

Eph Ch 4 vs11-16

Gifts given to the church

This morning we'll be picking up where we left off before we deviated from our regular text slightly last week for the Christmas Study and we'll be picking back up here in vs 11 of ch 4. and To refresh your minds and your hearts, Paul has been spending significant time and emphasis on the essential need for unity in the Body of Christ, again not an organizational or denominational unity, but rather that we're to maintain the unity that already exists by the Holy Spirit, and we're simply called to walk in and maintain that pre-existing spiritual unity. and We're to do that by walking in all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. and Of course that's not to say that those qualities we're to somehow muster up with in ourselves but rather we're simply to let the Holy Spirit have His way in our lives and these things will come into fruition in our lives through our simple submission to the Spirit of God having His way in us. For the fruit of the Spirit is what? Gal ch 5, *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”*

The bible says that if we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and so if we're submitting to the Spirit, allowing the characteristics of the Spirit to become a reality in our lives, and we're walking in the Spirit and crucifying the flesh, the end result in going to be living in loving unity and keeping the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. But remember that unity, doesn't mean uniformity, we can all be walking in all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and still not be carbon copies of one another. God uses diversity to bring about unity; He uses each and every individual believer in a special and unique way in order to bring about the balance of the whole.

That's where we left off last time, setting the stage to talk about some of these different gifts, that Christ gives to men, or in specific's in our context some of the different offices, or gifted men that God gives to the church for leadership. God using diversity to maintain the unity of the Spirit, we read that to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. and You recall that Paul after stating this fact of Christ being the One who personally decides what gift and to what capacity that gift or whatever number of gifts is given to each and every individual believer. He added in this parenthetical type of statement, in order to make sure that we know what it cost Him to be the One who would be in the position to give gifts to men.

The Spiritual gifts that you possess were radically and immeasurably costly to the Lord and should never be taken for granted. It wasn't like He was just sitting around on His throne one day and decided to give some enabling gifts of His grace to people. For Him to be able to do that, in the plan of God and guarding the Holiness of God, His righteousness and His wrath and judgment against sin, and yet to show and to share God's love and His mercy and His kindness, He had to humble Himself, and come to this earth in the likeness of human flesh, live a sinless life and die a sinners death, He had to shed His blood. Descend into the lower parts of the earth, but death not being able to hold it's grip on Him, He ascended on high, led captivity captive and now gives gifts of enablement to each and every person who trusts in Him, enabling us to lead godly lives that reflect Him to the world around us and build each other up, edifying one another. That's the setting in which the diversity of gifts are spoken.

Vs11-14

Now you have to kind of follow this closely because the tone has sort of changed here, and it's gone from speaking about gifts that Christ gives, to gifted men that Christ has given to the church. So it turns a little from giving gifts to men, to giving the men who have been given certain gifts, to the church. and In doing so Paul brings into view just a few of the Spiritual gifts, these being some of the basic, fundamental and essential leadership type gifts. It says here that "He Himself" which is an emphatic statement meaning that Christ and Christ alone, *He* gave gifts to men and some of those men that He gifted He gave to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, and He gives these men to the church. Again for the purpose of leading and maturing the body and we'll see that more as we go on. But he says here that He gave some to be apostles, as in Paul, and Peter and James and John along with the other 8. and The apostles were men who held foundational offices in the early church, meaning that Jesus Christ was the chief cornerstone of the church, and the apostles that He commissioned laid the foundation (Eph 2:20). They set certain standards, they wrote much of what we refer to as the NT scriptures; they laid the foundation. and In order to be an apostle there were certain specific criteria that one had to meet.

For instance, as I just stated you had to be commissioned by Jesus Christ, now in the broad sense every believer has been commissioned by Jesus. But in the context of what the bible refers to as an apostle, only 12 men held that office because only those 12 had been personally and directly commissioned by Jesus Christ, in other words Jesus personally appeared to them and gave them a commission that they were to fulfill. That's why Paul could state, "*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).*" and As far as the Gospel was concerned Paul said, "*I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

In other words just like the other 11 guys that Jesus had commissioned, Paul didn't learn the gospel through another man, Jesus personally appeared to him and mentored him or taught him the things of God and the balanced truth of the scriptures. The only difference being that with Paul it happened after the ascension of Christ which made His apostleship sort of unique in that respect but that's why he referred to himself as one born out of due time, because he saw the Lord last. Which brings us to a 2nd and sort of synonymous criteria that the apostles had to meet, and that was that to be an apostle you had to have seen the risen Lord.

