

Our message for today will be taken from Ephesians 4:7-16.

Last time in our series from Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, we saw Paul teaching the unity of the Body of Christ in verses 1-6.

We saw that we don’t “bring about” unity. It already exists. The instruction in Ephesians 4:3 is not “to create” unity or “bring about unity”—it is to *maintain* or *preserve* the unity that already exists.

Now as we continue to look at this passage, we find Paul beginning to assure believer that when you preserve unity, you don’t lose your individual identity, contribution and responsibility to the body of Christ.

Paul writes in verse 7, “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*”

Paul is saying that while God has great regard for and relationship with His Church, He also graciously relates to *each* individual. He is not like that corporate board that is only concerned with the bottom line of the company to the neglect of the employee—God is concerned for each and every blood-bought person in the Body of Christ, the Church.

This is consistent with the character of our Heavenly Father. In Matthew 6, Jesus says, “*Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*” (Mat 6:26-32)

When it comes to preserving the unity in the body of Christ, You and I have a responsibility and God is in the business of equipping each one of us to fulfill that responsibility by giving us His grace. Again in verse 7, Paul says, “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*”

We will talk about this grace a little later in this message but for now, the grace that Paul is writing about is not a grace for living but for the exercise of special gifts for *service*. This grace, according to Paul was given to us “*according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*”

As we unpack verses 7 through 12 we are going to answer three very important questions about Christ’s gift to the church:

- A. How Christ gives gifts to the individual. (verse 7)
- B. How Christ got the right to give gifts. (verses 8-10)
- C. How Christ gives gifts to the entire church. (verses 11-12)

***A. How Christ gives gifts to the individual. (verse 7)***

Notice that in the sections of Scripture where spiritual gifts are mentioned, the word “grace” is present.

*Eph 4:7 But to each one of us **grace** was given according to the measure of Christ's **gift**.*

Paul lets us know in Ephesians 4:7 that the measure of the *gift* we've been given is according to *grace*.

*Rom 12:6 Having then **gifts** differing according to the **grace** that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

Paul tells us in Romans 12 that the *gifts* differ according to the *grace* that is given to us.

*1 Pet 4:10 As every man hath received **the gift**, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold **grace** of God.*

Peter tells us here that the *gifts* are given according to the **manifold** *grace* of God. The word “manifold” means, “very varied,” or “multicolored.” In the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, this word was used to describe Joseph’s robe of many colors given to him by his father Jacob (Genesis 37:3).

The reference to spiritual gifts in 1 Peter lets us know that the operation of the gift is like that of a “spiritual prism”. When the gift is in operation, it manifests itself through the believer as does a prism that produces a spectrum of colors. This lets us know that each Christian’s spiritual gift displays differently when it is in operation.

Let’s say two people in our church has the gift of administration—the way that gift is put in action depends on how the Holy Spirit has placed each of those persons in the Body of Christ.

The point of verse 7 is that Christ has given each believer a spiritual gift. Many Christians comprise just one Body, yet, each one of us is gifted differently and our differences are necessary.

We will look at what these gifts are later in this message.

### ***B. How Christ got the right to give. (verses 8-10)***

Ephesians 4:8 is a quotation from Psalm 68:18. The picture here in this Psalm is God, the conquering hero ascending the hill and dragging behind Him the spoils of victory, the vanquished foes and material goods.

Paul sees this image in Psalm 68 as depicting Jesus Christ, triumphing over His enemy Satan, sin, death and hell.

When Israeli kings went out to battle, if there was victory, they would return and ascend the hill to Mt Zion; Mt Zion was the great crowning hill of Jerusalem—the place of great victory, the place where God had established His people.

An example of this victory march was when the people praised Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a colt. The people were waving palm branches (Mat 21:7-9) crying out "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord!*"

So the king would ride ascending the hill to Mt Zion. Behind him he would have two things:

1. *The spoils of victory.* The spoils consisted of the people from that foreign nation who were captured and would become slaves. The spoils of victory also consisted of the valuables of the conquered nation—much of these things would be given out to the king’s followers.

2. *The recaptured captive.* There were the king's own people who were captured by the enemy and rescued by the king and set free.

The picture in Ephesians 4:7-8 is our Lord Jesus who was at war with Satan, his demons and his hosts—a battle which took Him to the Cross. While Jesus was on the Cross it seemed as if all was lost, but in reality there was victory.

On the Cross, victory was won when Jesus said, "*It is finished!*" The debt for our sin was paid in full and so then Jesus returns from war and ascends the hill to the mount of victory and following Him were the spoils of victory and the recaptured captive. It is as if Jesus is flinging spiritual gifts out to His Body.

