



# Glyfada Christian Center



01/06/2025

**Preacher** Anton Beukes, Eleni Atmatzidou

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**Series** God's gifts

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**Service** Sunday Service

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**Passages** ;

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## Gifted – Suffering with Joy

### Pastor Gail – Greeting

1. Good morning. What a joy to be in the Lord's house today. Of course, it's just a building. But when we gather together, we bring His presence and it becomes a place of praise and worship and honor to the One, who has the name above every other name, amen.

2. Would you stand with me, and let's begin by offering a praise to the Lord, all together. I learned something from Anton yesterday, he said, 'You have to say speak it.' I didn't know that. That must be an American thing, so, I'm going to say, 'Let's speak a praise all together, so, let's speak our praise to the Lord,' amen.

3. Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you together, with our voices lifted up to You. You's is the name above every other name. We honor You; we praise You; we glorify You. This is Your day, and we're gathered in You're name oh God, to give You praise and honor and glory and worship. Hallelujah. Hear our praises oh Lord.

4. We love You oh Lord. Amen, amen, amen. There should be a Bible near you. And we like to encourage people to read from a paper Bible. People get lost on their phones. And so, we want you to know places in the Bible.

5. We're going to read from 2 Corinthians 4:6-10, if you sit down, it's OK, but if you'd like to stand it's up to you. Starting with verse 6. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." We thank You for the Light and the Life that you are, Jesus, amen.

6. Did you know when you woke up this morning, that the sun was going to come up? Did you know that? Did you worry that the sun might not come up? Isn't it wonderful to have a God, that His promises are true, yes and amen. He told us the sun was going to come up, and the sun came up. Amen. So, whatever happened yesterday, it remains in yesterday. It's a new day. Thank You God. Faithful God.

7. I always like to share this story, Brian and I know the man who wrote this song. His marriage was falling apart, but he came to the Lord, early in the morning, before the sun came up, and God just poured this into him. And his marriage was restored. He's a faithful God. Amen.

8. What a beautiful name, amen, Jesus. You may be seated. We have a special treat today. Trudy is going to come and share. She'll tell you where she lives, and she's a member of this church and she going to share about that.

### **Trudy – Testimony**

1. Good morning, everybody. It's wonderful to be here, you have no idea, how much we miss church. And not just me but the whole family. You've greetings from Elizabeth, Kosta, Elena and Michaela. And Elena says, 'Giagia, (Granny), when are we going to go back to Glyfada so that we can just go to church.'

2. I've thoroughly enjoyed the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and I've seen it work so many times in my life. I love it when the Holy Spirit does things to me and catches me off guard. And in one of these cases, 'How many of you have kids here under 10 years old?' Make sure you listen to your children, and watch them.

3. When I was 9 years old, and you know, I've always had a very, very close relationship with God, even when I was 9 years old. And we lived on the opposite side of the beach, I grew up in the Bahamas by the way, and you know, when I was growing up it was very safe. So, during the summer months, all the kids would go to the beach. Including me. I was known as a little fish. But this one day when I went to the beach, there was a lady there with her little child. The baby was probably about 8 months old, and Trudy being Trudy, I went directly for the child.

4. And I say, 'Can I sit down and play with her?' And the lady says, 'Yes, of course. I would love it.' And I sat there and played with the baby for a while. And she decided to tell me her whole life story, to a 9-year-old. And I just listened.

5. Apparently, she was in the Bahamas on a one-month holiday, and she stayed in an apartment, that was two blocks away from where we lived, over the hill. She was robbed of all of her money, her papers, everything. And I felt bad for her and I said, 'I'm really sorry this happened to you.' But as a typical 9-year-old, I didn't understand the seriousness of this.

6. The next morning though, I woke up, and this is very typical of me, I just get up and go to the beach normally, but I opened up my piggy bank and I took all my money out of it. It was something like 12 dollars and 15 cents, which by the way, it was a lot of money then, hey. I took this money and I just walked about a mile and a half, to the supermarket. As I walked into the supermarket, I tried to think, 'What does a baby need.'

