

# The Gift From Jesus Christ

## Ephesians 4:7-10

Turn with me this morning to the book of Ephesians, we will be continuing on in our study of experiencing a new life in Christ. We have been looking at Paul's words to the church to keep their hope and trust in God because God has a plan a purpose and a new way of life for them to live. Not a life based on what we can see with our physical eyes, but a life that encompasses every area, including those things that we possess even in the unseen realm of life as well.

Last week we looked at the idea that God has placed within the heart of every believer, a sense of unity. Many have always thought that unity was something that we made up, or worked toward, but according to the Apostle Paul, unity is something that has already been established – we simply need to celebrate those things we have in common with each other because of Christ.

We find unity in being (1) one body (a group of people in whom Jesus lives and is at work) (2) one spirit (having the same source of power) (3) One hope (having the same good news to share with others) (4) One lord (having the same ultimate authority in our lives founded in Jesus Christ) (5) One faith (having the same belief that Jesus Christ was the son of God, he was sinless, he became the ultimate sacrifice for sin by dying on the cross, he showed his ultimate power in coming out of the grave alive, and has now sent the Holy Spirit to live in our lives and to give us power to serve others.

(6) One baptism (the Holy Spirit is now living in us making us alive) (7) One God and Father (Even though we serve the God who made everything and who sustains everything, he wants to draw near to us and be our loving father, or parent who will take care of us,

These are the things we are to celebrate together. These are the things that bring true unity, and they have nothing to do with us, but everything to do with what God has done for us. Celebrate our unity, celebrate what we do have in common, and live at peace with each other – this is how we are to conduct ourselves within the church.

We now pick up Paul's words in **Ephesians 4:7-10** and he begins to speak about another important part of the Christian life:

*<sup>7</sup> However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. <sup>8</sup> That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people." <sup>9</sup> Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. <sup>10</sup> And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.*

## 1. We have a Gift.

Today, as each of us sit here, God has given you a gift. In fact in other translations of the Bible the word “grace” is used instead of gift. We know that grace is something that we are given only because of Christ has done for us, not something that we have earned by ourselves. You’ve heard grace defined as “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” The gift that is talk about here in verse 7 is not something that we deserve, but is something that because of Jesus Christ, we have been given.

In the original Greek there is also great emphasis on the words “each one of us”. Paul wants to make sure that this is not a gift that is limited only to a select few but that it is given to every person who is a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. **If you are a believer, if you have received Jesus Christ, if you are born again, if you have new life by the power of the Spirit of God by faith in Jesus Christ, then you have a gift.**

Where did the gift come from? Look at Paul’s words in verse 7 (given through the generosity of Christ). It is a gift from Jesus himself. Jesus even spoke of this gift when he was here on earth after his resurrection in **Luke 24:49**:

*<sup>49</sup> “And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”*

We are talking about the gift that Jesus sent to us in the person of the Holy Spirit, who now not only lives in us and makes us alive, but who also gives us power from heaven and allows us to be effective demonstrations of God’s power. We are talking about the gifts of the Spirit.

For some reason when one begins to talk about the Spiritual gifts we tend to want to avoid the subject because it is unexplainable, it seems weird, it isn’t something that we are use to. I think instead of having our own experience of what it means to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have seen others abuse the spiritual gifts and we have been turned off to them because of it.

If the GIFT of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, is a gift that is so good for us and is suppose to do incredible things in the church, then I think it is worth exploring and identifying so that we can experience a true, authentic, life changing form of Christianity that isn’t merely based on emotionalism or ideas written thousands of years ago, but that it is a living faith with a living force behind it. That the church would no longer be seen as the organization that preserves tradition, but it would be seen as a moving force that changes and impacts the lives of people today.