Verses 9 and 10 are in a parenthesis. In these verses Paul is going to explain how he was able to do this.

*(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

You may be asking, what does this have to do with the gifts? Hold your place in Ephesians and turn to 1 Peter 3:18.

*1 Pet 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

This is a picture of Christ's death on the cross. He was put to death in the flesh but quickened (made alive) in the spirit (small "s"). In other words, His outer man (His body) had died, but His inner man (His spirit) was alive.

Have you ever asked the question where was Christ for the three days He was dead? The Scripture teaches here that He was *descending*.

How do we know that? Listen again to 1 Peter 3:18 and now I will read along with it verse 19:

*1 Pet 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, **but made alive in the spirit (NASB)***

***1 Pet 3:19 In which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;***

The grammar in verses 18 and 19 is difficult so I hesitate to bring it up but it is important to know what Jesus was doing the three days His body was in the tomb.

The "by which" at the beginning of verse 19 modifies the word "spirit" in verse 18, so that we know that it was Jesus that descended, not in the Holy Spirit, but in His human spirit. Where did He descend? He descended down to the prison of spirits.

This place was called the place of the dead or *Hades* or *Sheol* in the Old Testament. We get a good picture of it in the story Jesus told of the "Rich man and Lazarus" in Luke chapter 16.

*Luke 16:20 "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,*

*Luke 16:21 "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*

*Luke 16:22 "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.*

*Luke 16:23 "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

*Luke 16:24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'*

*Luke 16:25 "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.*

*Luke 16:26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'*

*Luke 16:27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,*

*Luke 16:28 'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'*

*Luke 16:29 "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'*

*Luke 16:30 "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'*

*Luke 16:31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"*

The place where both the rich man and Lazarus went when they died was a compartment in the center of the earth. Most theologians believe this place was divided into two parts (Luke 16:26).

1. The top part was the place of the righteous dead. It was a place of happiness and bliss; the Old Testament Saints who died in faith resided there.

2. The bottom part was where the unrighteous dead and the bound demons were. In that section there was evil and torment. In 2 Peter 2:4, this place is referred to as *tartaros* or "hell," or the "pit."

The bottom section of *Sheol* was the place of the ungodly dead and the place of demons. You also need to know that this was the place that all the unsaved go that today we call hell.

So Christ descended into this place Lazarus and the rich man were—the place where the undead, dead were—the place where the bound fallen angels were and "**preached**".

The word, *preached* is not the New Testament word that means "to announce the good news" ("evangelize") *euaggelizo*, yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo ). It is the word *kerusso*, kay-roos'-so, that means "to proclaim" or "to publish."

What did Jesus proclaim to those in *Sheol*? He proclaimed that what appeared to be defeat was in reality victory. This is consistent with what Paul wrote in Colossians 2:15:

*Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*

*Col 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

***Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers (the fallen demon angels), He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.***

In other words, sometime after Jesus died on the cross, He descended into the lowest parts of *Sheol*, and openly proclaimed His victory to all who were there. And on His way out He (according to Ephesians 4:8) “*led captivity captive.*”

***Why were the Old Testament righteous held captive?***

Why were they held captive in the Place of the Dead? Why weren't they in Heaven? All who believed in the God of Abraham had to stay in what was called Paradise. Remember when Jesus spoke to the thief who was on a cross next to Him? The thief asked Jesus to remember him when He entered His kingdom.

How did Jesus respond? He said in Luke 23:43, “*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.*”

Paradise or “Abraham’s Bosom” is where the righteous went before they died because this was before Jesus’ death on the Cross to pay for their sin and until Jesus triumphed over sin and death, they were held captive until He set them free.

One of my coworkers and her husband were at an airport in Bermuda trying to get back home after their honeymoon. The plane they were to fly had trouble so she and her new husband were put in a hotel until the problem was fixed. It was a nice hotel; it was a luxurious hotel where they could see the waterfront—but it wasn’t home.

There was a blissful side of *Sheol*, called Paradise or Abraham’s Bosom, where the rich man was and the other Old Testament righteous went when they died. It was nice, but it wasn’t “Heaven.”

The Old Testament believers kept the blood covenant—that pointed to the sacrificing of God’s Lamb. So when Jesus died for their sins and when He descended and then ascended, He opened the door to the upper compartment of *Sheol* and set free the righteous that were held captive in that holding place.

God’s Word lets us in on this spectacular event in Matthew chapter 27:

*Mat 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.  
Mat 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;  
and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;  
Mat 27:52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,  
Mat 27:53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city,  
and appeared unto many.*

Back in Ephesians 4:8, we find the victorious, conquering Savior, Jesus Christ ascending the hill with the spoils of the battle after Him. The spoils of war were the Old Testament believers who were recaptured back from Satan and set free.

