

"Christ's Gifts to His Church"

Ephesians 4:1-7

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Ephesians 4:1-7

"1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 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;" (Eph 4:1-11)

The explicit and direct command of the Lord Jesus through the beloved Apostle is for us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is accomplished with "lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." The reason for this is that all division in the body of Christ is does not come from God but from somewhere else. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There is One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Let us consider verses 7-11 today.

Verse 7: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." There are some important things to note:

- A. The church is the work of the grace of God. The church is founded upon the mercy and kindness of God in Christ, and must be so conceived in our minds. It is not the result of our own work, but the work of the Lord.
- B. Every Christian has received this grace. Everyone has something to do and everyone has received grace to do it.
- C. This grace is according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Christ measures the gifts and gives them according to His own will.
- D. According to parallel passages in Corinthians, this gifts are not given primarily for the

benefit of those who have them, but for the benefit of the whole body, as our catechism states.

Verse 8: “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” This is a quotation from Psalm 68, which was written to celebrate the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem in the time of David. The Psalm praises God for His great triumphs.

A. It is common in the Bible to speak of God “rising up” and showing Himself strong in behalf of His people.

B. As David is a type and figure of the Messiah, it is certainly right and proper to ascribe this Psalm to the Lord Jesus

C. The victories of God are compared to the victories of great conquerors which were celebrated by triumphal processions into the capital city of the conqueror, the degrading of kings and warriors conquered by the Emperor and the rewarding of the servants of the Emperor. This is indicated by the words in the Psalm “18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. 19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.” (Ps 68:18-19)

D. As it is proper to ascribe these words to the Messiah, so it is appropriate to apply them to the greatest triumph that God has ever achieved in behalf of His people: the resurrection of Christ and His ascension into Heaven, a triumph over sin and death and hell and all the power of the devil.

E. Psalm 56 says that the gifts are for even the rebellions—that is those who had been in rebellion; so the gifts are all of grace. Sometimes this would happen, that Emperors and great kings would subdue rebellions in their possessions, and after defeated their enemies, put them under tribute and exalt some to be rulers over their own lands, after receiving expressions of submission and loyalty from them. This is certainly appropriate to apply to Christ’s gifts to those in the church, for all of us were dead in trespasses and sins, and the gift of life is certainly the great blessing that Christ gives to all His people.

Verses 9, 10: (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.)

A. The ascension implies that there was a descent. When God is said to “rise up” it means that it has appeared as though He has not been active—as though He were asleep. Many times God appeared to abandon His people, giving over to captivity because of their disobedience and rebellions. Then He would “Rise up” and overthrow their enemies.

B. So it appeared as if the devil had triumphed over Christ. He lay in the grave, the most extreme humiliation that could be imagined for the Son of God. God, who was clothed in

human flesh, now lay in the grave, still united to that flesh for He never abandons us, even in the extreme humiliation of death. “Descended into the lower parts of the earth” does not mean that He went to purgatory, but speaks of his humiliation.

C. But having experienced the humiliation of the cross and death and burial, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, triumphant over sin and death and hell, over all the power and authority of the devil.

D. He ascended that He might fill all things: This hearkens back to Ephesians 1:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:
22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,
23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

E. Christ is the measure of all things because of His ascension into heaven and His sitting at the right hand of God.

a. He is the measure of godliness; or morality, of theology, of all things, of the church, the communion of the saints, your love for your brothers and sisters, your wife, your family, every thing must be brought to the measure of Christ.

b. This is why Paul prayed:

“14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”
(Eph 3:14-19)

c. The Lord Jesus is the measure of all things: He is the length and the width and the height and the depth. We have been predestined to be conformed to his image. The Lord Jesus is All and All, the express image of God and the fullness of Him who fills all and all.

May God bless you. Next week I will speak of the manifestation of this exaltation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ in the ministry of the Word and the building of the Church.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.