7. I bought a gallon of milk, I bought cloth pampers, I bought some Mother Gerber food, and then I said, 'Oh what about the mother?' So, I bought peanut butter, because I liked it, I bought bread, sugar and coffee, because all grown ups drink coffee. I went to the cash register to pay. I was about 2 dollars short. So, I told the woman, I'm going to have to put something back.

8. And she says, 'Who are you buying all this stuff for?' And I replied, 'For a lady who lost all of her money.' Now, this whole memory is very, very vivid in my mind. And she says, 'OK, I'll put in the difference.' So, I took my brown bag, because we had brown paper bags, walked back. And then, the street was called, 'Nassau street,' and there were homes up the street and down the street, I had no clue where this woman lived.

9. I didn't know her name, but I was on a mission, and as I'm walking, there was a lady on the side of the street, a huge woman, and she says in a Bahamian style, 'Lyogo, what are you doing here?' I said, 'I'm looking for a lady.' 'What kind of lady,' 'One with a baby.' She says, 'Listen here, there's plenty of ladies with babies here.' I say, 'Ok, but she's a foreigner, and she lost all of her money.' So, she goes, 'Hmmm.' So, I said, 'Do you know her?' And she said, 'Let me tell you something, does your mummy know you are here?' 'Eh, no.' She said, 'You need a good smacking, I'm going to put you on my lap.' I said, 'You can do that afterwards. Let me just take the food to the baby.' She said, 'You're lucky, hey, you're lucky.' Because right behind her, the woman was the apartment where the woman was living on the first floor.

10. Now, I'm going to try and say this without crying, but this is how the Holy Spirit works even in children. When I walked up to the apartment and I knocked on the door, and she says, 'Oh, oh, little Trudy,' she remembered my name good. I said, 'I just bought you a few things.' This woman burst out crying. She says, 'You know the Lord sent you.' I says, 'I bought a gallon of milk, that you can use for your coffee and you can feed the baby.' And the baby by the way was screaming. She says, 'I'm going to show you something,' and she opened the fridge, and the only thing that was in there was a bottle of water.

11. I took all the stuff out of the bag and I said, 'This was all I was able to afford to buy.' And she says, 'You really heard from the Lord.' I said, 'I've got to go now, because mummy's going to get really upset with me. But as I left, that lady that was selling things on the side,

was not there. And as you can see this was all God-ordained. And there're have been many, many, many instances in my life, that the Holy Spirit has spoken so directly to me, and made me take steps of faith. But how victorious I came out of it afterwards. So, make sure that you give the Holy Spirit a chance. And listen to your children and watch them.

12. On a very quick note, now I'll finish. Michaela went through a lot of abuse in school, and this one time she was explaining to me in the car what was going on. And I got so angry. I said, 'I just want to come there and smack these kids.' And she says, 'Giagia, that's not the way Jesus works. We're supposed to pray for them. They don't know Jesus the way we do.' So, I got smacked by her in face, and she went, 'Ok, yeah. Because you want me to pray for you while we're driving?' 'Yeah.' So, from very young the Lord uses us. Just be available. Thank you.

### **Pastor Gail – Announcements**

1. Trudy is with us today and she will be with us next Sunday. In the name of the Lord, we believe we're going to be planting a baby from this church, that Trudy is leading on the island of Kefalonia.

2. So, praise the Lord we want to dismiss our children, for children's church. And just really quickly, only two announcements for today. And you can look on the WhatsApp group and on the GCC Facebook page, and find more announcements. Or as very quickly as Eric is showing us, next Sunday is Pentecost. We'll have a wonderful service and with that, we're going to have a Pentecost lunch.

3. Somebody asked me, 'What's a Pentecost lunch?' Well as the Holy Spirit came upon people from every tribe and tongue, we will invite you next Sunday, from every tribe and tongue in this room, bring a dish from your culture, and we'll have lunch together. You don't have to tell Leto what you're going to have, it's going to be a surprise for everybody, just as it was on the day of Pentecost. So, plan to be here.

4. And I would like all for all the home care group leaders, if you will stand, very quickly for me. I think Evy already went upstairs, you see them. There's Christina, there's Samantha, Anton, Laura, Brian, Evy and here's Leto and I'm on Wednesday night and there's Henneke. These people lead groups in homes during the week. And Trudy, on the island of Kefalonia.

