

'GOOD & PERFECT GIFTS'
(The Great Gift Exchange Between God and Mankind)
James 1:16-18

Gifts that Grow

All gifts need care and maintenance if you want them to work well and give you a long time of enjoyment and pleasure. But gifts that are alive require even more tender, loving care or they will quickly begin to weaken and die. People are often very short-sighted in giving gifts like pets and plants. They seem so amazing when you get them but require maturity, responsibility, and dedication in keeping them healthy enough to grow up and yield even more life (future puppies, kitties, fish or birds; future blossoms, flowers, and fruit). Other gifts are fun for a while, but in the end fail to be better or produce any more of itself. But living gifts are always changing, developing, and reproducing themselves if they are carefully nurtured and maintained.

God's spiritual gifts are good and perfect, but to stay that way and become better over time, they need responsible, mature Christian disciples to faithfully look after them every day, year after year, as long as either the present or the person it belongs to lives. God's Gift of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ is an awesome Gift that works miraculously in this life as well as the next...if the possessor of It (Him) takes care of it according to the Bible (*The Operator's Manual*) and properly assists the indwelling Holy Spirit by faithfully maintaining it daily (daily devotions in the Bible (**Proverbs 8:33-36**), constant prayer to God through Christ (**1 Timothy 2:5**), faithful membership in a particular local church for instruction, ministry, and fellowship (**Hebrews 10:24-25**), a lifestyle of separation from worldly influences (**1 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**) and sharing your story of how you came to faith in Christ with others (**1 Peter 3:15**).

These few disciplines will spiritually water and Son-light your new life in Christ like the rain and sunshine keep living things vibrant and healthy. As you faithfully do these things, your new life in Christ will blossom and flourish with spiritual fruit –

*“...**giving all diligence, add to your faith** virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. For **if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For **he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.** Therefore, brethren, **be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble**; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* **(2 Peter 1:5-11)**

God's satisfaction-guaranteed-promise for your eternal life can also be an *abundant life* (**John 10:10**), contingent upon you doing your part to take care of the awesome Gift He has given you.

Maybe you have the experience of getting something new and it didn't work like you expected. It probably made you frustrated, even angry. Perhaps you even felt like returning it or wanted to call wherever you bought it to complain. Sometimes you may be told to make sure it is plugged in or some other simple oversight. Sometimes it is embarrassing to have to admit the trouble isn't with the appliance, but with our failure to do some simple thing the instructions and Operator's Manual told us about.

With pets or plants it is more serious. If it starts to wither or weaken, we feel like blaming whoever we got it from only to remember that it is OUR job to care for and feed that living thing in order for it to be healthy and for us to be happy with it. Christians who don't think the Christian life works for them often tend to feel something is wrong on God's part, but the truth is always that we have not been faithful on our part with the basics of a successful Christian life mentioned above.

Some in the early Church Era felt that the gifts of God weren't working for them and the writer of the Book of *Hebrews* told them, that if their relationship with God wasn't working well, the fault is always 'us' not Him:

"...we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation..." (Hebrews 2:1-3)

To finish this year right and insure that the coming New Year will go really well and keep getting better. **Be sure that you are resolved to take better care of that awesome Gift of God in Christ your salvation is** – if you do, it will truly be a **HAPPY NEW YEAR**, in that holy new life God has given you in Christ (*Jude 20-25*). PtL

'Good & Perfect Gift Preservation'

(Progressive Perfection of God's Gift through Christian Service)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

James 1:17-18

New Birth ("brought forth by the Word of truth")

"...having been born again ... through the Word of God which lives and abides forever..."

1 Peter 1:23

New Fruit ("we might be a kind of first-fruits")

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."
(Jesus)

John 15:8

New Creation ("first-fruits of His creatures")

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God...For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pains until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body..."

Romans 8:19-25