

Walk Worthy

“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”

EPHESIANS 4:1-5:21

LESSON 3 – THE UNITY OF THE FAITH – EPH. 4:7-10

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Walk in Unity

- ▶ Continuing on in our study of Ephesians 4 under the theme of walking in unity, we come next to Eph. 4:7-10. This next paragraph of text is a rich source of truth for us as we learn to discern. For as we have studied, discernment is not something that just happens, and honestly, it is not something we can muster up on our own without any assistance or input from outside of ourselves. Here then is Ephesians 4:7-10:
- ▶ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

True Unity

- ▶ Notice where this text will take us looking all the way to the end of the paragraph at verse 16 – we will go through gifts given to the church, the work of ministry, the edifying of the church, the unity of the faith, maturity, truth, love, and church growth.
- ▶ Notice in the middle of it all that this paragraph of text is telling us how to come to the unity of the faith – this is true unity. It is being unified around a common faith in a common Savior. It is about fellowship and growth within the Body of Christ. The unity of the faith.
- ▶ So how do we get there and what role does discernment play in the journey? Today we start by looking at the gifts that Christ has given to His church because in this text we see that those gifts are used to bring about edification and unity. What gifts? What tools? Look at what the Bible says.

Gifts Given by Divine Right

- ▶ Within the church we are each given a free gift. Verse 7 says “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” This is a free gift, specifically given as Christ directs, to enable us to walk worthy. The emphasis is not the gift or even the Giver, but the nature of the gift – the fact that it is of GRACE and FREE.
- ▶ The key of course to using these gifts is unity, not uniformity, the two are not the same! We are not to be cookie-cutter Christians, all looking, talking, and dressing the same. Neither are we all given the same gifts.
- ▶ We are many members within one Body. Often there is too much emphasis put on individuality at the cost of downplaying the fact that the church is a covenant community. But here we see that we have indeed each been given, individually, gifts of grace. These gifts are not for individual use and gratification though for as the Bible so clearly shows us these gifts given to individuals have been given so that we as individuals might use them to the benefit of the rest of the Body.

A Hymn of Ascension

- ▶ However, before we get ahead of ourselves, we need to stop and see that Christ has a Divine Right to bestow these gifts as He pleases. The quote and explanation in verses 8-10 make this plain.
- ▶ Verse 8 quotes Psalm 68. This is a *Hymn of Ascension and Victory*. I recommend a read through this Psalm today, and while you read it think about the application Paul makes of it here in Ephesians. For here Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”
- ▶ Christ has a Divine Right to give free gifts of grace because He has fulfilled this Psalm. Remember I mentioned that it is a Psalm of Ascension and Victory? What does that mean?

Taking Captivity Captive

- ▶ In the past, especially in the Middle East, when a war broke out, usually the invader would cross the border and conquer a border town taking the citizens that were not killed as prisoners. The victimized nation would rally behind their king and launch a counter-attack. If successful, the victorious king would “ascend” back to his capital by way of a large parade.
- ▶ Following him in the procession would be the spoils his men had taken in battle. Some of this was shared with the cheering crowds and admiring subjects. Then would follow the prisoners taken in battle now to serve as slaves to the king and the conquering nation. Taking up the rear of the victory parade would be those of his nation’s people who had first been captured by the invaders. These rescued citizens would be paraded about as the final proof of victory. The captives had been re-captured.

Victory!

- ▶ This is a picture Paul uses from Psalm 68:18. Christ has come and freed and reclaimed those who are His, captured by the enemy, and now He parades them before the enemy as proof of His victory! Our salvation is the re-capturing of our souls! (See Acts 18:10; John 10:16, 11:51-52; Acts 15:14-18). How did Christ accomplish this re-capture? Paul tells us first that Jesus descended to death.
- ▶ 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. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:5-11

He Descended

- ▶ It says here that as Christ accomplishes God's will He descended to the lower parts of the earth. Some have taken this to mean that Jesus went to hell after He died. But the Bible does not teach us that Jesus went to hell. A simple reading of the gospels proves that Jesus died and went immediately into the presence of the Father. There is no basis whatsoever for the claim that Jesus went to hell to suffer for our sins.
- ▶ In fact, if Jesus went to hell, then He is a liar! For on the cross before He died He cried out "It is finished!" Now if there was still work to be done to redeem us then He lied. He had already born the full wrath of God for our sins while He was still alive and on the cross, at that moment when the Father turned His back on His Son and Jesus cried out in extreme pain and agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

He Descended

- ▶ Further we see that Jesus prayed just before He died, “Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.” If He went to hell then His Spirit did not go to the Father at that point, and again, either He lied, or the Father denied His last request! The bottom line here is that there was no need for Jesus to go to hell. And a careful examination of Scripture proves that what is meant when it says that Jesus descended to the lower parts of the earth. We know that it does NOT refer to hell when we look at the other ways the phrase is used in the Scripture:

He Descended

- ▶ Descended to death in Psalm 63:9 refers to death by sword.
- ▶ Descended to earth in Isaiah 44:23 refers to a place with mountains and trees.
- ▶ Descended as Jonah in the Fish in Matt. 12:40 is used as a picture of the grave.
- ▶ Descended as a Man, in Psalm 139:15 refers to being in a woman's womb, as He was born of a virgin.
- ▶ So we see by its usage that for Jesus to descend means simply that He came to earth, was born as a man, died, and His body was put in the grave. And Paul tells us in explaining the Psalm that because Jesus descended He then had the right to ascend!

He Ascended

- ▶ He ascended far above the heavens, to the Throne of God (see Acts 1:9-11, 7:55-56). Not simply heaven, but the very Throne of God. And remember, this is to ascend to the highest possible place, for this is where God is and He has to humble Himself simply to look into the day to day affairs of heaven! (Psalm 113:6).
- ▶ And as He has ascended, it is so that He might fill all things. He is the Sovereign of the Universe (Phil. 2:9-11). He fills the universe with His blessing, and He especially fills and uses His church.
- ▶ We see then that Eph 4:7-10 reveal to us that Jesus has by Divine Right bestowed upon each of us free gifts of His grace. Next week we will continue through Ephesians 4 and examine a few of these gifts that He has given to the Church.

The Unity of the Faith

- ▶ Our Faith is a gift of grace accomplished by God working in and through us.
- ▶ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. – Ephesians 2:8-9
- ▶ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake... Philippians 1:29
- ▶ John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.” John 3:27
- ▶ Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” – John 6:29
- ▶ Next Week: Gifts Given to the Church – Eph. 4:11