

GENESIS 2:4–9, 15–17

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GOD'S GIFT OF WORSHIP

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. 5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. 8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

The Creation had gone on for six days. Moses uses the simple expression, “evening and morning,” to describe the passing of each day, and this helps us to understand that these were days in the sense of 24-hour days, the days Moses’ readers would have been experiencing as they camped around the mountain of God during the Exodus. In the account so far, there had been morning six times, and evening had fallen five times, and so, as the second chapter of Genesis begins, Moses places us into the context of the Sixth Day.

The day before, God had produced the swimming creatures of the waters and the creatures that are able to fly. Here on the Sixth Day, God was filling out his creation with the three classic categories of land animals used throughout the books of Moses: Domestic animals, wild animals, and crawling creatures. Exactly which animals fell into each category is supplied by other passages, especially in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, but common sense will tell you most of it.

After the creation of the animals, God had one last creature to make. He saved Adam and Eve for last. Now, in our text, Eve isn’t formed yet, but before we even talk about the formation of Adam, let’s answer a question that comes up with almost everyone who reads Genesis 2. What does Moses mean when he says, “No shrub or plant had yet sprung up.” Well, Moses answers this in the last words of the same verse when he says: **“There was no one to work the ground.”** We know that God caused plants and other growing things to emerge already on the Third Day of creation, when he formed the dry land, but we understand that certain field-shrubs or field-plants—we would call them ‘crops’—had come up, because they require humans to tend them and care for them, and since there were no people yet, those crops were not yet growing. They would come soon enough.

But the focus here isn't on any of the animals, nor on the agriculture or horticulture of the world before the Flood. No, our focus is on the creation of man. And this is what Moses describes next.

As God formed man, he gave him seven things that Moses describes here in chapter 2. He already told us that he gave man "the image of God" in chapter one, the image that meant God's holiness and sinlessness, the image which man lost in the fall. But here in chapter 2, Moses outlines at least seven other gifts besides the image of God, all of which man did not lose, which we still have today, and all of which we believe we will retain even in heaven after the resurrection.

The first gift is **a form**. God formed Adam out of the soil of the earth, and this shows us that God cared about our shape, our form. He labored over us in a way that he did not do with anything else in the creation. Those who mutilate their bodies or who choose to change their genders violate this form and sin against God's creation.

The second gift God gave is **life**. Just as God gave life to the plants and animals, he also gave life to mankind. But whereas God placed other things under man's domain, including the animals and plants, which man may use for food and other purposes, God has placed a restriction on how we treat one another under the **Fifth Commandment**, and those who hurt or harm one another, and certainly those who murder one another, whether a healthy neighbor, an elderly person unable to defend themselves, or a baby still forming in its mother's womb, to take a human life apart from a just war, self-defense or capital punishment, is murder, and a sin against God and his creation.

The third gift is **a soul**. The soul is immortal. While the mind is able to reason and learn and remember, the soul is the essential part of man's nature; the soul is the essence of our being. An excellent example of a soul unencumbered by a body is the appearance of angels all through the Bible. God sometimes permits angels to be seen, and the angels have personality, intelligence, strength, courage, memory, a sense of humor, the ability to sing, and most important of all, faith. The human soul likewise has all of these characteristics.

The fourth gift is **a home**. Just as God gave our world a home in the solar system, he gave man a particular home in the Garden of Eden. For many of us, this place, Adam's first home, is the most memorable way that the Bible depicts man's eternal home in heaven, except that we know that heaven will surpass Eden in its beauty and perfection. We sin against God and his gift when we unnecessarily damage our world and waste its resources.

The fifth gift is **food**. To Adam, God gave the fruit of every fruit-bearing, seed-bearing and nut-bearing tree in the Garden of Eden except one. Later, he expanded that to every green plant, and to the clean animals. Still later, he removed all restrictions in a vision given to the Apostle Peter,

and we sin against God and this gift when anyone makes unnecessary restrictions or forbids anyone to eat certain foods or even to eat at certain times.

The sixth gift is **work**. Adam was given a place—perhaps unique in the world—where he would, at least for a short time, be able to see and inspect every creature on land and in the air, since God commanded him to name them all. His work was also to care for the Garden, and to Work it. We sin against God and against this gift when we lazily shy away from whatever work God has given us to do.

Each of these gifts that God gave to Adam continue to be gifts God gives us all, even after the fall into sin. And although I mentioned ways that we break God's will and sin against even these gifts, there are many other sins we commit besides. That's where God's seventh gift comes in. God also gave to Adam **the gift of Worship**.

The Worship God gave Adam was a single command for him to obey: Not to eat the fruit of the one tree. Now, in our text, Adam has not yet fallen into sin. He had the opportunity to worship God with a simple act of obedience which showed his knowledge of God, his faith in God, his complete devotion to God, and his trust in God's promises, to continue to supply him with each of these gifts, and especially food since it was the only one of the gifts that needed to be renewed.

Our worship of God also focuses on God's gifts, but the only reason that they need to be renewed is because of our fallen sinful condition. **We must have the gospel**, because without it we would be lost in our sins. We must have **baptism**, because without it we would not be certain if his promises applied to us as individuals or not. We must have the **Lord's Supper**, because without it we would not know that the forgiveness of our sins truly applies to us. We must have **the confession of sins and absolution**, we must have **prayers**, we must **confess our faith** together to be reminded of what the Bible teaches us, we must have the **gathering** of the church around us—without these things, we would despair. We would first begin to wonder whether God had abandoned us, and this would lead to doubt that God ever loved us, doubt that God even exists, and downward into a spiral of doubt and despair that would lead only to death.

Before ever Adam was tempted or fell, God supplied everything that we need, not only physically, but Spiritually. God gave us **a form, life, our soul, a home, food, work**, and also **a way to worship**. All of the forms of worship we know and enjoy today are simply a response to our forgiveness through Christ. Through Jesus, we continue to have a way to worship here on earth, and we will keep on having a way to worship in heaven as well. God's many gifts have come to us through many means, but the gift of worship, the desire to worship, and the goal of worship, remain the same: To give glory to God, and to remember that we have a place with him through the blood of Jesus, forevermore. Amen.