

## THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

### EPHESIANS 4:7-11, *WALKING IN GODLY UNITY- WHAT?*

- A. The distribution of spiritual gifts by Christ (7-8), *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."*
1. Every believer receives grace which enables him or her to function effectively in the body of Christ.
    - a. Here, grace refers to one's ability to serve God.
      - 1) Warren Wiersbe, *A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.*
      - 2) Harriet Auber, *And every virtue we possess, And every victory won, And every thought of holiness, Are His alone.*
    - b. It is *measured* or given according to the will of Christ.
      - 1) Romans 12:3, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*
      - 2) 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
      - 3) Harold Hoehner, *Each believer is to function in Christ's body by God's enablement, proportionate to the gift (spiritual ability) bestowed on him, no more and no less.*
    - c. *Christ's gift*
      - 1) The word for gift here stresses *free*.
      - 2) It is only used in the New Testament concerning a spiritual or supernatural gift.
      - 3) John Stott, *The unity of the church is due to charis (grace), God's grace having reconciled us to himself; but the diversity of the church is due to charismata, God's gifts distributed to church members.*
      - 4) Stephen Fowl, *...this verse encourages us to think of God's gift of grace as a precisely tailored suit that fits each of us perfectly.*
  2. *Therefore* gives evidence that God has the authority to give gifts.
    - a. The ascension relating to Jesus was His victory over death which placed Him at the right hand of the Father.
    - b. Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18, *You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.*
    - c. *He led a host of captives*
      - 1) John Stott, *Christ ascended as conqueror to the Father's right hand, his train of captives being the principalities and powers he had defeated, dethroned and disarmed.*
      - 2) Others believe it pictures those who were captive to sin but were set free by Christ.
      - 3) It can refer to both since the illustration comes from an Old Testament scene would include those who were made captives and those who were freed from captivity.
    - d. There has been some question concerning Paul writing *gave gifts* but Psalm 68:12 states *receiving gifts*.
      - 1) There are several variant readings from Old Testament translations at that time. Some read *gave gifts*.
      - 2) The importance of this quotation is that Paul emphasized the right of the victor to give gifts to those who followed him in victory.
      - 3) Here, Jesus Christ Who is Victor over sin and death, has the right to give gifts for the benefit of the church to those Who follow Him.
- B. The basis on which Christ gives spiritual gifts to the church (9-10), *(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)*
1. Jesus had to descend before He could ascend.
    - a. His descent to *the lower regions, the earth* refers to His death and burial in the tomb but the emphasis is on His ascent.
    - b. This verse pictures Jesus' humiliation, note Philippians 2:5-11, and exaltation by which He bestowed the Spirit to indwell believers and gave gifts of the Spirit to mature the church.
    - c. Thomas Constable, *In His death Jesus Christ gained the victory over sin, and He redeemed those whom He would give as gifts to the church.*

2. Jesus ascended in order to fill all things in creation.
  - a. He has the fullness of the Godhead and is Head over the church and all the universe.
    - 1) Colossians 1:18, *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*
    - 2) Proverbs 30:4, *Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!*
    - 3) Romans 8:22, *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.*
  - b. His exalted position gives Him the right to bestow gifts on His subjects who become gifts to the church.
- C. The gifts to the church are gifted people who have specific functions for service to the church (11), ***And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,***
  1. *He gave* explains verse 8, *and He gave gifts to men.*
    - a. Jesus gives gifts to Christians who serve the church and enable it to function.
    - b. 1 Corinthians 12:5-6, *and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.*
    - c. Romans 12:3-5, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*
    - d. The following list is not exhaustive since Paul lists other spiritual gifts in his writings as in Romans 12:6-8, *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*
  2. Paul lists a number of the positions of service gifted by Christ to believers
    - a. Apostle
      - 1) One who is sent as an authoritative delegate, a special messenger.
      - 2) He was commissioned by Jesus Christ for the particular task of proclaiming the Gospel message with authority.
      - 3) Apostles and prophets were foundational gifts to the church.
        - a) Ephesians 2:20, *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*
        - b) Ephesians 3:5, *which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*
    - 4) A list of apostles
      - a) Twelve men who were immediate followers of Jesus Christ plus Paul who had seen the risen Christ and had received appointment from Him.
        - 1) Acts 1:21-22, *So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.*
        - 2) 1 Cor 15:8-9, *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*
      - b) Others who functioned as apostles.
        - 1) James, Galatians 1:19, *But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.*
        - 2) Barnabas, Acts 14:14, *But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out,*
        - 3) Also, Silas, Timothy, and Apollos functioned as apostles but were not specifically called apostles in the New Testament.
    - 5) Apostles were foundational gifts to the church.
      - a) Warren Wiersbe, *There are no apostles today in the strictest New Testament sense. These men helped to lay the foundation of the church—"the foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets," and once the foundation was laid, they were no longer needed.,* Ephesians 2:20, *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*
      - b) Apostles were authenticated by miraculous events, 2 Corinthians 12:12, *The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.*