For the rest of the announcements please watch the video.

### **Anton Beukes – Main Message.**

1. Good morning, everybody. It's good to be back with you this morning. I was blessed to visit my family in South Africa for two weeks, but it is so good to be with my spiritual family this morning. I want to thank you. Many of you have prayed for me this year. Dealing with health issues, not knowing what was wrong. And in the last week since returning from South Africa, I have seen a lot of changes in my health, and I thank the Lord for cardiologists and other doctors, but I thank the Lord for His intervention in my life.

2. I remember, it was about two months ago, Laura prayed for me in the service, for complete health, and restoration. And I don't think I ever shared that with them, but when she prayed, the Lord reminded me of 2 Corinthians 12:10, "For when I am weak, then He is strong." Paul said that when he was weak, the Lord is strong in him. And I thank the Lord for

the prayers for full recovery for my health. But I know that during this time the Lord wanted to teach me to be totally dependent on Him. To realize that He is my strength in my weakness.

3. We believe in a God that He is able to do everything, nothing is impossible for Him. Wonders and miracles have not ceased, and we need to continue to pray for people, for healing, for restoration, to break free from bondage.

4. But I also believe, that sometimes the Lord wants to teach us that we need to know, before He hears our prayers. I believe that the Lord will heal me, but I had to learn something in this time. So, what the Lord has taught me, is that it's easy to pray for healing, but sometimes we need to pray, 'Lord, what is Your will in this person's life now.' And maybe it is not healing at that moment. Maybe it is to endure and to have a witness of the enduring of the situation. And when He teaches us what to pray for, then we will know that He will do something in our lives and in other peoples' lives.

5. I'm very excited about next weekend, not just because we have Sunday Pentecost service, but our whole weekend will be focused on Pentecost. We will have services on Friday and Saturday night, and we will focus on coming together as the early church came together. And we will wait together, and we will have an expectation of the Holy Spirit doing something new in our church next week.

6. We've been talking about being 'gifted' this year. It is not just gifts that we receive from one another, but it is the gifts that the Lord has given us through the Holy Spirit. Last week, pastor Gail asked you, to think about the gifts that the Lord has given you. To write it down. To acknowledge. But also, to pray that the Lord will give you other gifts.

7. What were the gifts that you wrote down to pray for. Anybody that wants to share those with us? More joy. I think that's impossible for pastor Gail, but she was praying for the church. What are you praying for, what are the gifts that you are praying for? Faith, faith to believe for the impossible. What else? Prophecy, we need prophecy in our world today, to bring the Word of the Lord to the people. Prophecy gives us hope. Let's pray for more prophecy.

8. Anyone else? Knowledge, perfect. Boldness. Wisdom. The strength to evangelize. The Lord has so many gifts that He wants to give to us. But I bet you, there is one gift, that you've never prayed for, or don't want to pray for. One gift, that the Lord has given to His church, and most probably for some of you already, that we don't want.

9. If you have your Bibles with you, turn with me to Philippians 1:27-30, and we're just going to read four little verses. "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the Gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have."

10. We read in the Book of Acts, that the Holy Spirit guided Paul and his co-workers to go west and not to go east. And so, they sailed towards Macedonia. And the first city they went

to was Philippi. And you can read the story in Acts 16. That is where Paul and Silas suffered a lot for the Gospel. And now, a few years later, Paul is writing to this church. When we read this letter against some of the other letters, we see that there is a different relationship between Paul and this church, and the relationship that Paul had with the Corinthians, or not had with the Romans.

11. This church was very special to Paul. He loved them dearly. You can that through this letter. He longed to be with them. They had some problems; yes. But he does not rebuke them. He encouraged them to work together. This is one of the few church that supported him financially. And they supported him sacrificially. They sacrificed to give to him.

12. And so, Paul is sitting in prison, writing this letter, and he talks about 'Joy.' He understood what it means to suffer, but he's calling on them to show joy. In the passage before the one we just read, we read a little bit about Paul's struggles. He has been rejected, he has suffered, he has been stoned and on the one hand he wants to be with the Lord, with Christ. That's his desire. But on the other hand, he knows that the Lord has not called him home yet, and that his being alive, is for the benefit of the people, the churches that he has planted, and those who haven't heard the Gospel yet. And so, we hear the struggle of, do I want to die or do I want to live, and he came to the conclusion, that I have to put my desires apart, in order to live for the others.

