

Ephesians 4:7-16

Our last lesson was all about our walk in Christ as it affects our fellow believers.

It is a walk characterized by the Christ-like attitudes of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance, with the overall goal of keeping **"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."**

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As we continue in Ephesians Chapter 4, the focus is still on the local assembly, but this time the subject is spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:7 **"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."**

Certainly, Ephesians makes an important contribution, but it isn't the only

epistle to address the subject of spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 contains 13 spiritual gifts, and Romans Chapter 12 mentions 7.

By contrast, Ephesians only deals with 5, but it is very enlightening when it comes to the circumstances under which these gifts were given.

However, before we commence our study of Ephesians, let's spend a little time in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12.

We will begin by reading verses 4 to 6 ---

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5: And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6: And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

Of course, any gift must have a giver.

In this case our benefactor is the entire Godhead.

In V 4, the Holy Spirit is identified, while V 5 speaks of the Lord (no doubt referring to the Lord Jesus).

Then V 6 assures us that it is **"God which worketh all in all."**

And then we discover something very revealing about these gifts.

V 7 **"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."**

Yes, apart from their specific ministry, each gift is a **"manifestation of the Spirit."**

The word manifestation describes something that has become apparent or visible, and that's exactly what these spiritual gifts do.

They are the channels through which the Holy Spirit becomes apparent as He does His work in the body of Christ.

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As we have already mentioned, 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 deals with 13 spiritual gifts, and they are all important.

However, because our main thrust will be in Ephesians, we must limit ourselves to only one of the several categories into which they fall, and, within that category, confine ourselves to only one spiritual gift.

I have chosen the supernatural or miracle gifts, which include the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

And for reasons that I will explain in a moment, this category can also be called the sign gifts.

The particular gift I have chosen is the gift of healing.

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Certainly, this wasn't the first time that God had provided his servants with signs and wonders.

Moses was supplied with some very significant miracles to back up his demands, and during a time of spiritual decline in Israel, Elijah was granted special signs and wonders.

And certainly Jesus was supplied with unmistakable credentials, Peter calling Him **"--- a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."** Acts 2:22

And certainly this approval was necessary.
In spite of the fact that Jesus spoke "---
**as one having authority, and not as the
scribes,**" He was a carpenter's son Whom
the nation was to accept as their
Messiah.

And when Jesus sent forth His own disciples
to preach the kingdom, He supplied them
with the very same credentials.

Matthew 10:7-8 **"And as ye go, preach,
saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
8: Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,
raise the dead, cast out devils: freely
ye have received, freely give."**

Yes, when verification was necessary, God
supplied appropriate signs and wonders.

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And certainly that was the case with the
early church.

They were confronting a nation steeped in Old Testament Law with the message that everything had changed.

Yes, they needed God's verification, and they certainly got it.

Acts 5:12-16 **"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13: And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14: And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15: Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.**

16: There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."

And not only was this true of the apostles, but it was equally true of Paul.

Acts 19:11 **"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:**

12: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

However, and this is my point, the gift of healing, along with the other miracle gifts, were only temporary.

God had provided them to give credibility to the early church until its doctrinal foundation had been established in the New Testament Scriptures.

Sometime later we find Paul advising Timothy to --- **"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."** 1 Timothy 5:23

Why was he suggesting this rather common home remedy?

Why didn't he drop a handkerchief in the mail and heal him?

He had done it for others.

Why not for his dear friend Timothy?

Obviously, the gift of healing had been withdrawn.

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So, am I saying God cannot heal?

Certainly not!

That has always been His prerogative, and it always will be.

However, that's not true of His servants.

The miracle gifts had been supplied for a particular need and a particular time in

church history, and were eventually withdrawn.

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Well, we better get back to Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:7 **"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."**

Grace has been defined as God's unmerited favour - a very interesting definition when you apply it to **"the measure of the gift of Christ."**

No, our spiritual gifts are not rewards for something we have done.

They are simply another example of God's unmerited favour.

And as you might have noticed, this unmerited favour has been extended to **"every one"** inside the body of Christ.

Yes, every born again believer has received at least one gift, although some of us haven't opened it yet.

However, not all of us have received the same gift, nor have we been endowed in equal measure.

Just as a loving father might give gifts to his children at Christmas -- a toy horse for the baby, a set of blocks for little Mary, a bicycle for teenaged Jim, and electrician's tools for his grown-up son -- so every believer has been given appropriate gifts according to Christ's wisdom.

