

RECOGNIZING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Diversity in Unity in the Body of Christ: Eph. 4:7-16

⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

⁸ Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

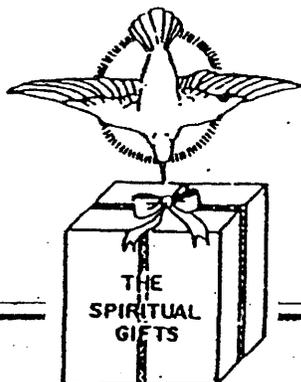
¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

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.



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Diversity in Unity in the Body of Christ: Eph. 4:7-16

1A. The Portioning of the Gifts: 4:7-11

1b. Their derivation: 7-10

1c. The principle of grace: 7

Unity does not imply uniformity. There are varieties of gifts and offices.

Gifts: Not all get the same gifts.
 Not all get the same number of gifts.
 Not all get the same amount of the gift.

2c. The procurement of the gifts: 8-11

1d. The illustration from the O.T.

1e. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18-19. Psalm 68 is a psalm of victory after battle. The exact battle is not known. Perhaps it is a reference to David's victory over the Ammonites (2 Sam. 12:26-31). Yahweh is given credit for victory. The ascending, *anabas*, is God ascending to His throne, a sign of victory. He took enemies, gave gifts, that is the spoils and booty. The Hebrew says He gave gifts unto men.

The answer lies in the fact that God took in order to give. The work took, *laquach*, may mean to receive in order to give. (Gen. 15:19), Abraham took animals and gave them to God as God ratified the covenant

2e. Victorious kings receive spoils and distribute them.

2d. The application to the Lord:

1e. Christ's descent into hades:

1f. Some say this is the "harrowing (emptying) of hell" by Christ at His ascension, but this thought is not in the language:
 1) This view does not take the O.T. usage into consideration.
 2) The captives of 4:8 are distinguished from men.
 3) The view misses the idea of the grammar: He captivated those, so there is a captivity resulting, not "he released them."

2f. Christ defeated and captured His enemies: Satan, his host, sin, death, as Col. 2:15 states, "and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made show of them openly, triumphing over them."

3f. The reference to the lower parts of the earth:

1g. At death He descended into hades, Psa. 16:10

1) This stands in contrast with "far above"

2) This agrees with the lower parts.

3) Death in the OT is always seen as down.

Deut. 32:22; Neh. 4:13; Psa. 63:9-10; 86:13.

However the passage speaks not of the emptying of hades but the triumph over His enemies.

2g. An alternate interpretation is that grammatically the emphasis is on the contrast between His ascending and descending, so that the term "the lower parts" stands in apposition to earth or to put it into simple English, Christ first descended to the lower parts (from the high heavens) namely, the earth.

Ryrie's footnote on Ephesians 4:8 is very cogent:

"Paul uses an illustration from Ps. 68:18 ps. In which the triumphant warrior is elevated when he returns with hosts of prisoners, receiving gifts from the conquered people, and distributing gifts to his followers. Christ conquered Satan and all that had conquered us."

2e. Christ's ascent into heaven:

Christ conquered Satan, sin and death and ascended to heaven and from heaven bestows gifts on His body, the church. Paul states in 1:23, (the church) is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

2b. The enumeration of the gifts: 4:11

"He gave"—*edoken*, denotes the grace of the giver. The "he," *autos*, is emphatic: he himself did it.

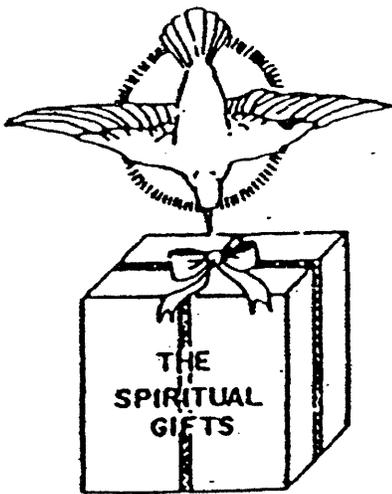
1c. The nature of the gifts:

- 1d. The definition of a spiritual gift: A God-given ability for service.
- 2d. The double nature of the gifts: Christ first endowed the men, and then He gave them so endowed to the church.

