

Eph Ch 4 Vs7- (Unity in diversity)

I'm continually blown away by the overwhelming emphasis in this book on unity, the fact that we're not to be isolating ourselves or doing our own thing, but rather Christ died to break down any of those walls that separate us in order that we might be one w/Him & that we might be one w/each other *in* Him. & We're to operate in body life, ministering to one another, serving one another in love, each of us esteeming others above ourselves. Because there can be such a tendency to sort of be loners, or it seems to be easier at times just to sort of stand at a distance & not really get to involved, or get to know our brothers & sisters more than just a, "high how are ya?"

But the bible encourages body life, practical application to our spiritual foundation, & that comes again through serving one another in love, remember again after Jesus washed the disciples feet, He said to them, "*I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*" You should serve one another w/all lowliness & gentleness, w/longsuffering, bearing w/one another in love. Not tolerating one another in frustration, but bearing, or enduring through love, agape.

Over the last couple of weeks we've been looking at this biblical concept of what it means to walk worthy of the calling w/which we were called. & Paul emphasizes that a worthy walk is lived out in humility, & gentleness, & patience; the agape' love of God being the key ingredient that brings these qualities into fruition & practical application in our lives. & The obvious end to all of these things being applied to our lives & lived out through our lives toward one another is going to be living in loving unity, it's going to be maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Because I doubt that you're going to have to much of a beef w/someone who puts up w/all your quirks out of genuine & loving forbearance, who is always gentle towards you & is placing your needs above there own. You're going to get along just fine w/that person, & if you're being the same way as a result of the love of God in your life towards your brothers & sisters as well, then I doubt that too many people w/have issue w/you either.

You see issues don't spring out of love & gentleness & longsuffering, & humility, issues spring out of intolerance & rudeness & self seeking agendas & pride. & Those are the types of things that seek to divide the body or splinter the body of Christ & when that happens the ranks weaken & the work becomes less & less effective.

That's why Paul deals w/1st things 1st, he in essence says hey, take all of the resources that have been given to you in Christ & use them in allowing them to take deep root in your own heart 1st. & Then allow them to spill out of your life towards your brothers & sisters in Christ so that you might live in loving unity so that the things that God will have you endeavor in will be effective. Because if everyone is doing their own thing then no one will get anything done, but as we come together as one & move forward in the direction that God is taking us, then things will begin to happen & lives will begin to change & God will be glorified.

So since there's only one body & one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism & one God & Father of all believers, it doesn't do any good to kick against the goads. It's best just to simply fall in line w/the will of God for our lives & live in loving unity, what's the will of God for your life? (Read last ½ of vs1-3)

Again not at the sake of compromise, purity 1st then peace, or unity, but that's the will of God for us as believers, again not organizational or denominational unity, but the unity that the Holy Spirit has already created. We're called to walk in that unity & maintain that unity through peace, as much as depends on you (the bible says), live peaceably w/all men.

So now that Paul has spent considerable time establishing the fact that we're all to be one in Christ as he spoke to the Corinthians that we all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. He now takes the time to diffuse the misconception that that means that we're all to be carbon copies of one another, & that there is beautiful unity in diversity, & it sounds at 1st like a contradiction, but God uses diversity to bring about unity. 1 Cor 12:4-7, *"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences (or diversities) of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all."* So when he speaks of unity, he's not speaking of uniformity, but of the fact that God uses each individual in a special & unique way in order to bring about the balance of the whole.

Vs7

Now the word "but" here in vs 7 is more than just a conjunction that joins these 2 vs, it is in reality the word that Paul uses in order to contrast what he's just been talking about w/what he's getting ready to say. Because in vs 3-6 the overwhelming emphasis there is on unity, but now Paul begins to parallel that w/an emphasis on diversity in vs 7-11. Because notice that in vs 6 the word "all" is used 4 times, one Father of all, who is above all, through all, & in you all, *but* (now in contrast in vs 7) to *each one* of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

So unity is the theme but w/in the unity of the body of Christ there is a diversity of gifts given for the purpose of edification, as we'll see later. So he says *to each one of us*, every single individual believer w/out exception has been given grace. "But to each one of us, grace has been given." Grace, the Greek word is Charis (khar'ece) & what's being developed here is the fact that at the heart of every spiritual gift that's given, is grace. & We'll see that more as we move on, but he says here that to each one of us grace has been given, & from the initial observance of this vs we may be prone to think, well, yeah, that seems to be the obvious.

