

The Victorious Jesus and His Gifts for a Victorious Church Part 1

Message 13

2.5.23

Introduction: Today's passage is familiar to many of us.

A. But I want to approach this passage over two weeks.

1. Too often, we jump into the details of who these "gifts" or "offices" are.
2. We want to debate about Apostles and prophets or the differences between a pastor and a teacher.
3. We will do some of that next week.

B. Paul's attention here is clearly upon Jesus.

1. **When we put our eyes on the gifts instead of the gift giver, we become out of balance.**
2. A believer who is walking worthy of their calling stays focused upon Jesus.
 - a. It's not about the minister.
 - b. It's not about the person on the platform or on the screen.
 - c. It's all about Jesus.
3. It is Jesus who has given gifts to His people.

Ephesians 4:7-16 (CSB)

⁷ Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ For it says:

When he ascended on high,

he took the captives captive;

he gave gifts to people.'

⁹ But what does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things. ¹¹ And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.

1. Christ's Victory brought us gifts.

A. The Apostle draws the reader's attention to what Jesus has done.

1. Now Grace was given...

2. Grace is a great word.

a. **Greek, it is Charis.**

b. It's where we get our word "charismatic."

3. **In its simplest form, Grace means a gift.**

a. Unmerited, undeserved favor.

b. For us, Grace is not a salary or wage that we earn, but a gift that we must receive.

B. With this definition in mind, notice again what Paul is saying:

⁷ Now **grace** was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

1. The word translated as "gift" is a different word than Charis.

2. But we could read this as "Now gifts were given to each according to the measure of Christ's gifts."

a. That may feel confusing.

b. But if I gave you a birthday present, what did you receive? A gift.

C "You got me a present!" "Thank you for the wonderful gift."

C. Before Paul describes what Jesus gives us, He tells us the measure or the size:

1. According to the measure of Christ's gift.

2. This is a recurring theme in Ephesians:

a. Not "from" but "according."

b. A hundred dollars from a millionaire is not according to their wealth but from their wealth.

c. Jesus gives accordingly, which is with great abundance and grace.

2. Why is Jesus giving gifts?

A. Conquering heroes and new kings often gave gifts to their subjects.

1. The Roman emperors were great at this.

a. After victories, they would throw feasts and give gifts to the people.

b. The leader's victory was shared with the subjects.

c. Let's be honest, American politicians do the same: reward those who got them elected lol.

2. Paul has something similar in view here.

a. Jesus, who had defeated death and ascended to the "throne," celebrates by giving gifts to His people.

b. This allows Jesus' followers to participate in Jesus' victory.

B. But Paul also has a broader picture in mind.

1. In our Bibles, verse 8 is in different formatting and may be in bold.

2. This tells you this is a quotation from the Old Testament.

a. When we read this, we should read the whole context.

b. Most of your Bibles will include a little lettered footnote and a reference to Psalm 68.

Psalm 68:1–20 (CSB)

¹ God arises. His enemies scatter,
and those who hate him flee from his presence.

² As smoke is blown away,
so you blow them away.

As wax melts before the fire,
so the wicked are destroyed before God.

³ But the righteous are glad;
they rejoice before God and celebrate with joy.

⁴ Sing to God! Sing praises to his name.
Exalt him who rides on the clouds—
his name is the Lord—and celebrate before him.

⁵ God in his holy dwelling is
a father of the fatherless
and a champion of widows.

⁶ God provides homes for those who are deserted.

He leads out the prisoners to prosperity,

but the rebellious live in a scorched land.

⁷ God, when you went out before your people,

when you marched through the desert,

Selah

⁸ the earth trembled and the skies poured rain

before God, the God of Sinai,

before God, the God of Israel.

⁹ You, God, showered abundant rain;

you revived your inheritance when it languished.

¹⁰ Your people settled in it;

God, you provided for the poor by your goodness.

¹¹ The Lord gave the command;

a great company of women brought the good news:

¹² "The kings of the armies flee—they flee!"

She who stays at home divides the spoil.

