

Great Gifts We Need

In the name of Jesus, God’s greatest Gift of all to all, dear loved ones of God:

This was not the first week and sadly it will not be the last when Americans are shocked by tragedies involving children. As dreadful as the news was to hear about the physical and emotional trauma, there are spiritual aspects to these stories with far deadlier consequences.

People keep asking, “How can anyone do such a thing?” – as if they themselves are incapable. Some of the inmates in our Lino Lakes Bible study are starting to open up. Many of them realized too late what they were capable of doing. But it was not too late for God to have mercy on them. They see His stern discipline as a gift, the blessing they needed to see their need for God’s **Great Gifts**.

The Holy Spirit gives us some spiritual insight here today: *“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* He’s picturing a deep valley between us and God, the Grand Canyon of our sins where the flames burn hot for all eternity. Some folks ignore the warnings as if they can run around on this side away from God and never face His judgment. Others just fall into despair. Some try to reach God on their own. They invent huge Harley’s, ecclesiastical motorcycles, chromed with human works and merits. In their Sunday best, revving engines, “Let’s see what this baby will do!”

“But you’ll fall short!” you warn. “All your extra work cannot get you to God.”

They just flip their pretty hair and reply: “But I sure look good, don’t I?”

But that’s the other part that troubles me about this week’s tragedy. The Holy Spirit’s original Greek word for *falling short* also means *to be too late*. Why would parents insist on letting their children grow up and make their own decision? As if any of us sin-dead souls can decide for God! As if any of us know we have another day or hour to live! Why deprive children and teens of **Great Gifts We Need**?

This morning I was going to put up some pictures of kids who fall into the one-in-every-eight hundred crowd. Do a Google search on “cleft palate,” and you’ll see what I mean. Heartbreaking pictures. If American kids are born with a cleft palate, we take care of it here. Some of our own members have traveled with medical staff to other countries to help give surgeries to poor kids. We do what we can.

Such physical deformities are obvious, but spiritual deformities are invisible to human eyes. We need the Great Physician of our souls to show us the problem. Then He goes to work on our little ones too, washing away their sins in His Word-powered water. He sanctifies their souls with His Word in Sunday School. Every time we honor God’s name or talk about His Word at home the dear Holy Spirit is bringing again God’s gifts of joy, love, hope, light, life and peace from our newborn King, the Word of God made flesh. He came to lay His own body across that wretched valley of our sins. He sends His Holy Spirit to show us the way across. He wants our children to share His love.

We all sin. We all fall short. But God also says we are *“all justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”* He shed His own blood to redeem us for God.

This Christmas remember the Giver of all **Great Gifts**. It’s easy to find more joy in your salvation than in your Savior. To worship and serve created things rather than the Creator. Our children are about to tell again the great message of what God has done for kids of all ages. At Jesus’ birthday He gives the greatest gifts, **Great Gifts We Need**. Hold this Baby close to your heart. Let Him take you home to the heart of God. Amen.