

# The Unity of the Body – Part 3

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul urges a unity of maturity in the life of believers in all humility and patience
2. aim – to cause us to desire a deep unity in the church based on a humble doctrinal maturity
3. passage – Ephesians 4:1-16

### b. outline

1. The Unity in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:1-3)
2. The Unity in the Body (Ephesians 4:4-6)
3. The Unity in the Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-10)
4. The Unity in the Faith (Ephesians 4:11-16)

### c. opening

1. the **importance** of unity for the church
  - a. Paul gives to the Ephesians his first great **imperative**: walk worthy of your calling
    1. our calling being two (2) things: a) the initial **effectual** call by which the Spirit of God calls out of our spiritual tomb to faith in Christ, and b) the continuing call by which the Spirit of God works in us to guide us to holiness in Christ **and** to every kind of service for his kingdom (**vocation**)
    2. thus, the imperative is to “walk” (**i.e.** to live) in a way that is **consistent** with that calling
      - a. to live as a people of enduring faith in Christ and to be useful servants in his kingdom
  - b. Paul (obviously) considered church unity to be a central matter of concern to him
    1. he knows that unity in the church is central to its ability to advance the cause of Christ
    2. he wants that unity to be built (firstly) on a people walking in humility, patience, and love
    3. but, he also believes that church unity is walking **within** something even greater:
2. the **organic** unity of the church
  - a. organic = the way in which **all** humble, patient, and loving followers of Christ are **knit together**
    1. **e.g.** the “**golf ball**” imagery – layers of unity: personal piety at the core, surrounded by the layer of service towards one another, covered by a layer of maturity and protection in the faith
  - b. Paul will **expand** upon the “**body**” imagery of **v. 4** to explain how the unity of believers in the church is much more than just them being a **machine** of disparate individuals “doing their own thing”
    1. the “**body**” becomes a key concept in **vv. 12, 16** – a secondary keyword under “**unity**”
  - c. Paul (**now**) explains this greater form of unity through something known as **spiritual gifts**
    1. first, he contends that there is a gifting that comes from Christ within his role as the Conquering King – that spiritual gifting is something that Christ grants to his church as Lord over it
    2. second, he contends that this gifting leads to certain specific functions in the church that help it to be unified – that spiritual gifting is specific and concrete in the church
    3. third, he contends that the goal of this gifting is to create an organic unity in the church around the doctrines of the faith – that spiritual gifting leads to spiritual growth and maturity
  - d. **Paul believes that the unity of the church is created organically – that all believers are granted spiritual gifts which are used in the body to create a single, organic whole – that all are gifted by the Spirit to serve as an indispensable element of its organic existence**

## III. The Unity in the Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-10)

### Content

#### a. the **definition** of spiritual gifts in the body

1. spiritual gifts = specific **ability(ies)** granted to believers through which the Holy Spirit works to accomplish tasks which **advance the cause of Christ in the world**
  - a. **charisma** = gift; something given by grace – the gifting by Christ of believers (**v. 7**)
  - b. talent = a **natural ability** granted to human beings by God as creatures created in his image
  - c. spiritual gifts can be either 1) unique abilities given to a believer upon conversion, or 2) talents **redeemed** and **empowered** by the Spirit for the work of ministry (**e.g. faith, giving, etc.**)
2. by definition, **all spiritual gifts** are extraordinary workings of the Holy Spirit **through** the believer into specific circumstances or outworkings (**note 1 Corinthians 12:7**; “**manifestation**”)
 

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”