And, as is indicated in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12, the members of Christ's spiritual body function in much the same manner as the members of a human body.

Whether we be a foot or a hand, or a more
obscure member of Christ's body, our gift
is important.

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I have a niece who is a diabetic.
The fact that one small organ in her body is
not working has affected her whole life.
If it were working, it wouldn't even be
noticed, but it would be important.
And that's true of every member of Christ's
spiritual body.

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Now that we understand both the source and
the recipients, it's time to discover the
unique circumstances under which these
gifts were given.

Ephesians 4:7-10 **"But unto every one of us
is given grace according to the measure
of the gift of Christ.**

8: Wherefore he saith, When he ascended

up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9: (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10: He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

In V 8 Paul makes a direct reference to Psalm 68:18, which says --- **"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men ---."**

In this Psalm, God is pictured as a conquering King at the head of His victorious army.

And if we back up one verse, we will discover that His army contains twenty thousand chariots and thousands of angels.

In Ephesians 4:8, Paul uses this same Psalm to describe Jesus' resurrection and His victory over sin and Satan.

Like a conquering King, He is distributing gifts (in this case spiritual gifts) to His loyal subjects.

And besides that, something else was going on.

Ephesians 4:9 "**(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)**"

Scholars believe this verse refers to that wonderful time shortly after Jesus' resurrection when He descended into Paradise, or Abraham's bosom, and brought the Old Testament saints back to glory with Him.

Also, V 8 says --- "**When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive ---.**"

What does that mean?

Dr. Harry Ironside says this is a Hebraism. That is to say, the words have been taken directly from Hebrew and literally mean to lead captive him who held you captive. That could only refer to Satan and those poor souls who have been **"taken captive by him at his will."**

But at the cross, where he thought he had gained his ultimate victory, Satan was led captive at the chariot wheels of our Saviour.

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And, not only do we have a Conquering Hero seated at the right hand of God, but we have a real man in the glory.

A man, Who, being wearied by His journey, asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water.

Yes, we have a Great High Priest who can **"be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."**

And when you are smarting from betrayal, you can **"--- consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."**

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But the real point Paul is making is that this Conquering Hero has given **"gifts unto men,"** spiritual gifts supplied for the maintenance and increase of His own spiritual body.

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Ephesians Chapter 4 includes every believer, and therefore acknowledges every spiritual gift, but it only deals with five.

Ephesians 4:11-12 **"And he gave some,
apostles; and some, prophets; and some,
evangelists; and some, pastors and
teachers;
12: For the perfecting of the saints, for
the work of the ministry, for the
edifying of the body of Christ."**

Unlike 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 which deals with both spiritual gifts and gifted individuals, Ephesians only concerns itself with individuals, gifted men whom God has given to the Church.

That distinction is brought out quite clearly in the NIV, which reads, **"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."**

And, as you might have noticed, each of these men has received a mandate directly relating to the Word of God.

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First of all, we have apostles and prophets. Like the miracle gifts, they belonged to the early church.

As Ephesians 2:20 tells us, the church was **"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."**

Yes, these are the men whom God enlightened concerning the doctrinal foundation of the Church recorded in the New Testament Scriptures.

There are no apostles and prophets in the Church today, and there is no need of them.

The foundation has been laid, and these gifted men have passed off the scene.

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The next gifted individual is the evangelist.

And even though he can be beneficial inside the body of Christ, his essential ministry is to the unsaved.

He has been given the unique ability of presenting the Gospel in a most convincing manner.

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This brings up the question, *Is a believer's spiritual gift the only one he can exercise?*

Well, the answer is no.

Just because a believer's specific gift might be *helps*, doesn't mean he has no responsibility to the lost.

He may not be an evangelist, but he should be **"ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh" him "a reason of the hope that is in" him.**

And even though a man may not possess the gift of leadership or teaching, every

husband must lead his family and instruct his children in the way of righteousness.

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And this might be a good time to distinguish between natural talents and spiritual gifts.

And there *is* a difference.

God has given natural talents to everyone, but He has only given spiritual gifts to His children.

Of course, this doesn't mean the Holy Spirit cannot channel a spiritual gift through a God-given talent.

No doubt Paul was a naturally gifted speaker, and no doubt the Holy Spirit channelled the gift of preaching and teaching through that God-given talent.

However, that doesn't mean a person's natural ability automatically becomes his spiritual gift.