13. And that's when we come to the first verse that we read. Paul says, 'Whatever happens, whether I live or whether I die, conduct yourselves in the manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.' He's saying to this church, in every situation, whatever you do, whether I'm with you, whether I'm apart from you, whether I'm alive or whether I'm dead, Paul is saying it's not for my benefit, it's not because of me, whatever you do, do it in the manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

14. Why do you lead a good life? Why do you do the good things, or try to do the good things? Why do we try to be friendly and show kindness? Why would we give food to a family that we did not know? It's not about us. It's not for our benefit. It is for the sake of the Gospel of Christ.

15. And so, Paul is calling on us as well, today, to whatever we do, wherever we are, you're in church, when we drink coffee, when we go home, when we're in our bedroom, when we are in the street, wherever we go, whatever we do, to conduct ourselves worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

16. In a sense, we become like a mirror of the Gospel. That when people look at us, they will not see Cecilia, or Henneke, or Elizabeth, or whoever, they see Jesus, and they see the Gospel of Christ in us. Paul says then in verse 27, "Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the Gospel."

17. Paul will know if they conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, whether he comes to visit them, or hear about them, or whether the Spirit revealed that to him. It is not about Paul, it's the congregation, the church, living out their lives for Christ. That he will know, that they will stand firm in one spirit, that they will strive together as one, and that they will be without fear in any way for those who oppose them.

18. And then when we go to the next verse, verse 28, “This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.” So, Paul is saying in verse 27, that people are opposing the believers in Philippi, and it’s important for the church to react in a certain way.

19. Now, I grew up as the youngest child, and I was bullied by my brothers and sisters, not really, but I believed that, and I had to defend myself, and my mind is set on revenge. Even now. When somebody does something to me, I think of revenge. That’s my flesh. You may not think of revenge, you may think about hate, most probably not about love, but definitely things to do because they’ve done it to me.

20. And so, Paul is saying, when people oppose us, we need to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, and that does not include hate, or revenge, but the following three things:

- a. To stand firm in the one spirit.
- b. To stand on the truth. In the spirit, not in the flesh
- c. To strive together as one.

21. The last two weeks we looked at 1 Corinthians 12, that the Lord gives us gifts through His Spirit, to us as individuals, for the benefit of the church. It’s not about me, it’s not about Cielo, it’s about the church. And Paul is saying that we need to strive together as one. If the world opposes us, we need to know that we are not alone, but we are part of His body. And he says, ‘For the faith of the Gospel.’ So, he said earlier, ‘For the benefit of the Gospel,’ and now he’s saying, ‘For the benefit of the faith of the Gospel.’

22. To stand firm, to be united, and without being frightened in any way. The Lord did not give us a spirit of fear. He has given us the spirit of boldness. And He has given us love. And true love drives away all fear. And so, when we are opposed, we can go back to these principles. To stand firm in Him, to know that we are not alone but part of the body and we don’t have a reason to fear, because He is with us, He is in us and His love drives away all the fear.

23. And so, this will be the sign, and there is not agreement among theologians about what ‘this’ refers to in verse 28. Some say that ‘this’ refers to the persecution. And some refer to the action to the opposition, as the ‘this.’ I think it is both. Because how we experience the opposition, and the persecution, and how we react to that, that is the sign to those who oppose us, that God is with us. And this sign, will also impact those who oppose us, while we will be saved, they will be destroyed.

24. Then we come to verse 29, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.” The gift of suffering. Have you ever prayed for the gift of suffering? Have you ever desired the gift of suffering? Paul tells us, that ‘Because of Christ, we have received faith and we desire that faith, but we have also received suffering.’