- 6) Definition of an apostle by Matthew Poole, *...extraordinary officers, with an immediate call, universal commission, infallibility in teaching, and power of working miracles ...founding the Christian church in all parts of the world.*
- b. Prophets
- 1) A prophet is one who speaks for God with His authority, Matthew 1:22, *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*
  - 2) Prophets provided encouragement, consolation and revelation to the church.
    - a) 1 Corinthians 14:3, *On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.*
    - b) Ephesians 3:5, *which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*
  - 3) Prophets were gifted people for the foundation of the church as were the apostles.
    - a) Ephesians 2:20, *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*
    - b) Harold Hoehner, *They probably revealed God's will to the church when the biblical canon was incomplete. Since the apostles and prophets were foundational, they did not exist after the first generation of believers.*
    - c) John Stott, *Nobody can presume to claim an inspiration comparable to that of the canonical prophets, or use their introductory formula 'Thus says the Lord'. If this were possible, we would have to add their words to Scripture, and the whole church would need to listen and obey.*
    - d) A thought on a subsidiary gift of prophecy.
      - 1] John Stott, *...the 'prophetic' gift is detected in the handling of the Word of God, for one cannot think of God's prophets in isolation from God's Word. It is understood as a gift of insight into either the biblical text or the contemporary situation, or both, namely a powerful combination of accurate exposition and pertinent application.*
      - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *Christians today do not get their spiritual knowledge immediately from the Holy Spirit, but mediately (indirectly) through the Spirit teaching the Word.*
- c. Evangelists
- 1) An evangelist is one who proclaims the Gospel.
    - a) He was often a person who went from place to place announcing the Good News.
    - b) Max Anders, *The gift of evangelism is the ability to share clearly and easily the good news message of Christ.*
    - c) Acts 21:8, *On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.*
    - d) 2 Timothy 4:5, *As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*
  - 2) Evangelists were similar to present-day missionaries or those who lead evangelistic meetings in churches and communities.
  - 3) John Stott, *Since all Christians are under obligation, when they have an appropriate opportunity, to bear witness to Christ and his good news, the gift of an 'evangelist' (bestowed only upon some) must be something different. It may refer to the gift of evangelistic preaching, or of making the gospel particularly plain and relevant to unbelievers, or of helping timorous people to take the plunge of commitment to Christ, or of effective personal witnessing.*
  - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *The Apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church, and the evangelists built on it by winning the lost to Christ.*
- b. Pastor-teacher (*shepherd-teacher*)
- 1) Most believe that pastor and teacher refers to one office that involves two complementary roles, to guide and help a congregation as well as to teach Biblical truth. The lack of *the* in front of teacher puts emphasis on the connection between shepherd and teacher.
    - a) A *shepherd* or *pastor* is one who is responsible for the care and guidance of a Christian congregation.
    - b) A *teacher* is responsible to provide instruction in Biblical truth.
    - c) 1 Timothy 3:2, *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,*
    - d) Titus 1:9, *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*

- 2) The pastor-teacher would be in a settled group of believers, a local church, in contrast to an evangelist who would spread the Gospel by traveling to new areas.
  - 3) John Stott, *Perhaps one should say that, although every pastor must be a teacher, gifted in the ministry of God's Word to people (whether a congregation or groups or individuals), yet not every Christian teacher is also a pastor (since he may be teaching only in a school or college rather than in a local church).*
  - 4) William Barclay, *The picture of the shepherd is indelibly written on the New Testament. The shepherd was the one who cared for the flock and led the sheep into safe places, the one who sought the sheep when they wandered away and, if need be, died to save them. The shepherd of the flock of God is the one whose heart bears God's people within it, who feeds them with the truth, who seeks them when they stray away, and who defends them from all that would hurt their faith. And the duty is laid on every Christian to be a shepherd to all other Christians.*
- 3 These gifts may be categorized into two groups.
    - a. Foundational gifts would include apostles and prophets.
    - b. Permanent gifts would include evangelists and pastor-teachers.
  4. As noted earlier, others spiritual gifts are noted by Paul and Peter in their letters.