There were a # of different things that authenticated the apostles, so in the strictest sense of the word, there are no longer apostles today. Same with the prophets, again in the strictest sense of the word, why because as Eph 2:20 states, the foundation of the Church was built on the doctrine of the apostles and the prophets. and The prophets were men who were given by the Holy Spirit, again direct revelation of the scripture and insight into particular mysteries that weren't as of yet revealed. You remember in ch 3 of the book of Eph, Paul in speaking of the mystery of Christ said in vs 5, "*which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.*"

So though there were futuristic utterances from time to time out of the NT prophet, like in Acts 21:11, that wasn't his primary function, he primarily proclaimed the word of God, sometimes concerning future things to come, as in Acts 11:28, but many times it was in revealing to the people the word of God. Because you have to remember that they didn't have the written word like you have the written word. Nor was the NT completed at the time, so how then would a local assembly discover God's will for maybe a certain situation. Well, many times God would reveal it to them by those who possessed the gift of prophecy.

1st Cor 13:2 tells us, or at least very strongly suggests to us that the gift of prophecy has to do with understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, speaking of course of spiritual truth's. So again, in the strictest sense of the NT prophet, they no longer exist, they were foundational players in the church. Now, the gift of prophecy and the holding of the office of a prophet, isn't exactly the same thing, and I'm not trying to confuse you, nor does the gift of prophecy have necessarily to do with telling the future. 1 Cor 14:3 says that, "*he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*"

So can the Holy Spirit give utterance through men today of edification, exhortation and comfort? You bet, He does it all the time, but as far as one holding the office of a prophet in the strict sense of the text we're studying, after the foundation of the church was laid, they went away along with the apostles. However these next 2 offices or groups of gifted men given to the church are still very much around and carrying on that to which they've been called.

1st here in the list is evangelists, now again in one respect every believer in Jesus Christ is to be an evangelist, it means a bringer of good tidings, or good news, in one respect the angel who announced the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds was evangelizing. He said, “behold I bring you good tidings of great joy.” and Every time you share the gospel you are evangelizing, Paul told Timothy to “*do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*” So although we’re all commissioned in one respect or another to be evangelists, that doesn’t mean that we’ve been gifted specifically by the Holy Spirit for the work of evangelism.

Now, an evangelist isn’t necessarily a guy with 4 or 5 different suits who runs around setting up tents on the side of the road. Though I suppose that at times it may work something like that, but to keep it somewhat short the evangelist is the one who has been spiritually skilled and gifted at bringing new birth into the church, he’s the one who no matter what text of the bible he’s preaching, it always winds up at the cross of Jesus Christ and mans desperate need for salvation by grace through faith in Christ. You may think of Greg Laurie, or Billy Graham or maybe others, but these guys go to those who don’t know Jesus Christ and proclaim the gospel, again you might consider them the “obstetricians” of the church. They are gifted in bringing new births, delivering baby Christians into the world and God has blessed them and Christ has gifted them in this area, they are evangelists. and They’ve been given to the church world in order to help get the gospel out to the whole world.

Then finally in our list here, the pastor/teacher, now they can be two distinct issues, but not here, there are pastors and teachers, but the construction of the Greek here makes it obvious that Paul is speaking of one and the same office, the Pastor/teacher. Notice there’s no “some” between the word Pastor and teacher as there is in all the others, and the word “and” here between the 2 is the Greek word “kai” (kahee) which can also mean “that is” or “in particular” which is to say, pastors, that is, teachers, making “teacher” in this case explanatory of pastors. So we don’t see 5 offices here, we see 4, the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, and the pastor/teacher.

The pastor/teacher is the pediatrician of the church, and he ministers primarily to one local church, and he shepherds the flock there, the word “pastor” literally means “shepherd”. He is a pasturer, or a shepherd, he leads and he feeds the local flock, how by teaching the word of God to the people. Another absolutely critical role in the church, and we should praise the Lord for giving to the church pastor/teachers to feed us and build us up and strengthen us, to challenge us and convict us by the Holy Spirit that we might mature and develop into that which God desires for our lives.

