

Ephesians 4:7–16

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

"God's Design for His Church"
Ephesians 4:7-13

INTRO:

The local church is the agency through which God is doing His work in the world today. That is why, as the Apostle Paul taught us how to live out the tremendous spiritual realities in **chapters 1-3** in our daily lives, he is concerned about God's church.

If we are going to *“walk worthy of the calling with which [we] were called,”* we must do this worthy walking in the local church. So, Paul wrote extensively about God's church in the passage that we are going to explore today. In **verse 7**, the Apostle turned our attention to the gifts God gave to His church. Our exploration will fall into three parts.

I. The Giver of the Gifts (v. 7-10)

II. The Gifted Individuals Who are Given (v. 11)

III. The Purpose of the Gifted Individuals (v. 12, 13)

I. The Giver of the Gifts (v. 7-10)

A. In the verses before **verse 7**, the Apostle Paul wrote about the central truths around which true unity is to be built in the local church (**verses 3-6**). At **verse 7**, Paul introduced another subject.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

Each one of us, who are saved, were given a specific spiritual gift by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are also told this in **1 Corinthians 12:7**.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”

1. This gift was a part of Christ's triumphant ascension after His death. **Verse 8** is an allusion to **Psalms 68**. It paints a picture of the Lord Jesus ascending to heaven in a triumphal procession, proclaiming victory over sin, death, and the tomb! As a part of the triumph, He gave gifts to His people!

2. Paul is not satisfied to just mention this triumph, he felt compelled to dwell on the wonder of it to the glory of His Savior.

B. In **verse 9** we are told that He that ascended first descended to *“the lower parts of the earth.”* What this all means, I am not sure any one really knows. We do know that it includes that which Paul describes in **Philippians 2:5-8**.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

1. The gifts we receive to serve Him are gifts that were purchased at a great personal cost by the King of glory. He was willing to go all the way to the cross so that we might be saved and that we might have the privilege of serving Him.

2. (**v. 10**) The same One who descended also ascended to the highest, to the place where God the Father is, and thus is filling all things, including His church.

That is so we might be empowered to use the gifts to serve and glorify Him! The gifts are not given for our individual benefit, but for our Lord's glory in His church.

II. The Gifted Individuals Who are Given (v.11)

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,” (Ephesians 4:11).

A. What gifts are these that God the Son gave to His church? Paul gave us a list of special gifted individuals whom God gives to His church so that the work might take place. **Verse 11** says, ***“And He Himself gave . . .”*** These gifted individuals are the Lord Jesus Christ's personal gifts to His church. ***“And He gave.”***

B. Whom did He give them? ***“He Himself gave some to be Apostles.”*** Notice the emphasis is on the ones who have the gift, not the gift itself! The Apostles in mind here are those special individuals personally called, enabled, and authorized by the King of Kings to serve in a special ministry to His church. These are the men who wrote the New Testament and who started the churches in the various cities around the world. They had to be men who had personally witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This gift was foundational and it disappeared with the death of the first Apostles.

C. ***“He Himself gave . . . some to be prophets.”*** These individuals were also foundational in their gifts. They provided direct revelation from God before the New Testament canon was closed.

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” Ephesians 2:19-20.

These first two gifted individuals are not present in the church today!

D. ***“He Himself gave . . . some to be evangelists.”*** Who are these gifted individuals the Lord Jesus gave to His church? There are two places where this gift is mentioned in the New Testament.

1. First, in **Acts 21:8** where we read of Philip, the evangelist.

“On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.”

Now what did Philip do? Did he travel around to churches and conduct week long evangelistic crusades? No! He was one of the original deacons and we find that he went into the virgin territory of Samaria and planted churches there!

2. Second, we find it in Paul's closing exhortation to Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:5**. ***“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”***

Timothy was Paul's assistant in church planting in Asia Minor and Europe. At this point in his life, tradition tells us that Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus. It is conceivable that Paul is directing Timothy to not neglect the ministry of starting churches around him.

3. From this limited information, I think it is reasonable to conclude that the evangelist in **Ephesians 4:11** is the church planting missionary.

E. ***“He Himself gave some to be . . .pastors and teachers.”*** This is one individual and not two offices. What is his function in the Lord's church? He is first to pastor or shepherd God's local flock. Shepherds first and foremost, feed the flock! They also lead the flock.

“He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake” (Psalm 23:2b-3).

He also protects the flock and sometimes corrects the flock. The major function that he has is that he is the teacher. He communicates the Word of God to the people of God on a regular basis. He is responsible for the spiritual diet of the flock.

III. The Purpose of the Gifted Individuals (v. 12-13)

“For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12–13).

A. Why did the Lord Jesus give these gifted individuals to the church? It is so they can do the ministry, right? No. Remember **verse 7**?

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

These individuals are not the only ones given gifts to be used in the ministry. Each one of us also has been given a gift. So, what are these gifted individuals (evangelists and pastors) supposed to do?

B. We are told in **verses 12-13**. They are ***“to equip the saints.”*** The word means ***“to prepare.”*** Now let me digress a little here. What equipment does Paul have in mind here? It is not the latest and greatest video on ministry methodology. It is the Word of God.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

I think the major problem in the Lord's church today is that most of God's saints don't know the Bible well enough to do the ministry!

C. What is the major goal of this ministry, Paul? It's to create a great army of believers to win the world for Christ, right? Not really. Look at the rest of **verses 12 and 13**.

“For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

1. It is to literally **“build up”** the body of Christ. Spiritual growth and maturity is the first goal of local church ministry. What about evangelism? That happens when Christians reach spiritual maturity.

2. How do we know when we have grown enough? What is the line on the door that we have to measure up to?

We are spiritually mature when we are come to unity around the things that really matter (see **verses 3-6**).

We are spiritually mature when we have an abundant personal knowledge of Jesus Christ (**v. 13a**).

“Until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

If we do not have a real, growing, vibrant, personal relationship with God, we are not spiritual.

We are spiritually mature when we are complete spiritually (**v. 13b**), when Jesus makes us whole and able to minister to others. Some are not grown enough and secure enough in Him to be effective ministers.

Finally, we are spiritually mature when we are filled with the fullness of Christ (**v. 13c**). When we are totally controlled by Him and not by our own desires and will, we have reached a measure of spiritual maturity.

As we step up to the wall and mark our growth on that standard, where are we? It is as we grow that we minister and as we grow God gives us spiritual children to nurture. And the church is built up the way a church should be built. The end result is that God the Father is glorified in His church through Jesus Christ.

Hymn# 210 Jesus Paid It All