The Bible contains four chapters with the lists of spiritual gifts: Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4 and 1 Peter 4.

1e. Apostleship:

- 1f. The nature of apostleship:
The gift is general and specific. In the general sense, it means one sent with a message (Phil. 2:25, Epaphroditus). In a specialized sense it refers to the Twelve, and a few to whom the gift was given and who were accredited by signs.



- 2f. The qualifications for apostleship:
The scriptures refute the idea that apostleship is a valid gift today and refute the idea that all spiritual gifts ever given still have to exist today, otherwise one denies the power of the Holy Spirit.

The qualifications for an apostle were very stringent, based on Acts 1 when Matthias was chosen as a successor to Judas.

1) An apostle had to accompany Christ from His baptism to His ascension; 2) he had to have seen the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 9:1; Acts 1:21-22); 3) he had to perform miracles (2 Cor. 12:12, "the signs of an apostle"); 4) he had to be commissioned by the resurrected Lord (Jn. 13:16; Mt. 12:1,2).

No one alive today dates back to the time of Christ's baptism.

2e. Prophets:

A prophet received a message from God by special revelation and was guided in the declaring of it. A prophet was authenticated by God Himself. Prophecy includes **foretelling** (Acts 11:28; 21:9, 11) and **forthtelling** (1 Cor. 14:24ff; Acts 15:32).

3e. Evangelists:

The first two gifts ceased with the conclusion of the canon of scripture. Evangelists are only twice mentioned: Acts 11:8, Philip, 2 Timothy 4:5, Timothy is to do the work of an evangelist.

--an evangelist had the special ability to state the truth clearly.
 --he spread the gospel among the heathens, the unreached (the contemporary term would be missionary).
 --perhaps an evangelist had an itinerant ministry (Philip, Acts 8:5, 26, 40; 21:8). Philip moved from Caesarea to the desert and back to Caesarea.

4e. Pastor-Teachers:

These are aspects of the same office.

1f. Pastor: administration or shepherding, watch-care, protecting.

2f. Teacher: feeding ministry. This gift can be given alone or in connection with pastor.

We must distinguish between the office and the gift.
 --Some gifts were foundational gifts.
 --Every gift need not appear in every generation.

2A. The Purpose of the Gifts: 4:12-16

1b. The maturation in the body: 12-13

The saints are to be perfected in order that they might do the work of the ministry. The word "perfecting" is only used here in the N.T. It means to be fit or complete.

Verse 13 speaks of unity, majority and conformity. The term "until" looks at the rapture. The word "man" (*aner*) is contrasted from child. The term "reach" speaks of the place of destination, the edification of the body of Christ.

2b. The protection of the body: 14

Paul wishes that believers in the body would no longer be "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

"Sleight" (*kupeia*) comes from "playing with dice." The false teachers pursue a deliberate plan of deception. "Craftiness" speaks of cunning and dishonesty. Error uses Bible passages (apparently with their real meaning) and reasonings (seemingly sound) and thus easily fools the "infants in the Christian faith."

Pastors better warn their flock and thus become in controversy because of a) the instability of the immature and b) the deceitfulness of error.

3b. The edification of the body: 15-16

Verse 13 looks at the whole church—the future.
Verse 14 looks at individuals—the present.

1c. The growth of the individual: 15

Walking in truth needs to be done in love. Notice the key word love appears again at the end of verse 16.

2c. The growth of the body: 16

The present participles indicate the process is ongoing.

- 1d. Cooperation: every bone, ligament and muscle supplies vital force, is just as necessary as the four gifts.
- 2d. Coordination: each single part works together to make the entire body function. No part of the body is unimportant.
- 3d. Completion: the motivating sphere is love. Spiritual increase in love results in numerical increase. May this be true of this church and any other church!

Jesus' Descent to Hell