<b>EPHESIANS 4:12-16, WALKING IN GODLY UNITY - WHY?</b>
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- A. The purposes of gifted people (12), ***to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,***
  1. To equip Christians to do ministry.
    - a. *Equip* means to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something.
      - 1) 2 Timothy 3:17, *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
      - 2) Luke 6:40, *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.*
    - b. Gifted leaders are to prepare others in the body of Christ to minister.
      - 1) 2 Timothy 2:2, *and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.*
      - 2) 1 Corinthians 12:7, *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
      - 3) Romans 15:2, *Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*
  2. To build up the church.
    - a. Gifted people in the church *build up* others which can mean *mending* or *restoring*.
    - b. Some members of the body of Christ are hurting and gifted people come alongside to aid in recovery.
      - 1) Galatians 6:1, *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*
      - 2) 2 Corinthians 13:11, *Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*
    - c. The goal of ministry is the strengthening of the church in order to fully function in a needy world.
      - 1) Ephesians 4:16, *from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*
      - 2) John Stott, *All spiritual gifts, then, are service-gifts. This is their purpose. They are not given for selfish but for unselfish use, namely for the service of other people.*
      - 3) Max Anders, *When believers are equipped and people accept the adventure of ministering to others, then the whole body is built up, matured, strengthened, and flourishes.*
- B. The goals of gifted people (13)
  1. To promote doctrinal unity (13a), ***until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,***
    - a. *Until we all attain* means to arrive at a particular state.
      - 1) It may be seen in the 3-part process of salvation.
        - a) Justification is when we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life, the point of time when salvation began.
        - b) Sanctification is the process whereby we become more like who we are instead of who we were.
        - c) Glorification (or attain) is when we are exactly like who we are, when we die or when the Lord returns.
      - 2) There will always be a need for gifted people in the church because attaining is in the future not the present or past, and it is for every Christian.

- b. The components of Christian unity.
- 1) *Faith*
    - a) One faith was noted in Ephesians 4:5 and is emphasized in Jude 3, *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*
    - b) Our faith is not just a creed but commitment to Jesus Christ as *Lord*.
    - c) Max Anders, *The crucified, resurrected Lord is the object of that faith. To confess Jesus as Lord is to express the faith of the church and to unify oneself with all members of that church.*
  - 2) *knowledge of the Son of God*
    - a) *Knowledge is accurate, full and complete.*
    - b) Some have faith in Christ but not faith in the Son of God, Note Romans 10:2, *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*
    - c) Paul demands that Christian unity requires faith in the same person who is fully God and fully man.
  - 3) John Stott, *This expression effectively disposes of the argument that unity can grow without Christian faith or knowledge. On the contrary, it is precisely the more we know and trust the Son of God that we grow in the kind of unity with one another which he desires.*
2. To produce spiritual maturity (13b), ***to mature manhood,***
- a. *Mature* in this instance does not describe age but *behavior*.
  - b. Christians are called to a maturity which is beyond societal norms of morality but in conformity to Christ.
  - c. *Mature* also means *perfect*, Matthew 5:48, *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*
  - d. The goal of gifted people in the church is to develop spiritually mature believers who imitate Christ.
  - e. Richard Strauss, *God is not trying to produce successful Christian business people who can impress the world with their money and influence. He is not trying to fashion successful church leaders who can influence people with their organizational and administrative skills. Nor is He trying to fashion great orators who can move people with persuasive words. He wants to reproduce in His followers the character of His son—His love, His kindness, His compassion, His holiness, His humility, His unselfishness, His servant attitude, His willingness to suffer wrongfully, His ability to forgive, and so much more that characterized His life on earth.*
3. To develop Christ-like believers in Christ-like churches (13c), ***to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,***
- a. *measure* is a *unit of comparison* with the measure or model of spiritual maturity being Jesus Christ.
  - b. Christlike-believers and a Christ-like church demonstrate Jesus Christ in His fullness.
  - c. William Barclay, *In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale was passing one night down a hospital ward. She paused to bend over the bed of a sorely wounded soldier. As she looked down, the wounded youth looked up and said: 'You're Christ to me' ... That is what the true church member ought to be.*
  - d. Max Anders, *The church's goal is that each member and thus the entire church will show to the world all the attributes and qualities of Christ. Then the church will truly be the one body of Christ.*
- C. The result of gifted people equipping believers for service (14-16)
1. Believers will be stable in their faith (14), ***so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.***
    - a. A stable faith is not a childish faith that has not grown in the Word
      - 1) Hebrews 5:12, *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,*
      - 2) James 1:6, *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.*
      - 3) John Stott, *Of course we are to resemble children in their humility and innocence, but not in their ignorance or instability.*
    - b. It is not easily confused by false doctrine.
      - 1) 1 John 4:1, *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*
      - 2) 1 Timothy 6:20, *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"*

