason why life is not a game. You see, in a game, **things supposedly happen by chance**; however, in your life, things do *not* really happen by “chance” (at least, not in the sense that the *world* means it), because *God* is in control of everything.

Now, stop and think about the nature of a game. In a game, you may roll a pair of dice, or spin a spinner; and the way the numbers fall largely decides what will happen to you in the game. We call this “chance.” Yet, what does this word “chance” mean? Is it a biblical word? Well, the word “chance” is used in the Bible, in **Ecclesiastes 9:11**. In this verse, Solomon says, **“I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”** That word “chance” is translated from the word *pega*, which means “chance,” in the sense of an “occurrence”—something which has unexpectedly occurred, befallen, or struck you. Yet, *who caused* that unexpected thing to happen? If there be no God, then “chance” is random and meaningless. (This is how the *world* uses the word “chance.”) However, if there be a sovereign, all-present, all-wise, all-powerful God, then what we call “chance” is not random or meaningless at all. *Nothing* happens that God does not allow. Even when someone rolls a pair of dice in a boardgame, the outcome isn’t really “chance” (in the sense that the *world* means it) because the number that is rolled happened by *divine permission*. God has a purpose even in the smallest details of our lives, such as how the numbers fall when a die is rolled! **Proverbs 16:33** says, **“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.”**

Now, lest you doubt that *God* would be concerned about something as minute as the roll of dice in a board game, think back to what Jesus said in **Matthew 10**. Remember what we read about the sparrow? Christ said that God knows when even a tiny sparrow dies and falls to the ground! In fact, no sparrow can fall to the ground unless He allows it. Anything that happens, God *allows* it to happen for a reason; and He uses even *bad* things in Christians’ lives for good. He is able to do this because He is God! God is all-powerful and sovereign. He makes no mistakes! **Romans 8:28** says, **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”**

Now, what is the third reason why life is not a game? Well, in a game, *good* things supposedly happen because of “good luck”; **however, in life, good things don’t happen by “luck.”** We make *choices*. In life, you have a *choice* of which road you will take. There is no such thing as “luck.” First and foremost, *God* in control; and secondly, *you* have a definite say in which way you will go in life. You make *choices*; and God allows you to make them.

Read Matthew 7:13-14.

Every day, you and I have choices to make. Some of the choices you make are small, and relatively unimportant; and some choices are very important and serious. However, there is one choice you must make that will determine everything else that will happen in your life! In fact, this choice will determine where you will go *after* your life on earth is over. I’m talking about the choice of whether or not to receive a *gift* that has been offered to you. The Bible calls this gift “the unspeakable gift.”

Read 2 Corinthians 9:15.

What is the context of this verse? Well, in **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**, Paul was encouraging the members of the church of Corinth to give an offering for their brothers in Christ who lived in Judaea. Their Jewish brothers back in Judaea had taken the Gospel to the Gentiles years before; and now that they were going through hard times on account of famine and persecution, Paul was reminding the Gentile Christians that they owed a great debt of gratitude to their Jewish brothers. He urged them to give to their brethren in Judaea for a number of reasons; but the greatest reason of all is stated right here in **verse 15**. Paul reminded them of the greatest gift

of all—the *“unspeakable gift.”* He didn’t even need to explain what that gift is, because they all knew. The *“unspeakable gift”* is the gift of **salvation from sin**—the gift that Jesus Christ purchased for us on the cross. Because Christ had given these believers the unspeakable gift of salvation, the least they could do was to give of their substance to help their brothers in the Lord. Paul did not *compel* them to sacrifice to give to their brethren: it was a choice which they could choose to make, out of love for Christ. (And they did!) You see, when you have the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ, and salvation, it makes all the difference in the way you live your life! Your life is now about doing good works to glorify God!

Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

You and I have a choice as to whether to receive that unspeakable gift, or not. You and I must choose what we will do with *Christ*. If you have not received that gift, I urge you to do so! **John 1:12** says, *“But as many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”*

II. Why we all need the “unspeakable Gift”

A few moments ago, we saw that the *“unspeakable gift”* is the gift of salvation from sin, death, and hell. We will talk more about this “unspeakable gift” shortly. Before we do, though, we must understand *why* we need the gift of salvation. Let’s “rewind the tape,” and go back to the beginning of our lives. Think of when we come into this world, as newborn babies. When we look at a baby, what do we see? We see a cute, adorable little child, right? However, what we often fail to understand is that that cute little child is a *sinner*, who needs to be saved. **Psalm 58:3** says, *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”* **Psalm 51:5** says, *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* Folks, think about that! God says that we are *born in sin*, speaking lies from the time we come out of the womb. That explains a lot of things, doesn’t it? It explains why we see tiny tots (who are barely able to walk), pushing, shoving, and snatching things from other children, and even screaming at their own parents, and shoving them! Why do little children behave this way? Did they have to be *taught* to act this way? No! They behave that way because they have wicked, sinful, selfish little hearts!

It seems that nearly every day, we hear people blaming God for the terrible things that happen in the world. A lot of people question that there even is a God. They say, “If there really is a God, and if He really is all-loving and all-powerful, then why would He let these terrible wars and atrocities happen?” But you know what? The problem isn’t with God. The problem is with *us*. The Bible says that we all have a problem *with our hearts*. Our hearts are so deceitful, that we don’t even know how bad we really are. We can fool ourselves into thinking that we’re pretty good, when, in reality, our hearts are full of wickedness! **Jeremiah 17:9** says, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*

Read Psalm 58:1-5.

Read Mark 7:17-23.

This is a pretty bleak picture, isn’t it? God says that we all come out of our mothers’ wombs telling lies; and Christ said that out of our hearts proceed all manner of wickedness. ? Our hearts are like sewers that are backed up and overflowing with vileness. In God’s sight, *that* is what our hearts look like! This explains why people do such horrible things. Whenever you read about people robbing stores, breaking into people’s homes, killing people, or committing

other heinous crimes, just remember that it all started back there, with the infants who were fighting over those toys! A little baby who snatches a toy today will snatch a lot *bigger* things from people when he gets older (unless proper restraints are put upon him)! We all come into this world loving “me,” and doing what pleases “me.” **Isaiah 53:6** says, “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*”

Why are we like this? Why are we so selfish? It’s because of sin. The Bible says that we got our wicked, selfish, sinful nature from our first parents, Adam and Eve. Now, *God* didn’t create Adam and Eve with sinful hearts. He created them holy and sinless. He gave them an absolutely perfect world to live in, where there was no death. However, God didn’t create them as robots. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was the only thing God commanded them *not* to do. It was God’s way of testing them. He wanted Adam and Eve to love Him and serve Him because they *chose* to love and serve Him, and not because they were robots, with no choice.

Read Genesis 2:15-17 / 3:1-19.

Adam and Eve had a choice; but they chose to disobey. Through the mouth of a serpent, Lucifer told Adam and Eve the biggest lie that was ever concocted. He said that if they would eat the forbidden fruit, they would *not* die, but would become as gods! Tragically, Adam and Eve listened to this lie; and from that time onward, their hearts were filled with sin. God promised Adam and Eve that He would one day send a Saviour into the world to take away their sin; but in the meantime, they had to leave the Garden of Eden.

However, being kicked out of the Garden of Eden wasn’t the worst part of it. Dying physically was *part* of the curse; but the worst part was that Adam and Eve were separated from God. Inside, their spirits “died” to God. Tragically, every single one of us has gotten a sinful heart from them. **Romans 5:12** says, “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” **Romans 6:23** says, “*For the wages of sin is death.*” Each of us was born a sinner, and already separated from God; and the Bible says that because of our sin, we are automatically on a path that ends in the Lake of Fire, for all eternity.

