

06–13–2020 Ephesians 4:7–16 Bible Study

Read Ephesians 4:7–16 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he captured captives; he gave gifts to men.” 9 Now what is the meaning of “he ascended,” except that he also descended to the lower regions, namely, the earth? 10 He, the very one who descended, is also the one who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things. 11 And he himself gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God—a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature. 14 So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. 15 But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. 16 From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body builds itself up in love.

COMMENTS:

The apostle has been discussing the unity of the whole in our reading yesterday. Now he turns to the individual parts and shows how diversity within the body contributes to its unity. The body is unified but it is not uniform; every person has a special gift that makes a contribution to the whole. If you didn’t read 1 Cor. 12:12–26 yesterday, I urge you to do so today.

In the verses following, the apostle lists the various gifts necessary for the body to function properly and ultimately to attain its goal of maturity, “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (4:13). But to each one of us grace has been given.

Christ’s giving is always a matter of his grace, and just as the apostle has emphasized how he personally was the recipient of grace (3:2, 7, 8), he reminds the readers that each one of them has received the same privilege. Later, he will show how that privilege leads to responsibility (4:12–16).

The gift is as Christ apportioned it. Though grace suggests the unlimited favor of God, this phrase shows that, as it was given to each individual, it does have limitations. No one person has all the gifts required for the body.

The gifts of each member are supplemented by the gifts of all members. It is the working together of each part that produces unity and growth. Here it is the gift that Christ apportioned, not the gift of the Spirit, as in Corinthians. Our team God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit always work cooperatively.

The continuity of this passage is interrupted by a parenthesis at 4:9–10. The writer has introduced Christ as the giver of spiritual gifts, but before he goes on to enumerate them (4:11), he pauses to reflect upon the “giver” and how Christ’s dispensing of these gifts relates to the humiliation and exaltation of Christ.

No sooner has Paul spoken of this unity than he goes on to speak about the diversity of gifts. “But to each one of us grace was according to the measure Christ’s gift...He gave gifts to men...some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers” (vv. 7, 11).

The contrast is between “all” and “some.” All are members of the one body, but some have received one gift and some another. Nor do we pick the gifts we want. They are given as God desires. Nor are some gifts more valuable than others. All are necessary for the proper functioning of the body, the church.

All the gifts are necessary to properly equip the believers (saints) for the work of building up the body of Christ. This is not a casual situation. We ALL are to attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. Then we will be a mature Christian.

Little children have a limited attention span. They like to flit from one thing to another or they get so enchanted with one thing they want to do it over and over and over again. When we go chasing after the new teaching or new teacher, we can be headed for danger. God does new things, but he does not produce new theology or self revelation about himself.

V. 15 reminds us there is such a thing as truth. Jesus himself said, “I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life” (John 14:6). I remember someone suggesting that if you read and studied 10 books on the same topic, you could become known as an expert on that topic. You should be a source of knowledge if you did that, but I don’t think that makes you an expert.

Our warning is that God doesn’t tell us to pick out what we want to know best. We are to be growing in Christ, the head of the Church. If you grow in Christ, you will grow in love. Remember the proclamation of 1 John 4:7–12 which contains the wonderful words: God is love.

REFLECTION QUESTION: I believe we understand the value of education primarily as a way to increase income. As a Christian I value education because it helps me to know what is true and false. I have guidance in making important life decisions. Have you ever considered that with Jesus having become our brother and living among us and for us, we now a third great commandment. When Jesus was asked what was the first and greatest commandment he said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your mind. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Then in John 13:34 Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have love you, you also are to love one another.” As Christians we are called to the highest love for the world: loving others like Jesus has loved us. That is more than a lifetime project.