It's a wonderful privilege to be considered as a gift to the church; your only hope is that you're not considered a gag gift. The Pastor/teacher, today he would be considered the Senior pastor, but the biblical terminology is pastor/teacher, now there are teachers in the church who aren't gifted to pastor, they don't really have a shepherds heart for the flock, but they do have an enablement and motivation and gifting to teach and God uses them tremendously. There are also pastors who aren't necessarily teachers, they've just been given a heart for the people, maybe an assistant or a youth group leader or someone who's really more of a shepherd than they are a teacher, they just love the sheep, and care for the sheep and are constantly tending to the needs of the sheep.

But they don't really have an instructional role, or a teaching gift. But the one who takes the primary lead in the local church, or leads the staff, or is a senior pastor, this is the person that God has for His people, the pastor/teacher. One who shepherds by feeding the sheep the word of God, He leads and nourishes the church by teaching God's word. Acts 20:28 by way of correlation, *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."* 1 Peter 5:1-4 *"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."* This is the role of the pastor/teacher and of course the one common thread that weaves all of these offices together is that of teaching the word of God. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor teachers are all woven together through the teaching of the word of God, God places such high priority on the teaching and understanding of His word, and we'll see why as we move on. So God gives these men to the church, and why, for what purpose?

Vs12

Now I hope you caught that because vs 12 unravels for many today a mind-boggling revelation as to the purpose of these men given to the church. If you were to take a poll and ask the majority of people today, even believers what's the role of the pastor in the church, you'd probably get all kinds of different responses. Well, his job is to go and visit everyone who gets sick when they're in the hospital, his job is to call me every time I don't come to church to make sure I'm ok, his job is to take food to people who need it, or to make his rounds visiting everyone in the church and if he doesn't do these things than he isn't worth his salt. Many people think that the pastor gets paid to do the work of the ministry and to be spiritual on their behalf. "Well, I don't have time to do such and such, that's why we hired a preacher." That (it would seem) is the general attitude of the church world today. His job is to go out and witness and get new people into the church.

That's not what the bible teaches, according to the bible His job is to teach you, and to instruct you to "equip" you so that *you* can do the work of the ministry. His job is to be given to the word of God and prayer, so that you might be properly equipped to do the work of the ministry, it's not to say that he's not to be an example in service, but it is to say that he's not to be, nor can he be spiritual on your behalf. We call the pastor of a church, "the minister" but in reality if you're a Christian, you're a minister, we say, "so and so went into the ministry" meaning that's what they're doing vocationally. But I have news for you we're all in the ministry, it would be better to say is the ministry your vocation or not, because the given is that you're to be ministering whether you work at a bank, or, a factory or a doctor's office, or wherever. You don't enter the ministry upon going on staff at some church; you enter the ministry upon giving your heart to Jesus Christ

The work of the ministry is for the saints, which is to say every Christian, and the purpose of the leaders is the equipping of the saints so that they might be serving the Lord in a manner that's reflective of Him. It's not a pastor's job to go out witnessing and to do all the visitation, that's not a pastor type thing, that's a Christian type thing, the pastor is to teach the word of God so that those who are in that local flock are equipped to do the work of the ministry.

Now, I'm not saying that a pastor should never visit you if you're sick or anything like that, but what I am saying is that's not his primary call, and if he gets too busy going out all the time and becoming an errand boy all under the guise of "meeting needs" then his studies are going to suffer and the whole body will reap the ramifications of that. It's absolutely critical that he be given time to be given to the word of God and prayer so that the body might be properly equipped or so that it might operate properly so that the work of ministry is getting done, again it's called body life. It's how the body of Christ edifies itself, builds itself up, the pastor isn't to do all the work, he is to train the people so that they might do the work of the ministry.

As the old saying goes, give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him to fish and you've fed him for life. It's the same way in the ministry, the pastor can't do it all for you, he's to teach you through the word to do the work of the ministry. J. Vernon McGee said, "I think the greatest sin in the local church today is the ignorance of the man sitting in the pew; he doesn't know the Word of God, and that is a tragedy. I would hate to get on an airplane if the pilot didn't know any more about flying than the average church member knows about Christianity and the Word of God. The plane wouldn't make it-I think it would crash before it got 10 feet into the air. That is the condition of the church today.

