

Fly Through the Bible

Part Three: Five Gifts

Introduction

We've met five people in the OT:

- Adam, Abraham, Moses, David and Ezra.

We've looked at five events in the life of Jesus:

- He was born, He was tempted, He was crucified,
- He is risen, and He has ascended.

In this last session we are going to look at the NT letters, and focus on

- five gifts that Christ gives every believer:
- The Holy Spirit, Faith, Forgiveness, the church, and heaven.

1. The Holy Spirit

Just ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven,

- there was a festival called Pentecost.
- This was when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church.
- Luke records the story in Acts 2

A sound like the wind

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:1–2)

In the ancient world, many languages use the same word for “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.”

- The sound of the wind is similar to the sound of breath,
- only it is much louder, and it lasts longer.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He breathed on His disciples, and said,

- *“Receive the Holy Spirit”* (John 20:22).

Jesus was explaining what would happen on the day of Pentecost.

- So, when the disciples heard a sound like the rushing wind just a few days later,
- they would immediately associate it with the sound of Jesus breathing on them
- and recognize that this was the fulfillment of what Jesus had promised.

Great balls of fire

And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. (Acts 2:3)

In the Old Testament, God appeared to Moses in flames of fire resting on a bush.

- The amazing thing is that neither the bush nor Moses was burned.
- When God appeared in the fire, He commissioned Moses.
- Now God was commissioning His church with the same sign.

Try to imagine yourself in the room as God's fire comes down.

- Who do think it will land on? Peter? James? John?
- Or perhaps each of the twelve disciples?

As the fire comes down, it divides into separate flames.

- Looking up, you realize that one of these flames is coming toward you.
- And when you look round at the other believers in the room,
- you see that a flame rests on every one of them.

In the Old Testament, God gave His presence and power to *some* of His people.

- Now, He was giving His Spirit to *all* of them.
- God was commissioning every believer to advance His purpose in the world.

They spoke in other tongues

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

Suddenly and spontaneously, each of the hundred and twenty believers found that

- they were able to speak in languages they had never learned.

When the crowds in the city heard the sound of the wind,

- they headed in the direction from which it had come to see what was going on (Acts 2:6).
- And when they arrived, they heard the believers
- declaring what God had done in words they could understand.

God's promise to bless all the families of the earth was being fulfilled, and it continues to be fulfilled today.

- The good news of what God has done in Jesus is for all people.
- God wants this good news proclaimed in every language.
- And all who believe have a part to play in communicating this good news.

God has put a circle of people around you,

- and you are the one who can bring the good news of what God has done to them.

2. Faith

The Holy Spirit is our helper on earth as we journey to heaven;

- He opens our minds to understand the truth;
- He turns our hearts towards God;
- and He leads us to faith.

Jesus said, “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22).

- That is a command.

If you have felt that faith is beyond you, the good news is that faith is also a gift.

***“For by grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).***

God gives what He commands.

Faith is like a living tree bursting with fruit:

1. Faith will open your understanding (Hebrews 11:3).
2. Faith will lead you to work for the good of others (Hebrews 11:7)
3. Faith will lead you to obedience (Hebrews 11:8).
4. Faith will give you hope. (Hebrews 11:16)
5. Faith will bring blessing to others. (Hebrews 11:20)
6. Faith will lead you to worship. (Hebrews 11:21).

Why does faith do all these things?

- Where does its life and energy come from?

7. Faith unites us to Jesus

Faith unites us to Jesus Christ, so that we become His and He becomes ours.

Jesus said,

*I am the vine; you are the branches.
Whoever abides in me and I in him,
he it is that bears much fruit, (John 15:5).*

Faith forges a spiritual union in which you are in Christ and Christ lives in you

***I have been crucified with Christ.
It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.
And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)***

The Bible uses the analogy of a marriage to describe this union:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother

*and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”
This mystery is profound, and I am saying
that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32).*

In a wedding service, the groom is asked:

- “Will you take this woman to be your wife?”
- Then the bride is asked: “Will you take this man to be your husband?”

Two thousand years ago the question was asked of Jesus:

- “Are you willing to take on all that is involved in being united with sinners?”
- And from the cross, with outstretched arms, Jesus answered: “I will.”

Now, the Holy Spirit, who forges this union, asks you,

- *Will you take Jesus as your Savior and your Lord?*
- *Will you forsake all that displeases Him, and keep only to Him, as long as you shall live?*
- And faith answers: *I will.*

As in the marriage service, the response “I will” could not be simpler.

- But these words of commitment are life-changing in their significance.

3. Forgiveness

Jesus teaches us pray,

- “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12, Luke 11:4).

We all have **debts** because God has called us to a life of love:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)

Which of us can honestly say that we have done this?

- We have debts because we have not given what we owe.

And we have **debtors** because others have not given what they owe to us.

- So how can we be forgiven and how can we forgive?

How can we be forgiven?

We can be forgiven because Jesus did what we have failed to do.

- He lived a life of perfect love.
- He fulfilled all that God requires of us,
- and then laid down His perfect life to pay the debt we owe.

God forgives sinners as we look to His Son, Jesus, in faith and repentance. (Luke 24:46–47)

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just
to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)***

Jesus told a story about a son who left home, wasted his father's money and, in the end, became so desperate that he decided to return to his father.

- He expected a rather cold reception,
- but when he was still a long way off, his father saw him,
- came running to greet him and welcomed him home with joy.

This is a picture of how God receives us.