But not only were the captive set free and paraded down the main street of the city, the spoils of victory are thrown into the crowd. Fulfilling this imagery, Jesus, the One who triumphed over death and the grave, gives gifts (verse 8 says) to the church.

This leads us to our next point—How Christ gives gifts to the entire church.

### ***C. How Christ gives gifts to the entire church***

Spiritual gifts are the spoils of Christ's victory. But, what exactly are spiritual gifts?

The word "gifts" is from the Greek word **charisma**, and refers to a divine power given to Christians that enables them to serve members of the Body of Christ. The gift is a divine, supernatural motivation for ministry.

Spiritual gifts differ according to the grace of God.

*Rom 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

*1 Cor 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

According to 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, there are three types or categories of gifts: **Motivation** (ability), **Ministry** (office) and **Manifestation** (effects). Each follower of Jesus Christ has at least one motivation gift and the possibility of many ministry and manifestation gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 summarizes the gifts:

*1 Cor 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

*1 Cor 12:5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.*

*1 Cor 12:6-7 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

- a. **Motivation** gifts (vs 4) which each believer is given at the moment of salvation. This list of gifts is found in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:10.
- b. **Ministry** gifts (vs 5) are opportunities to exercise our motivational gift in a formal ministry. These ministry gifts are not necessarily permanent and may change. They are received by appointment (*etheto*, aorist tense - 1 Cor. 12:18, 28; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11) or election (*cheirotoneo*, 2 Cor. 8:16, 19, 23).
- c. **Manifestation** gifts which are the actual results in the lives of others as a believer exercises his or her motivational gift through a formal ministry. This list of gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. These gifts are given constantly (v. 11, "distributing," *diaipoun*, present tense), and repeatedly to believers as the Holy Spirit determines.

Let's look at each category of gifts beginning with the motivation gifts:

#### ***Motivation Gifts***

*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet 4:10).*

The Greek word for "gift" is **charisma**, khar'-is-mah; Charisma is often thought to be charm or magnetism, but the Greek word is actually a combination of two other words.

- "**Charis**" is the Greek word for "grace." This denotes that the gift is something that is freely and graciously given.
- "**Char**" (breaking the word down further) which is the Greek word for "joy." This introduces the dimension of motivation, desire, incentive, or burden.

Pulling all this together we find that a spiritual gift is a supernatural ability from God given to each believer for ministry and the byproduct of using your spiritual gift for ministry is *joy*.

This category of gifts motivates you and gives you a desire or even a burden to do the work of the Lord.

If you've ever gotten tired or fed up with church work or ministry you probably were not working under the power of your spiritual gift; you were more than likely ministering through human effort. When you minister using your spiritual gift you experience *joy* and the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

Paul lets us know in Romans 12:6-8 that there are *seven* motivation-gifts that the Christian needs to be aware of—Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Administration (leading) and Mercy.

Let's briefly look at these gifts:

1. **The Gift of Prophecy** - The motivation to proclaim or preached truth revealed in Scripture.
2. **The Gift of Serving** - The motivation to demonstrate love by meeting practical needs.
3. **The Gift of Teaching** - The motivation to search out truth from the Word and also to and validate or clarify what others have presented
4. **The Gift of Exhortation** - The motivation to encourage or stimulate the faith of others
5. **The Gift of Giving** - The motivation to entrust personal assets to others for the furtherance of their ministry
6. **The Gift of Leading or Organization** - The motivation to coordinate the activities of others for the achievement of common goals to further the advancement of the Gospel.
7. **The Gift of Showing Mercy** - The motivation to identify with and comfort those who are in distress

These are the gifts that motivate you to do ministry of the Lord. The next category of gifts are call *manifestation* gifts.

### **Manifestation Gifts**

In 1 Corinthians 12, after mentioning the Motivation Gifts and the Ministry Gifts (which we will close this message discussing), Paul goes on to list the *Manifestation* gifts.

*1 Cor 12:6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.*

*1 Cor 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

*1 Cor 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;  
1 Cor 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,  
1 Cor 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

In verse six Paul says (depending upon the translation you have in your hand) that there are a variety of “effects,” “operations,” “activities” or “workings.”

In other words, something happens when these gifts are in operation. They are a visible, clear, manifest, public display and they are given for the profit of all (vs. 7).