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

III. How to receive the unspeakable Gift

There is an “*unspeakable gift*” that is available to every one of us: and that unspeakable Gift is Christ Himself, and salvation. To have Christ *is* to have salvation, because Jesus *is* salvation! (That’s what the name “Jesus” means—“salvation”!) However, you *must want* Jesus. You must *ask* Him to save you from all your sins, and to come into your life, and to be your new Master. What if you choose *not* to receive the unspeakable Gift? Then you will continue on your way to the Lake of Fire. You don’t have to “do” anything extraordinarily bad to end up in hell, because we were all going down this path from the time we were born!

Folks, this is scary stuff! There was a time, years ago, when I realised that I was on my way to that terrible place; and it scared me to death! However, I found out some *really* good news: I didn’t *have* to stay on the path that leads to destruction! Even though we are sinners, and even though we *deserve* to end up in hell, we can get off the path that leads to everlasting destruction, and get onto the path leads to everlasting life. How can you get onto this path? Simple. You get onto this path by *receiving a gift* from God. The gift that He wants to give

you is forgiveness of your sins. He can take your sin away, so that He won't have to punish you for your sin by sending you to hell after you die.

However, you've got to realise something about this Gift: this Gift cost God a terrible price! God Himself had to *purchase* this gift for you; and the way He purchased it for you was with His own blood. Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, came to earth and became a Man, by being conceived in the womb of a virgin. He did not have a human father: His birth was a miracle! This was prophesied by Isaiah 700 years before Christ was born. **Isaiah 7:14** says, ***“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*** (And “Immanuel” means “God with us”!) Jesus is completely God and completely Man; and He is the only sinless Man who ever lived.

Now, Jesus did many wonderful things when He was on earth. He healed the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the lame, and the lepers, and He even raised people from the dead. However, these are not the most important reasons why Jesus came. Jesus came to earth **to die for our sins**. Wicked men nailed Him to the cross; but it wasn't really they who took His life from Him. Jesus willingly laid down His *own* life. Jesus gave *His* life to pay for our sins. It was a *free gift!* It wasn't free to *Him*; but it is free to *us!*

Read John 6:47-51 / 10:14-18.

While Jesus was on the cross, your sins, my sins, and the sins of every man and woman who will ever be born, was placed on Jesus, as though He had done all those terrible things! A little while ago, I quoted **Isaiah 53:6**, which says, ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”***; however, I didn't quote the rest of the verse. The second half of the verse says, ***“And the LORD hath laid on him (on Christ) the iniquity of us all.”*** That is the best news you and I could ever hear! Jesus took all our wicked sin, which has merited us hell, and paid for it in full. **First Peter 2:24** says that Christ Himself ***“bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”***

For the six hours that Jesus hung on the cross, He was separated from God the Father. The Father couldn't look on His Son, because all our sin was upon Him. Jesus took our sin on Himself, and died in our place, so that we, in exchange, could be declared “righteous,” and be reconciled to God! By dying for our sins, and rising again from the grave, thus conquering death for us, Jesus did everything that was needed for us to have our sins forgiven!

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

God the Father bought the gift of forgiveness of sins for us; and He paid for it with the blood of His Son, Jesus. **But...you** must receive this gift. *How* do you receive it? Do you receive it by trying to do good things to earn it—such as going to church, being baptised, keeping your nose clean, or giving to charity? No! We cannot buy this gift by trying to do good things. If you could buy it, it wouldn't be a gift. If you are trying to earn your salvation by being a “good person,” you are actually insulting God. You are telling Him that what His Son did on the cross is not good enough. Salvation is the ***“gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”*** **Romans 6:23** says that ***“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** You must *receive* that gift, by simply **repenting of your sin, and believing on Jesus**. First, you must repent. What does it mean to repent? Does that mean “try to reform your life”? No! You cannot earn your salvation by any effort of your own. Repentance doesn't mean “turning your life around, or doing a good work, so that you

can earn salvation.” Repentance simply means that you have a change of heart, mind, and will. You decide that you want to turn to Christ, and give Him the throne of your life—which also means that you are deciding to turn your back on sin and self.

