

The Gifts of Christ

Ephesians 4:7-13 – Pastor Dr. Ronnie Wolfe – August 7, 2011 (PM)

I. GIFTS GIVEN ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF CHRIST, 4:7

A. We Would Have Nothing Without Christ.

1. John 15:5 *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*
2. Eph 2:12 *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*

B. We Are Given Gifts

1. The gift of life – Eccl 3:13 *And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.*
2. The gift of “living water” – John 4:10 *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*
3. Eternal life – Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
4. Manifold gifts given – 1 Peter 4:10 *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

II. CHRIST LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, 4:8

A. This captivity was taken captive when Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:11).

B. Some say this captivity was not taken captive when he resurrected from the dead.

1. There is a theory that Jesus, after his death, went into a place where the saints were detained until after Jesus’ death. Some say this is the place where Paradise used to be before Christ resurrected.
2. This is a Papal notion called Limbus Patrum. It is supposedly contiguous, or alongside, hell. After Jesus died, they say, he went to this place and took captive the Old Testaments saints who were detained there until Jesus’ resurrection. Then he supposedly took this Paradise to Heaven, and now Paradise is in Heaven.
3. But notice Eccl. 12:7 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*
4. Notice also: Luke 23:46 *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*

C. So, at his ascension, not at his resurrection, he took captivity captive.

D. Then he gave gifts to men, which we shall consider shortly.

E. That which was taken captive was:

1. Sin – Rom. 8:3 *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*
2. Satan –
 - a. 2 Tim. 2:26 *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*
 - b. Luke 10:18 *And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*
3. World – John 16:33 *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.*

- In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*
4. Death -- Rom. 6:9 *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*
 5. Grave – Matt 28:6 *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*
 6. Spiritual Enemies – 1 John :3-4 *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. 4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

III. CHRIST FIRST DESCENDED INTO THE LOWER PART OF THE EARTH, 4:9-10

- A. Before Jesus Christ could ascend into Heaven, he must first descend.
- B. This infers that Jesus came from above.
 1. John 8:23 *And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.*
 2. John 6:31-35 *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*
- C. This descending (coming down) from above infers his coming to the earth to be born among the lowly and to die among the wicked.
 1. In the womb -- Ps 139:15 *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*
 2. Humility – Phil. 2:8 *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*
 3. Made sin for us - - 2 Cor 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*
 4. Made a curse for us – Gal 3:13 *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*
 5. Made his grave with the wicked – Isa 53:9 *And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*
 6. Suffering on the cross and die for our sins – Luke 24:46 *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:*
- D. Then Christ ascended far above all heavens, 4:10
 1. Far above all ... -- Eph 1:21 *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*
 2. That he might fill all things.
 - a. Some say that he might “fulfill” all things that were prophesies of him and were required of him as God’s obedient Servant, those things which the prophets told of in the Scriptures and were pressed upon Him as our Chief Shepherd.
 - b. This word is “fill,” however, and means that he might “complete” his job as our High

Priest, which is His eternal position before God, being the only mediator between God and men. Also, he is our eternal King of kings and Lord of lords, which post he makes complete or make perfect at his ascension.

IV. HE GAVE SOME . . . , 4:11

A. He gave some, apostles.

1. In other words, he gave some men, a few men and only a few, gifts that would make them apostles, such as Peter, Andrew, James, John, etc. There were 12 apostles who were called “the twelve.” These had special gifts that no one else had.
 - a. They had special signs -- 2 Cor 12:12 *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*
 - b. They had the foundational doctrines – Act 2:42 *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
 - c. These apostolic gifts were given to “some,” not to all.
 - d. There are no apostles in this sense today. They were used in a special way to deliver the true Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles and to lay the foundational truths of Scripture in the churches, being taught personally first by Jesus, then by the Holy Spirit, who led them into all truth, producing the complete word of God, our Bible.
2. He gave some, prophets.
 - a. Eph 2:20 *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*
 - b. Eph 3:5 *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*
 - c. Re 18:20 *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*
 - d. These prophets were put into the first New Testament churches until the word of God was finished; then they were not used anymore, since the whole revelation of God was complete.
 - (1) 1 Cor 13:8 *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*
3. He gave some, evangelists.
 - a. This gift was that of preaching from place to place. There was no apostolic power or authority attached to this position, and there was no need for the evangelist to be an overseer, or pastor, of a local church.
 - b. Philip was an evangelist (Acts 21:8).
 - c. Paul instructed Timothy to do the work of an evangelist: 2 Tim. 4:5 *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*
 - (1) The evangelist, as we see here, must (1) watch in all things, or be aware of the hardships that may come; (2) endure afflictions, which indicates that this was not necessarily a safe job; (3) do the work, which means that it was not a lazy man’s job; and (4) make full proof of the ministry, which means that this work is important. It is not simply a freelance endeavor but a recognized position in the church of the Lord.
 - (2) This is a valid ministry today, and many are doing it.