- When we come to Him in repentance and faith,
- He embraces us with the wonderful gift of forgiveness.

How can we forgive?

God calls us to forgive those who have wronged us, failed us, and disappointed us, as He has forgiven us:

***Be kind to one another, tender hearted,
forgiving one another,
as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)***

So, the starting point for our forgiving others is the forgiveness we have received.

Forgiveness is never easy.

- But if you are struggling to forgive another person,
- receiving God's forgiveness will give you
- a new capacity to forgive others.

Jesus taught us to pray,

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12).

There is the closest connection between us receiving forgiveness from God and us releasing forgiveness to others.

- The connection lies in the words *us* and *our*.
- The prayer is not “Forgive me my debts.”
- It is “Forgive *us our* debts.”

In praying this prayer, you are asking God to forgive not only the debts you owe but also the debts that others owe to you.

- “Father, forgive *us*” means, “
- Forgive me as I have failed to love You
- *and* forgive her as she has failed to love me.”

The only alternative would be: “Father, **don't** forgive us.

- I won't forgive, and I don't want You to forgive either.”
- But who would want to pray that prayer?
- As God opens your heart to pour forgiveness out, it will be open for Him to pour forgiveness in.

Transition

So far, we have looked at the gifts of the Holy Spirit, faith, and forgiveness.

- These are all wonderfully personal gifts:
- The **Holy Spirit** works in your life.
- When you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, He becomes yours.
- And when He is yours, **forgiveness** is yours.

But there is more:

- When God reconciles you to Himself,
- He brings you into His family,
- and that brings us to the gift of the church.

4. The Church

How important is the church?

- If I have faith in Jesus, and have some good Christian friends,
- why do I need the church?

The answer is that the church is central to God's purpose in the world.

Paul speaks of

*the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God,
who created all things, so that through the church
the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known
to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

(Ephesians 3:9–10)

God created all things so that His wisdom and His glory might be known,

- and His plan is that this will be accomplished “through the church.”

When believers in local congregations love one another, despite our many differences,

- forgive one another for our many sins and failures,
- and put the needs of others before our own,
- the beauty of God's grace is put on display.

The church is central to the purpose of God,

- and being a member of Christ's church
- is a privilege we should cherish.

A glorious future

There is a big difference between what the church is now and what she will be.

- Look at any church today and you will find that it is
- a long way from what God calls the church to be.

If this has been your experience, you may have given up on the church.

- But Jesus will never give up on His church.

*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
that he might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
so that he might present the church to himself in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25–27)*

Jesus *loves* the church with all her spots and wrinkles.

- And if we are like Him, we will love her too.

Notice what Jesus is doing for His church now.

- He cleanses her by washing her with His Word, the Bible.

The Word of God is like a bath in which we are washed.

- so that something of the beauty of Jesus may be seen in us.

Then we are told what Jesus **will do** for His church.

- He will “present the church to himself in splendor,
- without spot or wrinkle...
- One day the church will be everything Christ calls her to be.

Think of the story of Cinderella.

- She is despised by her ugly sisters but destined to marry a prince.
- The church is despised by the world,
- but she is the bride of Christ, and her future is glorious.

Jesus will present the church to Himself in splendor!

- And on that day, you will be so glad that you belong to His church.

5. Heaven

The last gift God has prepared for us is the gift of heaven.

The joys of the new heaven and earth will be beyond anything we can imagine,

- but God uses two pictures to give us some inkling
- of what lies ahead for His people:
- The city and the garden.

In the last book of the Bible, John says,

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)

A voice from the throne of God described life in this city:

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:3–4)

John saw the city from the outside and when, in his vision, he was invited inside the city, what he saw was a beautiful garden.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life. (Revelation 22:1–2)

The Bible story began in a garden.

- John would have seen the significance immediately:
- This is paradise restored, and the new paradise
- will be more glorious than the one Adam lost.

At the beginning of the Bible, God gave Adam and Eve the gifts of a home, work, marriage, and great joy in His presence.

But, at the end of the story, God’s people will have a better home.

- The joys of life in this world are just a small sample
- of the delights you will enjoy in God's new creation.

We will have better work;

- In heaven, our lives will be ordered, our work will be fulfilling, and our relationships will be whole.
- We will serve God as we always wished we could,
- and all of our work will be offered to Him as worship.

We will enjoy better relationships

- The garden of Eden was enjoyed by just one man and one woman.
- But vast crowds will stream into God's presence from every tribe and every nation.

But our greatest joy in heaven will be the presence of God Himself.

- God came down to the garden of Eden as a visitor and made Himself known,
- but in the new creation God will no longer be a visitor.
- God will dwell with His people, and we “*will see his face*” (Revelation 22:4).

God’s ultimate gift is the joy of eternity in His presence,

- and God offers all of this freely to you.

“To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment” (Revelation 21:6).

Heaven is not a reward you can earn;

- it is a gift you must receive.

Jesus came into the world so that this gift could be yours.

- He went to the cross for you.
- He rose from the dead for you.
- He offers you everlasting life.

But you must come.

***Let the one who is thirsty come;
let the one who desires take the water of life without price.
(Revelation 22:17)***

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Receive what He offers.
- And in the words of the last sentence in the Bible,

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (Revelation 22:21)

Prayer:

Word Count

- **2784 words**
- And 73 words introduction.

Intro 73

- The Holy Spirit 501
- Faith 485
- Forgiveness 597
- The Church 454
- Heaven 598