All believers need to be trained in the Word of God so they can do the work of the ministry.” and That’s where the pastor/teacher comes in, he is to train the saints so that they do the work of the ministry adequately and accurately. But that doesn’t excuse personal study of the word either, we’re all to be reading and taking in the word of God on our own and then as we come into the sanctuary God confirms on our hearts that which we’ve been learning of Him throughout the week. Or if need be corrects a position that we’ve wrongfully taken, so we are to be being equipped for the work of the ministry, again through the teaching of the word of God, and ministry of equipping is that which leads the Christian from sin, to obedience.

Causing growth in the body, now there’s something I want to stress here, spiritual growth doesn’t always involve learning something new. Many times that area which is most critical for us to grow in is in regards to truth we’ve already heard, maybe many times, but we haven’t fully applied it to our lives. Peter said, *“I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you.”* Why, he goes on, *“to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”* John MacArthur wrote, “The great truth’s of the Word of God (which is every truth by the way) can never be mastered or over learned. The battle with out unredeemed flesh necessitates constant reminding. As long as a pastor has breath he should preach those truth’s, and as long as his congregation has breath, it should hear them.”

If I’m teaching right, and you’re listen and applying right, the end result will be effective ministry as a body and the edification of the body. We will be a spiritually healthy body and that’s important, because if you’re unhealthy you can only do so much, so it’s not that we’re completely introverted but rather we’re seeking to be made healthy so that we might be effective in the outreach, but 1st things 1st.

Vs13

That’s the aim of the equipping and the edification, the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of the God; ministry is to be aiming at believers being unified in the faith. Not just faith in Jesus, but the message of the word of God, you remember we talked about that when we went over vs 5 so we won’t get back into that this morning. We’re called to be contenders for the faith, we’re to stand up for the integrity and the truth of the word of God and as we learn of the word of God more and more and we’re applying it to our lives, we’re going to be more and more unified, we’ll be knit together in the balance of the word by the love of God. Because we’re committed to the same message, from the same Lord, we’ll be of the same mind and judgment, and we’ll speak the same things. So the more we understand and embrace and get into the word together, the more we’ll be drawn together.

Not only are we drawn together by the word of God, but also by the knowledge of the Son of God, ministry aims at saints being unified by growing in knowing Jesus. There is a unifying impact that takes place when 2 people meet that both know Jesus, and here the bible encourages us to grow in that unity, through the knowledge of Son of God. Be unified with one another in a passion and desire in growing in knowing Jesus, be increasingly intimately knowing the Lord, sold out to the Lord and impacted by the Lord and it will bind you together.

Why, because that's what's at the heart of eternal life, Jesus said, *“and this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* That's what we want to grow in, that's what unifies us, knowing God the Father and Jesus Christ whom He sent. That's what matures us in Christ or perfects us, completes us, not perfects as in with out fault, now Jesus will present you to the Father with out fault, but not because you're perfect in your flesh. But because He's covered you in His perfection, this word perfect is speaking of maturity. and What's the measuring stick of spiritual maturity? The stature of the fullness of Christ, maturity is to be measured by the full character of Christ.

Vs14

You see it's important that we be growing and developing and maturing in Christ, that we no longer be children. Now there are some attributes of children that we want to hold onto, but when it comes to the measure of the full character of Christ, it's absolutely critical that we be growing and developing. and Maybe next week we'll develop this a little more, but this morning just let me make a point.

Right now my daughter is 6 months old, therefore it's perfectly acceptable for her to make a mess in her diaper. It's not pleasant, but it's acceptable, if when she's 18, she's still making messes of that nature, it'll be a serious problem. It's important for her in that respect not to remain a child, but rather to grow up and mature, now in regards to knowledge and experience with sin and or evil, my prayer is that she'll always remain a babe in that respect.

Well, in like manner in some things we need to be child like, but when it comes to our learning the word, developing godly habits, and growing in knowing Jesus we need to be growing up and maturing, you shouldn't be where you were 2 years ago in your relationship with Christ or some of you 10 years ago. But rather you should be growing in Christ, growing in His word, having your discernment sharpened, and your ability to communicate the gospel enriched, you need to know the truth that you might recognize the lie. Not being tossed to and fro with every new fad in the Christian arena by the trickery of men, and as I said hopefully we'll develop this more fully next time.

Vs15-16