25. Suffering is a gift. There are different kinds of suffering. There are three kinds of suffering.

- a. Firstly, we can suffer because of our own decisions and choices. We may invest against the counsel of people, and then have to suffer when it does not work out. Or we suffer because

of addictions, or the way that we live our lifestyle. This is not the suffering that Paul is referring to.

b. The second kind of suffering, is because of this broken (fallen) world. We have broken bodies and we sometimes suffer because of sickness. Or because of other people's actions against us. In war, or of political decisions. Paul is not referring to these kinds of sufferings.

c. But the third kind of suffering that Paul is referring to, actually includes both the first and the second. Because when we make the decision to follow Christ, a decision that we make, other people, the world, and the evil one, turn against us. And so, we suffer because we want to follow Christ, and we suffer because the world hates us and opposes us.

26. But our suffering because of our faith, is not God's punishment for us, but is a gift to us, to show us, that we don't live anymore, we have died, He now lives within us. It's not about my desires, my needs, it's about His. And therefore, the gift of suffering, is a gift that the Lord gives us, to make us more dependent upon Him, and to make us more dependent on one another. It's not a gift that we desire or want, but it is a gift that we need.

27. But did you know, that when you suffer because of Christ, when you are persecuted because of Him, He is being persecuted as well. He is suffering with you. Remember when Paul went to Damascus, and met the risen Lord on the road, Jesus did not ask him, 'Why are you persecuting My church,' He said, 'Why are you persecuting Me?'

28. When we suffer, when we are persecuted, it's not just us, it's the church that suffers and Jesus suffers with us. Do we need to start praying for persecution? Do we need to start wanting suffering? I think it will be very difficult for any of us to do that. But I think what is important for each one of us, is to put our faith in Christ, and is to say to the Lord, 'Lord, I don't want it, but I'm available for You to me that gift, if that will glorify You, if that will be a testimony to those around me and if will help me to grow closer to You.'

29. I have never really experienced that suffering and persecution. I know some of you have, and you are encouragement to us. I have spoken to brothers and sisters of ours in the persecuted world. And every time I asked them, 'How can we pray for you?' They always say, 'Please don't pray that the Lord will take away the persecution. Pray that the Lord will give us the strength to endure the persecution.' The Lord will not give us a gift, if He will not enable us to use that gift. He will not give us the gift of suffering, if He does not give us the ability to endure the suffering.

30. This year, we are praying that the Lord will give us as a church, all His gifts, so that we can worship Him, so that we can live fully for Him, that we can go into this world and to proclaim His name, and I pray that the Lord will all His gifts to us. And reluctantly, I pray, that He will also give us the gift of suffering. I don't want you to suffer, but I'd rather you suffer for Christ, than not experiencing the fullness of Christ in us and through us.

31. Eleven years ago, friends of mine from South Africa, in Afghanistan, the father and the two teenage children, were murdered in their home. A month before that, my friend spoke at an international Christian gathering, and he ended his keynote speech, with these words, 'We only die once, but it is worthwhile to die for Christ.' A month later he died.

32. Are we willing to suffer for Christ? To receive that gift? To endure hardship? Not because we're good, but because we want to follow in the footsteps of our Lord. He has given everything to us. To follow Jesus, means to lay down our lives and to pick up our cross, daily, for the benefit of Christ and His Gospel.

33. Let us pray. Lord, we thank You for Your Spirit, that You have given us, to enable us to follow Your Son, Jesus, to believe in Him and to follow Him. Thank You for all the gifts that You have given. We also thank You Lord, for the gift of suffering. A gift that we don't want to experience, and for some who have experienced it already, Lord, I know that they don't want it again, but we pray Lord, that You will give us the strength, the courage, to be willing, to suffer for You. To be persecuted, to be opposed, to be hated, to be insulted. Lord, when we started to follow You, You told us that we have died. We don't live for ourselves anymore. We live for You. Therefore Lord, we give ourselves to You. And say Lord, not easily, but we say Lord, this morning, 'That if You want to give us the gift of suffering, that Your will be done, but we ask You Lord, to give us the strength, to endure it ourselves. Lord, we pray for our brothers and sisters, who are persecuted around the world, hundreds of thousands, even millions of them, Lord, we pray that You will give them the strength, to endure the hardship, the suffering, the pain, the persecution, the martyrdom. We also pray for those who are opposing them, that their eyes will be opened, to see the truth in Your children and the evil in their deeds and that they too will turn to Jesus, the truth, the life, and the way. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that we can pray this in Your name. Amen.

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