

# T R A N S I T I O N S

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## GRIEF'S GIFTS

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

James 1:17

When we think of gifts, more often we think of something we want and welcome. A new book, a shiny toy, a tie or the gift of company with loved ones. Seldom, if ever, is grief considered a gift. However, hidden in and beyond its obvious sorrow is benefit to be revealed once grief's shadow passes—which, it will. In the Bible, the Book of James tells us something of perfect gifts and that they are from above, from God. Grief is in God's realm. Grief offers something not readily seen when one is living in a season of grief but it is there. In truth, grief bears several gifts—if we opt to receive them.

One gift is the compassion of Christ that often deepens in us in a time of personal loss. To encounter a serious sever is to be especially sensitive to others who encounter loss. Another gift is to realize the degree of God's faithfulness. It can become clearer when we grieve. Without the absence of our measure of faith, we would not be able to see the immeasurable faith of God, and His hand that upholds us—regardless of how life hurts and how we feel. Another treasure comes from Jesus Himself. What Jesus did on Calvary for you and for me cost Him dearly. When we grieve a penetrating loss, we get a little closer to comprehending the suffering Jesus endured and His grief due to separation from the Father. We feel more keenly the love that brought Him to the Calvary, and kept Him there. Ease and life's lightness do not—cannot—produce awareness of such gifts, and concurrently shape more of Christ's character in us. Grief can.

Christmas is a time of wonder, delight, and celebration. The arrival of Jesus into the world is worthy of our celebration. For those who grieve, celebration can seem far off and perhaps reserved for Christmas seasons to come. God understands. Others will try to understand. Those who have ever suffered loss, already do. It is worthwhile for those who grieve, and onlookers, to remember that the daily presence of the Babe of Bethlehem is here. This Son of God grants joyous blessings but He came primarily to endure with us and for us the pains of this life, and to shield us from pain in the life to come.

May this Christmas be a reminder that the Lord of yesterday and its memories, and the Lord of tomorrow and its hope, is with you and with me. However Christmas is celebrated, Christ Himself is celebrated with and for the attention He gives to people. This is attention He awakes in us through grief's gifts. We are wise to receive them and carry them with us throughout all the days of our lives.

*Lord Jesus, You came to the world to meet people in need, and to rejoice with them in blessings. At Christmas and throughout the year, we remain blessed, grateful, and humble by Your steady and powerful presence in our lives. Lord Jesus, for those who are living this Christmas season with the ache of loss and emotional pains, we ask that Your touch be especially penetrating to them. Please comfort those who grieve, equip those who encourage those who hurt. Make and keep us Thy hands and feet to one another. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for hearing our prayers. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for directly our steps to be Your meaningful answers. In Thee, Lord Jesus, Amen.*