¹³ While you lie among the sheep pens,

the wings of a dove are covered with silver,

and its feathers with glistening gold.

¹⁴ When the Almighty scattered kings in the land,

it snowed on Zalmon.

¹⁵ Mount Bashan is God's towering mountain;

Mount Bashan is a mountain of many peaks.

16 Why gaze with envy, you mountain peaks,
at the mountain God desired for his abode?

The Lord will dwell there forever!

17 God's chariots are tens of thousands,
thousands and thousands;
the Lord is among them in the sanctuary
as he was at Sinai.

18 You ascended to the heights, taking away captives;
you received gifts from people,
even from the rebellious,
so that the Lord God might dwell there.

19 Blessed be the Lord!
Day after day he bears our burdens;
God is our salvation.

Selah

20 Our God is a God of salvation,
and escape from death belongs to the Lord my Lord.

C. The context of Psalm 68 celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.

1. God is depicted as leading his people out of slavery and bondage.
2. Psalm 68 pictures Yahweh as a Divine Warrior descending from Mount Sinai, striding across the earth winning victory after victory for his people, and then ascending Mount Zion surrounded by an entourage of the heavenly host in order to establish his throne room (temple) there. It is

the prayer of the psalm that this power of God be exercised once again to deliver his people.¹

3. In Psalm 68, God gave victory to Israel over the enemy.

D. Paul now applies that the the believers in Ephesus.

1. Now, it is Christ who conquered over the cosmic and spiritual powers, making an example of them.

Ephesians 1:20–22 (CSB)

²⁰He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens—
²¹far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And **he subjected everything under his feet**, and appointed him as head over everything for the church,

2. If you lived in a pagan city, with altars and shrines on every corner, wouldn't you want to know that Jesus had defeated them too?

3. Paul reinterprets Psalm 68 with Jesus as the main figure.

For it says:

**When he ascended on high,
he took the captives captive;
he gave gifts to people.**

⁹ But what does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things.

A. First, notice Paul adjusts the Psalm:

¹ Osborne, Grant R. 2017. [*Ephesians: Verse by Verse*](#). Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

1. In Psalm 68, the people gave gifts to God.
2. Now, Jesus gives gifts to His people.

B. Paul rereads Psalm 68 with Jesus at the center.

1. Jesus descended to the Earth, born in human flesh.
 - a. He descended to the Earth in the incarnation.
 - b. And at His Ascension, when He returned to Heaven, He ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Matthew 26:64 (NLT)

⁶⁴ Jesus replied, "You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."

2. In the process of descending and ascending is that Jesus' resurrection and ascension is proof of Jesus' power over death, hell, and the grave.

a. We make much of Jesus' crucifixion and His resurrection, but the ascension is equally as important.

b. Countless numbers of people have been crucified.

c. Many have come back to life after being pronounced dead.

d. But only Jesus has been crucified, resurrected, and ascended to heaven!

e. At His ascension, Jesus took the captives captive!

3. Who were the captives?

b. All Those enslaved to sin.

c. Just as God set the Israelites free from the bondage of slavery, Jesus set all who believe in Him free from the bondage of sin.

4. Now what?

A. In light of this Scripture, what do I do next?

1. I can't shake the feeling that before we dive into the details of the gifts that Jesus has given the Church, we should focus on this great gift of freedom that Jesus has given us.
2. What good is being able to describe the functions of an apostle, prophet, or pastor if you don't enjoy the freedom Jesus has given us?

B. Because Jesus "took captives captive", and because Jesus has given good gifts, each one of us can come before God today and receive what we need.

Matthew 7:7–11 (NLT)

Effective Prayer

⁷ "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.

⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

1. Jesus does not end verse 11 with a question, but a statement (there is a period, not a question mark.)
2. Today, I want to invite all who are weary and heavy-laden to come and receive rest.
3. Today, I invite all who desire freedom to come to Jesus and receive the freedom only the Holy Spirit can bring.
4. Today, I invite all who are sick and hurting to come to Jesus for healing.

5. Today, we are invited to benefit from the good gifts that God has given us through Jesus Christ!