Too often natural ability, as wonderful as it is, has been substituted for a spiritual gift, and the result has been the glorification of man rather than the glorification of God.

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The last two individuals mentioned in this chapter are the *pastor* and the *teacher*. Certainly a pastor or a shepherd (for that's what the name means) needs to be fluent in the Word of God.

Like Peter, he must feed the sheep.

But in addition, a shepherd must have a heart for God's people.

He must **"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."**

And he must guard against wolves.

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The teacher has a little different ministry, but all to the same purpose.

He is a man whom God has specially gifted to search out the Scriptures and teach them in a clear and orderly manner.

Properly implemented, his ministry will assist the believers in ascertaining God's will, and applying it to their lives.

"O may I love Thy precious Word, may I explore the mine;
May I its fragrant flowers glean, may light upon me shine.
O may I find my armour there, Thy Word my trusty sword,
I'll learn to fight with every foe the battle of the Lord."

Edwin Hodder

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The body of Christ has been given the necessary ability to maintain its own health and become more like Christ.

As Paul puts it in Ephesians 4:12, these gifts are --- **"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."**

I am told by those who study linguistics that the original Greek in which these scriptures were written contained no punctuation.

Of course our English translators had to supply punctuation, and I'm sure they did their very best.

However, in V 12, they seem to have added at least one comma too many.

Apparently there shouldn't be a comma after the word **"saints,"** and that addition has really changed the meaning.

Let's try it without the comma, and you'll see what I mean: **"For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry - --."**

Much different, isn't it?

With the comma, it would appear that these gifted men are responsible for the **"perfecting of the saints,"** and in addition to that, **"the work of the ministry."**

In fact, their job is to equip the saints so that they can do **"the work of the ministry."**

That point is brought out quite clearly in the New King James, which reads, **"for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry ---"** (no comma), and in the NIV, which reads, **"to prepare God's people for works of service --."**

No, the work of the ministry is not the responsibility of the few.

It is the vital concern of the entire assembly.

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I'm sure some of you might remember a mark that your mother put on a doorway to record your height.

As the years went by, more marks appeared, and you looked forward to the time when you would be as tall as your parents.

Well, our Heavenly Father looks forward to a time when we will reach our full stature in Christ.

And not only that, but He has given us the necessary gifts to participate in that endeavour.

As we see in Ephesians 4:13, He wants this process to continue **"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."**

And even though this goal cannot be fully realized down here, it is God's will for our lives.

We see that in Romans 8:29 --- **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."**

And one of the benefits of this increase in stature is protection from false prophets.

Or, as Paul put it in Ephesians 4:14 ---

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Paul's analogy is quite striking, isn't it?

First of all, he pictures the immature Christian as a child, who, by its very nature, can be easily misled.

Next, he likens him to a sail boat that is out of control.

Rather than being guided by the Word of God, it is **"tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."**

And there are men of **"cunning craftiness,"** and they do **"lie in wait to deceive."**

Peter describes them in 2 Peter 2:1 --- **"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."**

And really, our only defence against such men is the Word of God and spiritual maturity.

Ephesians 4:15 **"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."**

Certainly truth is essential, and false doctrine is a scourge.

But we must speak **"the truth in love."**

Yes, truth without love is unacceptable, but so is love without truth.

Too many times an unbiblical perception of love has suppressed the truth, and everyone loses.

Ephesians 4:15-16 **"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:**

16: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the

effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Here we see complete harmony within the body of Christ, and twice in these verses Paul emphasizes the importance of love.

Yes, love **"never faileth,"** but sometimes local assemblies do.

By the time John wrote the Book of Revelation, Jesus had found it necessary to warn the believers in Ephesus of the possible demise of their assembly.

Revelation 2:5 **"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."**

And this warning had not been provoked by inactivity or a tendency to compromise the truth.

In fact, Jesus assured them, **"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:**

3: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Revelation 2:2-3

But the bottom line is found in verse 4 --

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Yes, in their constant activity, they had lost what really mattered.

They had fallen out of love with their Saviour.

No longer did they cherish time in His presence.

No longer did they dwell upon His tender mercies.

They had left their **"first love."**

Jesus took that very seriously, and for good reason.

In a marriage, a wife's relationship to her husband is very important.

She may be a good housekeeper, a good cook, and the list goes on and on.

But if she ceases to love her husband, the marriage has little meaning.

And that's why the bride of Christ must never lose her **"first love."**

Every day, and in every way, we must **"grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"**.