4. He gave some, pastors and teachers.
 - a. These two are mentioned together and seem to be referring to the same position.
 - b. The elder, bishop, or pastor must be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24).
 - c. A pastor is a shepherd of sheep
 - (1) Peter was told to “feed my sheep” (John 21:16-17)
 - (2) Peter was told to “feed my lambs” (John 21:15)
 - (3) Peter was told to “feed the flock” (1 Peter 5:2)
 - (4) But a pastor who does not teach does not feed the flock and is not a good pastor.
 - d. A pastor is a teacher
 - (1) It is the job of the church to teach -- Matt 28:20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

V. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS, 4:12

A. For The Perfecting Of The Saints

1. Matt 5:48 *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*
2. To be perfect means to be mature, to grow up to full maturity.
3. We can never meet this challenge in this world, but it is our goal, one that we could be much closer than we are.
4. God gives gifts to men in order that the saints may be perfected.

B. For The Work Of The Ministry

1. The word work in the Greek is ERGON, and it designates the business of the ministry.
2. Jesus had to be about his Father’s business.
3. We must be about the business of the Lord’s ministry, especially in the local church.
4. Jesus said in John 9:4 *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*
5. Saul and Barnabas had business to do, so the Holy Spirit separated them for the work: Acts 13:2 *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

C. For The Edifying Of The Body Of Christ

1. The word “edifying” means “to build up.”
2. The body of Christ, the local church, is to be built up.
3. Built up by prophesying (preaching) – 1Co 14:5 *I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*
4. Built up by spiritual gifts – 1 Cor 14:12 *Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*
5. Built up by being effective in the church – Eph 4:16 *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

VI. THE DURATION OF THIS WORK, 4:13

A. Till We Come To The Unity Of The Faith

1. Eph 4:3 *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
2. Remember, there is “one faith” (Eph. 4:5).

3. The unity of the faith has to do with the “one faith” that is to be preached, the one doctrine of faith that is to be the same in all churches of the Lord, Jesus Christ.
 4. Each and every true church of the Lord Jesus should be edified to preach the very same faith that Paul preached, the same faith to which we are to be obedient (Acts 6:7), the same faith in which we are to continue (Acts 14:22), the same faith in which the churches are established (Acts 16:5), the same faith in which we are to stand (1 Cor. 16:13), the same faith with which we are to strive together (Phil. 1:27), and the faith from which many will depart in the last days (1 Tim. 4:1).
- B. Till We Come To The Knowledge Of The Son Of God
1. Phil. 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*
 2. 1 John 2:3 *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*
 3. 1 John 5:20 *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*
 4. That is, to know him in perfection. Certainly we know him, but we must come to that perfect knowledge of the Son of God as we are edified and taught in the church of the Lord Jesus. Then eventually we shall come to that perfection when he takes us to Heaven.
- C. Till We Come Unto A Perfect Man
1. This could designate Jesus Christ (see John Gill), or a perfect man that we all should be, being our spiritual goal in this life, to be more like Christ.
 2. Toward this goal we have some illustrations in Scripture:
 - a. In Love – Eph 5:2 *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*
 - b. Husbands – Eph 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*
 - c. Forgiveness – Col 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*
 - d. In our mind – 1 Peter 4:1 *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*
- D. Till We Come Unto The Measure Of The Stature Of The Fulness Of Christ (Perfection)
1. He is our example – John 13:15 *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*
 2. He is our goal – Phil 3:13-14 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Conclusion

Do you want to be like Christ? Are you pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Can you work harder, do better, pray more, attend to your reading more often, be concerned and help others more, refrain from sin more, praise God more, give more, accomplish more for Christ? If not, then you are backslidden.