Everyone who has been born again into the family of God has been the recipient of grace, the bible tells us very plainly that it's by grace that we have been saved (Eph 2:8) & so if you're a child of God grace has been given to you. Now, since Paul has just spoken to us of this grace in vs 8 of ch 2 why does he repeat himself here? Well, because Paul isn't speaking to us here of redeeming grace as he did in ch 2. So Paul isn't repeating himself, & the text spells that out for us very plainly, this isn't speaking of redeeming grace, this is speaking here of enabling grace.

You see the grace in which we stand not only saves, but it enables as well. It enables us & empowers us to use the gifts or causes the gifts that Christ gives us to function to the glory of God, so what does grace have to do w/spiritual gifts, well at the very root of the word that translates "Spiritual gifts", (charismata) is the word grace, they are grace gifts. They are enablements of God's grace in our lives Rom 12:6 "*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them.*" The word "gifts" in that vs is "Charismata", the word "grace" is "Charis" making the relationship of the two (that being grace & spiritual gifts) even in that one vs very plain to see. "Having then Charismata differing according to the Charis that is given to us, let us use them." 1 Cor 12:4 "*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*" 1 Peter 4:10 "*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*"

Spiritual gifts are God's grace at work, not only does God's grace forgive us, it's also His resource to transform us & use us & equip us, spiritual gifts, are grace gifts. Undeserved spiritual enablement, the church isn't designed (according to the scriptures) to run on the various church growth programs & the wisdom & enablement, talents & abilities of man. It's designed to function on the "Charismata", the grace gifts of God by the Holy Spirit that have been portioned out by the Lord Jesus to each & every individual believer. Or as our text puts it, "according to the measure of Christ's gift." So not only is it undeserved Spiritual enablement, it's also a characteristic spiritual enablement, because each & every individual believer has been portioned out a unique measure of the gift of Christ, by which our place & role in the body of Christ is distinguished.

One commentator said, “enabling grace is measured out to be consistent w/what is necessary for the operation of Christ’s gift.” You see, the various gifts that you & I receive, whether it be one gift or a ½ a dozen gifts & the measure in which we receive those gifts determines our unique role in the body of Christ. & When we don’t use the gift that Christ has given us, then the whole body suffers, because God has appointed us to function in a certain capacity that we’re not functioning in & therefore there is something being left undone or being done by someone else not nearly effectively as it could or should be done & there area of gifting is having to suffer because they’re devoting their time & energy to that which God has gifted & enabled you to do.

So that’s why I’m fairly consistently reminding you that Christianity is not a spectator sport, there are to be no side line spectators in Christianity, we’re all game players, we’re all starters & we all have our own unique position to fill & various capacities in which to fill them. You can’t say that just because you don’t do such & such or your gift isn’t whatever that it’s not important, no we all need each other in our proper places in order to be the most effective working that we possibly can, that’s what Paul was speaking about in 1 Cor 12:14-20 *“For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.”*

Paul is here likening Spiritual gifts to the different members of a physical body, & he does it in order to teach us that we can’t all expect to have the same gifts in the same measure, nor can we all expect to function in the same capacity & we can’t place anymore value on the functioning of any gift over that of another because one on it’s own w/out the complementing aspect of the other is pointless. It wouldn’t do me much good to be 140lb mouth, (though some may think that’s about what I add up to being) or 150lb foot. Every individual aspect of my body no matter how big or small needs to be proportionate to its counterparts in order to function as it was intended to in the big picture. & It’s the same way w/Spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, the exception being that the body of Christ doesn’t have expendable parts, so don’t worry about being spiritual tonsils or spiritual appendixes that must be good for something but we can live w/out them.

Such is not the case in the body of Christ, we all have a specific calling & functioning by which we're to operate in for the edification of the whole body. Each believers gift is unique, they're like snowflakes, there may be millions of them, all of them being snowflakes but under close observation it becomes obvious that no 2 are alike. Each person has a specific measure or Christ's gift, Jesus Himself sovereignly determines how much of what we each get, He has measured out the exact proportion of each believers gift. So not only does Christ determine what measure you will be endowed with, but He also determines the gift you get.

