

## Ephesians Chapter 4

Week 5, v. 7-10

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

We have been looking at the importance of unity within the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:7 begins with the word "but" meaning that Paul will now address another aspect of the church's unity. It is true that the church is unified through a common salvation through Christ (v. 4-6). It is also true that "each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift". In verse one of this chapter we were charged to walk worthy of the calling we have been called to. In Christ, we have what is necessary to fulfill that charge.

The words "each one of us" means every one who is in Christ, all believers. There is no child of God left out of this equation.

Grace is the "divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude" (Strong's Greek)

Something that is given according to measure is a purposeful distribution. There is careful thought behind it.

Have you been to the Poppy Fields? Compare that to the farmlands you see traveling north on Interstate 5 or 99. What is the difference?

This makes me think of two distinct areas in my yard. On the west side of my yard, I have filled in most of the empty space by scattering wildflower seed. There was no rhyme or reason to it. My thought was that wherever the seed landed would be the place it grew. This thinking took no plan on my part and does not really have any specific end purpose. In fact, I am surprised when I see a new seedling coming up because I do not even remember where I scattered different varieties.

In contrast to the west side of my yard is the east side. There I have planned very carefully. This plan is for my garden and it is on graph paper. I know just where everything is. It is my vegetable and fruit garden. I spent time measuring and thinking about where each tree, plant and seed would be placed in order to give it the right amount of space, sun and shade. My husband built specific raised beds for each type of produce. There are trellises for each

climbing plant and a carefully designed sprinkler system. My plan has a specific purpose in order to yield the best result.

Christ bestows upon His children whatever He deems necessary to carry out His purpose. Each of us is planted right where He desires us to be and we are given the exact amount of grace needed to fulfill His plan in His church.

Ro 12:3-8 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, [let each exercise them accordingly]: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1Co 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

What do we learn from these verses about the skills God has given to us?

They are gifts. Gifts are something given not earned. Whatever talents we have are because God has chosen to bestow them upon us. The glory for *anything* good we might accomplish goes *solely* to God. Because our purpose is to glorify God in following His commandments, we are to use our gifts to benefit the body of Christ.

Since these gifts are given to us, there is a responsibility to be a good steward of them. Are you using the strengths God has given you? Does this mean we cannot serve in areas where we are not as comfortable? Does this mean we “push” our way into serving where we “know” we are effective? We need to remember the attitudes we are to have in building the unity of the church, having one focus. This requires that we humble ourselves and are more

interested in working as a team member than being the team leader unless directed to do so by those in charge. Look back to Eph 4:2-3.

Have you ever been in a position to see a gift bestowed on a child just to hear that it was not what they wanted? What does that reaction say to the giver?

Are you content with the gifts God has blessed you with, knowing that He has given you exactly what He has deemed profitable for His kingdom? Whether it be running a government, running a classroom or running a home.

According to verse 7, what else do we learn about the gifts Christ has bestowed on each of us?

They are measured. Abilities are given to us according to the extent that God wants us to have in order to serve His purposes.

I am not a good baker. This is because I do not like to take the time to measure everything exactly. My failures in this area have taught me how important it is to have just the right amount of ingredients - not a tiny bit more than the recipe calls for and not a smidgeon less.

God has preordained the exact amount of grace needed to each of us to use our gifts to fulfill His plan. We will not run out of resources, neither will we have extra to stash away for later. Think of God's provision in your life. What gifts has He blessed you with? How have you seen Him use them for His glory?

We talked about the church being one body. Many different parts make up one body. Our physical bodies are a good example. Every part of our body is working toward the same goal - that is to keep us healthy and alive. Cancer is a bunch of radical cells doing their own thing instead of functioning with the purpose they were given. When this happens, the body no longer acts in harmony. If one part is missing or does not fulfill its role, other cells and organs have to compensate to fill in the weaknesses. We are then not as strong or efficient. In the church, each individual is necessary to provide a certain function. Even those functions that seem insignificant are extremely important in forming a complete, healthy whole.

1Pe 4:10 As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Think of your eyelashes. They seem rather insignificant to the function of your body other than being cosmetically pleasing. Yet without them, you are subject to problems with your eyes.

It is easy to think that they [eyelashes] are a practically useless appendage that happens to be quite a lovely adornment. Those who lack eyelashes however can suffer from a great many eye conditions.