The manifestation gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10) have been broken down into three sub-groups:

**Utterance** - These gifts *say* something:

- D. *Prophecy* - This is the "forth telling" of the inspired Word of God primarily to the church, for the purpose of confirming the written Word and building up the entire body. The message is usually one of edification, exhortation or consolation.
- E. *Speaking in Tongues* - This is a supernatural utterance of God's revelation in an unlearned language. This was also a known language that must be interpreted so that the entire body will be edified. Tongues may also serve as a sign to unbelieving Israel (Isaiah 28:11-12; Acts 10:45-46)
- F. *Interpretation of Tongues* - This is a supernatural interpretation of a message in tongues, translated into the known language so that the hearers (the entire body) will be edified.

**Power** - These gifts do something:

- *Faith* - This is not the faith that is given to every believer (Romans 12:3). It is not even "saving faith." This is special, supernatural faith given by the Spirit of God in order to believe God.
- *Healing* - This is supernatural healing, beyond natural means, given by the Spirit.
- *Miracles* - This is the supernatural suspension of the natural laws, or an intervention by the Holy Spirit into the laws of nature.

**Revelation** - These gifts reveal something:

- *Word of Knowledge* - This is supernatural ability to observe biblical facts and make conclusions. It is the ability to understand the Bible.
- *Word of Wisdom* - This is supernatural knowledge applied in a godly or correct way. It is the ability to take the facts that the gift of knowledge has brought out and make a skillful application of it.
- *Discerning of Spirits* - This is the supernatural ability to distinguish between spirits such as good and evil, truthful or deceiving, the Holy Spirit versus what is satanic.

We've looked at the *Motivation Gifts*—the gifts of the Holy Spirit that give the believer a “joy-injection” for service. We've looked at the *Manifestation Gifts*—these are the effects that occur with one uses his or her Motivation Gift in the Body.

Lastly we will look at the *Ministry Gifts*. This brings us back to the book of Ephesians.

### ***Ministry Gifts***

We have seen in Ephesians 4:8-12, the victorious, conquering Savior, Jesus Christ ascending the hill with the spoils of the battle after him. The Bible says, like a victorious king, “*He gave gifts to men.*”

What were the gifts? In verse 11 Paul writes, “*And He (Jesus) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers...*”

According to verse eleven, these gifts are not the motivations to do the will of God—they are not even the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. These gifts are *offices*, (actually people) given to the local church by the Holy Spirit in order to equip God's people to do the work of the ministry.

Let's briefly look at each of these and then we will close.

***Apostles*** - The Apostles were the twelve men whom Jesus selected to follow Him from His baptism onward. He gave them the special commission to teach the early church and to lead the church into taking the Gospel all over the world.

According to Acts 1:22, in order to qualify as an apostle, one had to be a witness with the rest of the apostles of the resurrected Jesus. When they fulfilled their mission of preserving the teachings of Christ and leading the church's missionary activity, the twelve apostles passed from the scene.

They did not occupy an office which they could hand on to others or which the church had the power to fill—they were personally called by Jesus Christ Himself.

***Prophets*** - The word *prophet* means "to speak before" or "to speak for." Paul said, “*One who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation [and] edifies the church*” (1 Cor. 14:3-4).

Prophecy has two aspects: *revelation* and *reiteration*. When a New Testament prophet received new information directly from God that was revelation. Whenever that information was repeated through preaching or teaching, it was reiteration.

With the completion of the New Testament, direct *revelation* from God ceased. All preaching and teaching today is *reiteration*.

***Evangelist*** - Notice back in Ephesians 4:12 that Paul gives the purpose for the ministry gifts given to the church: “*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...*”

These ministry gifts are actually gifted men given to the Body of Christ by Jesus, “*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*”. As the apostle and the prophet have a responsibility to edify or build up the body of Christ, the evangelist is no different.

The evangelist in Ephesians 4:12 is not the one who goes around evangelizing the world like Billy Graham. His office, like the others, is responsible for equipping believer for the work of service so that the Body of Christ might be built up. The evangelist is the one who the Spirit places in the Body of Christ to teach believers how to evangelize.

***Pastor-Teacher*** - In the Greek text, the *Granville-Sharp rule* is observed. It makes a connection between the words *pastor* and *teacher*, showing that they are related. What Paul is emphasizing here is the office of a pastor who teaches.

The word for pastor is the Greek word ***poimen***. It emphasizes the pastoral role of caring and feeding... shepherding. To be qualified as a pastor, among the other qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3, a man must have a shepherd's heart and be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2).

### ***Why are these offices given to the church?***

*Eph 4:11-12 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

Paul is letting his readers know that all of these offices are for the equipping of believers for the work of service to build up the body of Christ. The people who occupied these offices needed to be about this business of equipping.

### ***Equipping to Serve***

*Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.:*  
*Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*

The church today seems to have it all wrong when it comes to these offices. Many men and women take these titles with no regard to the calling and responsibility associated with it.