Your gift, given to you by Christ has absolutely nothing to do w/your personal preferences or your natural inclinations or abilities, your talents or any other personal consideration. But rather you're gifted according solely to His sovereign & gracious will, your gifted according to His plan, His purpose & His measure, & you & I have no more to do w/determining our spiritual gift then we did in determining our skin color, or our hair color, or what color our eyes would be, God is the source of all grace, electing, equipping & enabling. & Pours out that measure of enabling grace according to whatever it is that He desires to accomplish in & through our lives, you might say that our spiritual gifts are in proportion to what the Lord desires to impart to us, related to what He wants to do in & through us.

For instance there isn't just one single kind of teaching gift, though the gift of teaching is a general term, it may be on one of several levels by which that gift is measured out to you or me, if at all. One of us may excel at public teaching on an adult level, as to where another may excel teaching the children but not be able to get a grip on the public arena, still another may not deal well at all in any form of group setting but one on one they create phenomenal disciples of Jesus. & Each gift will be in accordance w/that same type of capacity & they will vary in accordance w/the measure that they are given. & An individual's gift isn't necessarily restricted to one category, there may be a number of gifts in a variety of limitless combinations mixed into one person that creates that unique gift just the way it is, someone who's major gift is administration may have some what of a gift of helps mixed in there w/a bit of teaching on the side.

Every person is unique in their gifts or combination of gifts w/the measure differing in each of them. Or maybe the emphasis of the gift will be different, maybe one teacher emphasizes mercy & grace, while the other instruction & exhortation, rightly dividing the word & leading lives accordingly. Now that concept takes us back to what I was saying a minute ago, that being that since no 2 believers are exactly alike in their gifting & the measure of it, no Christian can replace another in the plan of God. He has His own individualized plan for each of us & has individually gifted us accordingly. 1 Cor 12:11 *"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."*

God never gives us the wrong gift, or too much or too little of it, but rather each of His gifts is exactly what we need in order to fulfill the work to which He has appointed us. Now we may covet other gifts, & want to do other things but that's our own problem that we need to repent of, because we don't *need* any other gift other than that which Christ has measured out to us.

So there is unity through diversity, godly diversity doesn't threaten the unity of the Spirit, but rather it further enhances it, now fleshly carnal diversity definitely threatens the unity of the Spirit. But the main intent in this text that's before us is to reveal to us the balanced relationship between the oneness of believers & their individuality that contributes to that oneness.

Now, all that Paul lays out, (in much fewer words than I just did) in order to set the stage so as to delineate or outline or begin to show us & explain to us some of the gifts that Christ has given & their purpose w/in the body. But before he does that, he interjects here sort of a parenthetical type of a truth so as to show us (now that he's made it clear that Christ is the giver of the gift) what it cost Christ to be able to be in such a position so as to give us such gifts of grace.

Vs8-10

Now there are a couple of different understandings of these few scriptures only one of which I will elaborate on because I personally at this point in my walk believe that this is what it's in reference to. Many bible scholars believe that this is simply in reference to the fact that Jesus came to the earth & when it speaks of the lower parts of the earth, those words simply seek to show us the extreme contrast that took place in His stepping out of heaven in order to come to this earth in order to redeem mankind, I believe that it goes further than that. Vs 8 says, "when He ascended on high" who is the "He" that's being referred to here, well, it's an obvious reference to Jesus. Speaking of His ascension into heaven after the shedding of His blood for the sin of the world, His death, & resurrection whereby He defeated Satan, sin & death, & we see this in Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, & again in the book of Acts ch 1 vs 9. "& He led captivity captive, & gave gifts to men." Of course it was after the ascension into heaven that He gave the gift of the Holy Spirit & all the gifts thereof. John 7:37-39 *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (& It says), But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

On the day of Pentecost, you remember that when the Holy Spirit was given & all the disciples were speaking in other tongues & all the people were freaked out because even though there were so many people there that spoke different languages of which there was no way that the disciples knew them all, yet everyone heard in their own language these guys declaring the wonderful works of God. & Peter told them in Acts 2:33 in regards to Jesus, *“Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.”* & So when Jesus was exalted & ascended to the right hand of the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit even as He said He would in John 16:7 when He said, *“if I do not go away, the Helper (or the comforter, the parakletes) will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”* & With the sending of the Holy Spirit, came also the sending or the giving of His gifts to the church. But what does this “He led captivity captive” refer to? Well, I believe that that’s where vs 9 begins to come in, (Read).