- a. spiritual gifts are *not* “powers” dumped on believers (that they can “brag” about having)
- b. spiritual gifts are workings of a *Person* (the Spirit) through those he permeates in residence
  - 1. **the Third Person is a living, dynamic, and creative being, not a “force” or “power”**
- 3. myths related to spiritual gifts (as “taught in the church” or when treated as a “fad” by the church)
  - a. myth #1 – that spiritual gifts are just *nebulous* movements of the Spirit through believers
    - 1. Paul gives *specific* lists of gifts in (at least) 4 places (**1 Cor. 12 [x2], Rom. 12, Eph. 4**)
  - b. myth #2 – the spiritual gift(s) of a person can be determined by “personality” tests
  - c. myth #3 – believers are granted *one* spiritual gift for their entire lifetime
  - d. myth #4 – believers should not pursue other gifts *beyond* their normal giftedness
  - e. myth #5 – that spiritual giftedness is based primarily on “skill” (**see below**)
- b. the fact of spiritual gifts in the body**
  - 1. how do we *know* that Paul is (**in fact**) speaking about the concept of spiritual gifts in **vv. 7-10**?
    - a. other than the fact that most pastors and theologians see this passage as a discussion of such?
    - b. firstly, exegeting this passage will show that this is the direction Paul is going
    - c. and, that this passage aligns with the core teaching of **1 Cor. 12-14** and **Rom. 12:4-8**
  - 2. **v. 7a** – the **transition** to the concept of gifts imparted to the church (to organic unity)
    - a. the word “*but*” implies that Paul desires to *add* something to the previous discussion
    - b. **IOW:** personal piety is important, “*but*” it must include something else ...
  - 3. **v. 7b** – the **reality** of this concept flowing from the very work of Christ himself
    - a. “*grace*” = the choice of God, from his nature, to grant a benevolence to the undeserving
      - 1. obviously, grace is *foundational* to our saving relationship with God
      - 2. but, grace is also *fundamental* to our on-going relationships with one another
    - b. “*gift*” = a divinely granted mercy (by grace) into the life of “*each one of us*”
      - 1. **i.e.** it is this word coupled with a similar word in **v. 8b** that signifies *spiritual* gifts here
      - 2. **question:** what does Christ give as a gift to every believer?
        - a. certainly, the gift *includes* the original free gift of salvation itself (**Rom. 6:23**)
        - b. but, Christ gives the gift of his Spirit as the *agent* of this salvation – the Spirit is the *primary* gift of Christ to the elect *leading* to their regeneration and salvation (**Luke 11:13**)  
*“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*
  - c. **Christ’s grace to us is both our salvation and our giftedness as we are united in service**
- 4. **v. 8** – the **establishment** of this concept within prophecy and the history of the Messiah
  - a. Paul quotes from **Psalms 68:18** = a psalm of David praising Yahweh as he (God) had gone out and crushed the enemies of Israel, and then ascended to his place of power over all
    - 1. **i.e.** God had “descended” to act for Israel, and then “ascended” to his rightful place of worship
    - 2. and, with his victory, God now received the “spoils” of victory and the praises of his people
  - b. Paul modifies his quotation to *reverse the imagery* (**why does he do this?**)
    - 1. the Psalm has clear *messianic* overtones – it is a picture of the (eventual) savior of Israel
    - 2. Paul sees it (now) as applying to Jesus – Jesus Christ has come as this Messiah
    - 3. thus, as the King of Kings, Jesus has “ascended” (to the right hand of God) with a “*host of captives*” (his elect) and (now) he “*gives gifts to men*”
    - 3. so, Paul changes the wording to apply the Psalm to the (now completed) work of Christ – as the Conquering King, Jesus *lavishes* his captives with gifts (rather than receiving tribute)
  - c. **Christ is the Messiah that fulfills the prophecy of Psalm 68:18 – he is One foreshadowed in this Psalm, thus he is the One who acts in relation to the role of a king and his subjects**
- 5. **vv. 9-10** – the **proof** of this concept within the specific work of Christ
  - a. **note:** in most English Bibles, these verses are in parentheses – they are an *excursion*
    - 1. **i.e.** Paul stops to explain what he means by Christ “ascended” – what has Christ *done*?
  - b. **v. 9** – the Son of God “descended” into the “*lower regions*” or “*lower parts of the earth*”
    - 1. to Incarnation – descending from his divine place into the estate of humanity
    - 2. to humanness – descending to the struggles of human existence (temptation, obedience)
    - 3. to death – descending to experiencing rejection and death, taking on sin within himself
    - 4. to the consequences of death – descending to experience all of what sin requires (“*lower ...*”)
    - 5. to descend means that the Son of God came down to experience *and conquer every aspect of human existence* – there was nothing in the human experience that he did not conquer
  - c. **v. 10** – the Son of God “ascended” far above “*all the heavens*”
    - 1. just as the Son had conquered every aspect of human existence, he was now exalted above everything (and everyone) in the heavens (**i.e.** glorified by the Father above everything)
    - 2. and, he now “*fill[s] all things*” – he pours out (from his exalted place) every imaginable gift

- d. **Christ lavishes the elect with his gifts because he is the ultimate Conquering King, the One who descended from God, had victory over every human enemy, and now has been exalted**
- 6. **v. 11** – the **examples** of this concept being played out *literally* in the life of the church (**see next**)
- c. the incorporation of spiritual gifts in the body**
  - 1. Paul believes that the unity of the body is not just *individual*, but it is also *corporate*
    - a. **meaning: there is to be an organic unity in the church that is based upon the outpouring of giftedness amongst the people of Christ – as we serve alongside one another, using the gifts of the Spirit, we create this unity as we become more and more reliant upon another and in relation to one another**
    - b. it's not just about us being humble and patient and loving – it is about us *servng one another* to advance the cause of Christ inside and outside of the church