As Christians, as we sit here this morning, we posses a gift. It comes from the Spirit of God who lives within us. In fact Paul tells us in **Romans 8:9**:

*<sup>9</sup> But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)*

In other words, **You cannot be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit living in you.**

The gift is not only the indwelling of God's spirit in us, but that the Holy Spirit gives us abilities to serve the church (the group of believers we worship with). The word for "gift" and "grace" here in verse 7 is the Greek word "Charis" which is related to the word "Charisma" and which is where we get the term "Charismatic" When one thinks of the Charismatic movement they tend to only think of those who speak in other tongues but that is only one of a list of abilities (in fact, the gift of speaking tongues is the last gift listed in 1 Corinthians 12).

We find lists of these special abilities given to us by the power of the Holy Spirit throughout scripture. And as we read them this morning, ask yourself 'which do I possess?' **1 Corinthians 12:7-11** Paul writes:

*<sup>7</sup> A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. <sup>8</sup> To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. <sup>9</sup> The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. <sup>10</sup> He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. <sup>11</sup> It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.*

We find another list in **Romans 12:6-8**. There are some duplicated here yet some that aren't:

*<sup>6</sup> In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup> If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup> If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

And then we find another in **1 Peter 4:10-11**:

*<sup>10</sup> God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. <sup>11</sup> Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then*

*everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*

Just in these three portions of scripture alone we find at least 15 gifts. Let alone other references throughout the New Testament. When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in **2 Timothy 1:6** he told him:

*<sup>6</sup> This is why I remind you to fan into flames (stir up) the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you.*

Not only are we to find out what gift we have been given, but we are also to take that gift and use it, and let God give us power to make an impact on this world. In **Ephesians 3:8** we have read Paul's words when he said:

*"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." RSV*

Paul knew that one of his gifts was preaching. Do you know what your gift is this morning? Have you ever asked yourself, "What does God want me to do for him?" Do you know how to find out?

The impact of this church, in this area is directly related to how we respond to these questions. Do we want to know? Are we willing to find out? And are you willing to step out and develop this part of your life?

Paul wants us to know that Jesus Christ has given us a gift. He has given us the Holy Spirit who wants to empower us to effectively serve this community in way we can't serve in the natural realm, but in the power of God's might. Knowing this, how many of us are curious as to what God has given us? I will be talking about these gifts more in the coming weeks.

Look at verse 8. Paul goes on and quotes an Old Testament verse in Psalm 68:18. Paul is bringing some clarity to what he described in verse 7 as the "generosity of Christ." Psalm 68 paints a picture of a triumphant King, who came down to earth, experienced everything we have experienced, took on the sins of the world and died for our sins, and yet he ascended into heaven as a victorious king. The term "generosity of Christ" is merely a description of the extent of ability and power that Christ experienced and now sends to us.

## **2. The Power behind the gifts.**

The power we are talking about is made available to us in adequate supply to function in the gift that we were given. If you have the gift of healing then God will give you the power to heal. If you have the gift to teach God will give you the ability to teach. In other words, Jesus doesn't give us abilities and not the power to use them.

Have you ever sat around the Christmas tree on a Christmas morning and you start opening your gifts and you get some of the coolest electronic gadgets. You get all excited about that remote control car, or that new CD player. But there is only one problem, “You don’t have the batteries.” It kind of takes the wind out of your sail doesn’t it.

You see **God doesn’t want you to get frustrated with his gift, he wants you to know that if he asks you to do something he won’t hold back the power you need to get it done.** That is why Paul wrote in **Ephesians 3:20**:

*<sup>20</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.*

Even when he spoke about his own gifting he said in **Ephesians 3:7**:

*<sup>7</sup> By God’s grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.*

The power that God wants to give us is not dependent upon education, personality, or even attitude. It is a power strictly based on what God wants to do through you and me. In fact, this power is the same power that resurrected Jesus from the dead.

Resurrection power is what brought Jesus Christ to earth in the form of a man, demanded suffering and ridicule, in pain and anguish until death, brought him back to life again in order that we might have new life (but not just to exist) but so that we can given a gift and role to function in the church.

Jesus knew what his ascension into heaven meant, that it was time for his gift to mankind to be sent to us so that we could function in the areas that God created us for. I believe that when life comes to an end and we stand before Christ he will ask us “What did you do with the gift I gave you?” My prayer is that we would be able to hear “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” Let’s pray!