- c. It is not deceived by human trickery.
    - 1) 2 Peter 2:3, *And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.*
    - 2) 1 Corinthians 3:19, *For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"*
    - 3) William Barclay, *There is only one way to avoid being blown about by the latest religious fashion and to avoid being seduced by the convincing but wrong arguments of clever people, and that is by continual growth into Christ.*
  - d. It is not overwhelmed by demonic plans.
    - 1) Ephesians 6:11, *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil...But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*
    - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:3, *But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*
  - e. Warren Wiersbe, *The cultists do not try to win lost souls to Christ. They do not establish rescue missions in the slum areas of our cities, because they have no good news for the man on skid row. Instead, these false teachers try to capture immature Christians, and for this reason, most of the membership of the false cults comes from local churches, particularly churches that do not feed their people the Word of God.*
2. Believers will speak the truth in love (15a), ***Rather, speaking the truth in love,***
- a. *Rather* gives contrast between verse 14 and 15a.
    - 1) Paul identifies a mature believe as one who rejects heresy and proclaims the truth of the Gospel.
    - 2) 1 John 3:18, *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*
  - b. A mature Christian exhibits love even to the unlovely as the truth is proclaimed.
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *The truth may be as medicine to the person who needs it, but love is the sugar that added to the medicine makes it palatable.*
    - 2) Max Anders, *False teachers showed no love or care for the members; they simply wanted to get their own way. Mature believers search for the truth as a united body, loving and caring for the needs of each member. Such loving, caring search for truth allows them to grow as members of the body whose head is Christ, for Christ is the truth.*
3. Believers and the church will grow into the fullness of Christ (15b-16), ***we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***
- a. A Christian is to be conformed to the image of Christ.
    - 1) Romans 8:29a, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.*
    - 2) Colossians 1:27, *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*
  - b. A mature Christian is one who is growing into the fulness of Christ.
    - 1) Paul's illustration of the church as a living body illustrates the importance of the parts of the body being connected to the head.
    - 2) John 15:5, *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
    - 3) William Barclay, *The only thing which can keep the individual Christian solid in the faith and secure against persuasive arguments that lead people astray, the only thing which can keep the Church healthy and efficient, is an intimate association with Jesus Christ, who is the head and the directing mind of the body.*
  - c. A mature church is composed of maturing Christians serving effectively in love.
    - 1) *From whom* looks back to the centrality of Jesus Christ.
      - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus Christ is both the One into whom we grow and the One out of whom we grow as a whole church. The whole body grows as each part carries out its proper function.*
      - b) Harold Hoehner, *Each believer is to function in Christ's body by God's enabling grace in accord with the measure of the gift Christ bestowed on him (v. 7). When each believer accomplishes that measure, then the church grows properly (v. 16), coming ultimately to the measure of Christlikeness (v. 13).*

- 2) *Love* is what enlivens each member of the body and builds up the church.
  - a) As blood courses through the human body, love must flow through each member, one to another.
  - b) A mature Christian speaks the truth in love because he lives in a loving relationship with other maturing members of the body of Christ.

<i><b>CONCLUSION</b></i>
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- A. Every Christian is given one or more spiritual gifts for service.
- B. Jesus Christ has authority to give gifts according to His will.
- C. Spiritual gifts are for the benefit of the body of Christ, the church.
- D. Gifted people develop doctrinal unity, spiritual maturity and Christ-like believers in a Christ-like church.
- E. Spiritually mature believers are stable in their faith and speak the truth in love.