Eyelashes help to serve a number of practical purposes. One is that they block any debris and sweat from entering the eye, thus preventing the scratching of the cornea and other irritation. Eyelashes prevent particles in the air or environment, such as dust for example, from getting into a person's eye, causing pain and possible infection. Another is that they assist in detecting any foreign objects approaching the eye itself, prompting the reflex of the eyelid to shut. Eyelashes are very sensitive and can help calculate distances and proximity between an eye or face and its environment, much like the whiskers on a cat. Eyelashes are curved and structured in such a manner as to keep foreign water or moisture from getting into the eye. (ehow.com)

Have you ever been tempted to say something like they don't need me, I have nothing to offer, or I don't really have any strengths or gifts? What does this say about God? What does this say about God's design for employing gifts to His saints in the church?

The next three verses in Ephesians chapter 4 qualify Christ's position in giving the particular gifts He chooses to whomever He chooses and in whatever measure He chooses to build His church.

Eph 4:8-10 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this [expression,] "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Ephesians 4:8 is taken from Ps 68:18, a victory song written by David. In military terms, when a battle was won, the conqueror would bring home the spoils and distribute them. The reference of Psalms 68 is used as an analogy to show that Christ's victory in defeating sin has given Him the right to grant spiritual gifts.

Ascended – from the highest high, being fully exalted, pointing out the glorious ascension of Christ after his resurrection.

Ps 24:7-10 Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift [them] up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.

Ps 97:6 The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory.

Ac 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

He led captive a host of captives – Think! What held you captive before you were saved? If you are a Christian, what now holds you captive? Christ's death on the cross conquered the sin that held each of us captive. Christ has opened the door for us to have a relationship with His Father. His victory earns Him the right to distribute gifts and to rule the church.

Ac 1:4-8 And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," [He said,] "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Descended - from the lowest of lows, taking upon Himself our sins, His death and separation from His Father.

There is a stark contrast here between Christ's position as God and His willingness to lay aside His royalty to become a mere man.

Php 2:6-8 [Christ Jesus] who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[He is] "the fountain whence all blessings might flow; dispensing all good things to all his creatures, according to their several capacities and necessities" Adam Clarke's Commentary

We are His church, purchased with His blood, to be used by Him and for Him.

Eph 1:18-23 [I pray that] the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. [These are] in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly [places], far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

Application Questions  
Week 5, Eph 4:7-10

**Small group prayer: take 5 minutes and quietly think about the study this morning. What is God saying to you personally? What one area do you need to focus on?**

The themes we discussed today might help formulate your prayers. We have all been given gifts. They are to be used by God for His purposes. Careful stewardship, hearts of humility and contentment are to accompany the use of our gifts. Each gift is important in consideration of the body as a whole. Christ, in His death and resurrection, earned the right to bestow upon each of His children the unique gifts He determines is best to fulfill His plan.

You will have an opportunity in your small group to pray about your personal application following ACTS. Your leader will begin each section with scripture.

Adoration – “I praise You for...”

Confession – “Forgive me for...”

Thanksgiving – “Thank you for...”

Supplication – “I pray for...”

If your group is done before 12noon please use the time to quietly work on your memory verses or begin to work on the life application questions below. Visiting time begins at noon.

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This week: Read through Ephesians 4 and use the “Apply It” bookmark to guide you in personal application. Pray for the concerns of those in your small group. Work on memorization – Eph 4: 1-7, 12-13 – and pray for growth in the areas God has brought to your attention.

What gifts/strengths has God given you? How have you been able to use them for His glory? Take time to thank Him for His perfect and complete gifts in your life.

God has placed you exactly where He wants you and has given you exactly what you need to honor Him. Are you content where you are? Do you struggle wishing you were more like someone else? “Don’t despise little things; a lantern can do what the sun can never do – shine at night”. (Croft M. Pentz, *Zingers*)

Are you willing to use your gifts when He gives you the opportunity? How are you at giving God the glory for a task accomplished? Do you only serve in areas where you are comfortable? Do you trust God through His grace to give you just what you need in any area He places you in?

Think of your life before you were saved. What held you captive then? Who holds you captive now? How does your life show gratitude for the gift of salvation? Is there something you need to do to improve in this area?

Read Philippians 2:6-8. Christ is our greatest example of humility. Specifically, how are you doing following His example at home, at church, in ministry, at work, with your neighbors, etc?