Read Luke 15:10-24.

In this parable, the father is a picture of God the Father; and the young man is a picture of each one of us! We are *all* sinners who have strayed from God. Now, when the son returned to his father, did he have anything to offer his father to “make amends?” No! He had wasted everything. He had *nothing* to offer his father in order to buy his favour. He simply *repented*. He *turned* from his life of sin and self, and went back to His Father, and asked for mercy.

So it is with salvation. You must *turn* in your heart, mind, and will from your sin and self, and turn to Jesus. And when you truly repent (turn) to Jesus, there is something else you are doing: you are *believing* on Jesus Christ. This means that you believe, in your heart, that Jesus already did everything you need to be saved; and you put your complete *trust and confidence* in Him, and Him alone. Not in Mary. Not in any “saint.” Not in Christ *plus* your own good works. Just Jesus Christ! **Romans 10:9-10** says, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” If you will admit to God that you are a sinner, believe that Jesus died and rose again for you, and ask Him to save you, He will forgive you of all your sins, and give you eternal life.

The “unspeakable gift” is the gift of salvation—the gift of forgiveness of sins, and eternal life with God. But it’s even more than that. The “unspeakable gift” is **Christ Himself**. Jesus *is* the Unspeakable Gift! God the Father gave us the unspeakable Gift of His Son Jesus, so that He could die for our sins and make it possible for our sins to be forgiven. The question is, “**Have you received this unspeakable gift?**” Have you had *your* sins forgiven? Salvation doesn’t “just happen” to you. You must *choose* to admit that you are a helpless sinner, that you can’t save yourself, and that Jesus bought the gift of salvation for you by dying on the cross. You must come to the cross and *ask* Him for his gift of salvation. This is what the Bible calls the Gospel—the “good news.”

However, there is even more good news! First of all, once you are on the path of eternal life, you can’t ever get back onto the path that leads to destruction. You are saved forever! The Bible says that you can’t ever lose your salvation. (That’s why it’s called “*eternal* life.” It will never end!) However, there’s even more. After you are saved, there are many special things that God now wants you to do with your life. He wants to transform you from the inside out; and one of the many transformations that He wants to do is to *make you into a giver!*

Think about the way that God gave to us. He gave us the most precious gift He could possibly give. He allowed His own precious Son to die; and Jesus willingly gave up His life. He didn’t have to do that for us. We didn’t deserve it at all. Yet, He did it because He loves us! Well, that’s the way that God wants *you and me* to give. He wants to teach you to be loving and giving, just as He is; and He wants you to give *not* because you want others to do something nice for you in return, but simply because you love God, and love others!

Conclusion: The only way you can have real happiness in life is to receive the Unspeakable Gift of Jesus Christ. Have *you* received this gift? If not, please don’t put it off! Enter into the Ark of Jesus Christ, while the door is still open! If you *do* know Christ as Saviour, I would ask you this: Are you allowing the

Lord to make you into a giver, as He is? Or are you giving Him your “spare time” and “spare change”? He gave you the best gift that He could possibly give. What will you give for Him? Of course, we cannot possibly repay the Lord for His gift of salvation, because our salvation is a free gift. However, we *should* desire to give to Him out of pure love and gratitude. Christian, let Christ have *all* your heart!

ⁱ Dr. David Cloud, “Hymns of Surrender - Give of Your Best, Draw Me Nearer, I Surrender All, Who Is on the Lord’s Side,” Way of Life Literature, 15 March 2023, https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/hymns_of_surrender.php.

ⁱⁱ Robert Cottrill, “Give of Your Best to the Master,” Wordwise Hymns, 6 January 2014, <https://wordwisehymns.com/2014/01/06/give-of-your-best-to-the-master/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dr. David Cloud, “Hymns of Surrender - Give of Your Best, Draw Me Nearer, I Surrender All, Who Is on the Lord’s Side.”

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v Robert Cottrill, “Give of Your Best to the Master.”