So before one ascends, the given in the equation is that 1st a there is a descending, in other words before one can go up, it has to be down. & It says here that Jesus 1st descended into the lower parts of the earth. One day the Scribes & Pharisees were testing Jesus & they asked Him (as usual) to show them a sign. But He said to them, *“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”* Referring of course to His being swallowed up in death & then even as Jonah rose again being vomited up by the great fish, neither would death be able to hold Him in it’s grip & on the 3rd day He would rise again.

You remember again that on the day of Pentecost, when Peter began to preach to those who were there, he identified his subject as, *“Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”* & He says there in his sermon, *“For David says concerning Him: You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”* & He went on to say, *“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”*

Do you remember when Jesus was speaking in Luke ch 16 (lets turn there together, Luke ch 16 vs19-31) Now stay w/me here we're still developing Eph ch 4 vs 8-10 the descending, ascending & leading the captivity captive. Jesus is saying here, that before His death & resurrection there was (as it were) in actuality 2 compartments or 2 separate isolated dwelling places in hell. & They were separated by this great chasm, this great gulf, & in one compartment were those that were being tormented in flames, punished for sins un-repenting of having died apart from placing their faith in the one true living God. & In the other compartment were those that were being comforted in what Jesus referred to as Abraham's bosom & paradise. These are the ones of whom it refers to in Heb 11:13 where it says, "*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*" & Then later on down in that same ch we read, "*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*"

Now, in Isaiah, ch 61 we read there that part of the mission of the Messiah would be, to preach good tidings to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound. & Do you remember what Jesus said to that thief on the cross when he looked at Jesus & he said, Lord, when you come into your kingdom, remember me? Jesus said to him, today you will be w/Me in paradise. So when Jesus died, when He said, Father into Your hands I commit My Spirit. His Spirit went literally to hell, but listen now, not into the compartment of the tormented.

There are those that will teach you that Jesus was for three days being tormented by demons & suffering in the flames of hell, you will not find that biblically supported & I would vehemently reject any such teaching, you start teaching things like that & you're toying w/heresy, & blasphemy & things of that nature. Jesus said today you will be w/Me, not in torment as I suffer in flames being tormented by Satan & his demons, but in Paradise, that compartment whereby those who had died in faith were waiting until the fullness of time when God would fulfill His promise of sending the Messiah. Because even though they all died in faith, they couldn't ascend into heaven, because all they did to atone for their sin was sacrifice & shed the blood of bulls & goats, but the bible tells us very clearly that it's impossible that the blood of bulls & goats should put away sin. All they did was foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice of J.C. whereby the sin of the world would be atoned for & man could then have access into heaven, & into the presence of God. & So while Jesus was in Abraham's bosom Peter tells us that Jesus preached to those souls that were in prison, He didn't evangelize them, but rather proclaimed the good news, & the glad tidings of what had been accomplished by His work on the cross. & He led the captives from their captivity, He opened the prison doors there, to those who were bound, & led the captivity captive so that even many of the bodies of the saints of old who had died were raised, & coming out of their graves, they were seen wandering around the streets of Jerusalem after His resurrection (Matt 27 vs 50-53). So,

Vs9

In order lead the captivity captive, in order to open the prison doors to those who were bound & to lead those who had died in faith on into glory.

Vs10

Again even as Ch 1 vs 23 refers to Jesus as the one who fills all in all.

Vs11

So now that Paul has stated the fact that w/in the unity of the Spirit there is a diversity of gifts, & that Christ is the giver of those gifts, & that it cost Him dearly even His very life by death on the cross to be in the position to give those gifts, now he begins to get into what a few of those gifts are that He gives to men or in this case more specifically, the church. & This is where Lord willing, we'll pick up the next time we crack open this book, be it next week or the 1st of the year depending on what happens next week w/the Christmas thing as far as studies go.