

DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH, PT. 1; EPH. 4:7-10 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

AS YOU MAY RECALL, ~ LAST TIME WE LOOKED AT EPH. 4:3-6, ~ PAUL'S DISCUSSION of, ~ and emphasis on, ~ our unity within the body of Christ that the Holy Spirit has given us.

▶▶ That discussion and emphasis leads him into a discussion of the diversity within the body of Christ in [verses 7-16](#). ~ Specifically, ~ diversity of spiritual gifting in the church.

▶▶ The word unity needs to be modified to correct potential misconceptions.

▷▷ Unity does not mean uniformity, ~ that the church consists of a group of clones.

▶▶ In [Eph. 4:7-16](#), ~ Paul shows us that God has built diversity into the church by variously gifting all believers to serve in various capacities ~ ¶¶

▷▷ in order to promote spiritual growth and maturity in believers ~ and to preserve and protect the unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

▶▶ So there is both unity and diversity, ~ specifically in the present context, ~ diversity in gifting in the body of Christ, ~ the new humanity, ~ the church.

AND TO THE DIVERSITY OF GIFTS IN THE CHURCH WE NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION, ~ and begin to look at Eph. 4:7-16.

▶▶ Today, ~ we'll take up [verses 7-10](#), ~ in which Paul talks mainly about spiritual gifting in general.

PAUL BEGINS IN VERSE 7a BY GIVING A GENERAL STATEMENT THAT ALL believers have received spiritual gifting. ~ ~ "BUT GRACE WAS GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US."

REMEMBER "GRACE" IS USED A NUMBER OF WAYS IN THE NT.

▶▶ Here it refers to spiritual gifts. ~ Recall that Paul used the word "grace" earlier, ~ in [Eph. 3:7](#), ~ to refer to his gift of apostleship.

▶▶ Since "grace" normally means free and undeserved favor, ~ most likely Paul, ~ just as he did with his own gift, ~ is using it here to refer to spiritual gifts ~ in order to emphasize their free and undeserved nature.

▷▷ Our spiritual gifts are free, ~ and we definitely don't deserve them. ¶¶ 1/9

▶▶ And it's good to remember that we cannot achieve spiritual gifts through effort or education.

▶▶ It is also good to keep in mind that they are not rewards. ~ E.g., ~ they don't come as a result of being holy or super spiritual, ~ not for being spiritually mature.

▷▷ The church at Corinth was far from being a spiritually mature, ~ godly fellowship.

↳↳ And yet, ~ according to Paul in [1 Cor. 1:7](#), ~ they were "not lacking in any gift."

"BUT GRACE WAS GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US," ~ PAUL SAYS IN VERSE 7a.

▶▶ Paul puts [verse 7a](#) in the form of a contrast to [verses 4-6](#).

▶▶ In [verses 4-6](#), ~ he was emphasizing our unity with his seven "ones."

▶▶ He now points out in [verse 7a](#) ~ that there is also diversity within the body of Christ, ~ the church. ~ Again, ~ specifically in the context, ~ diversity in gifting.

▷▷ In [Rom. 12:6a](#), ~ Paul brings this out as well. ~ "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us."

▷▷ And in [1 Cor. 12:4-6](#), ~ Paul writes, ~ "Now there are varieties of gifts, ~ but the same Spirit; ~ and there are varieties of service, ~ but the same Lord; ~ and there are varieties of activities, ~ but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone"

▶▶ Even though we have great unity, ~ we are not all the same. ~ We do not all function the same within the body of Christ. ~ We do not all have the same spiritual gift/gifts.

▷▷ Paul points this out in [Rom. 12:4-5](#). ~ LEB ~ "For just as in one body ~ [human] ~ we have many members, ~ but all the members do not have the same function ~ [hands/eyes . . . ~ feet/ears], ~ ¶¶

↳↳⁵ in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ, ~ and *individually* members of one another."

▷▷ And in [1 Cor. 12:27-30](#), ~ Paul says, ~ "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ~ ¶¶

↳↳ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, ~ second prophets, ~ third teachers, ~ then miracles, ~ then gifts of healing, ~ helping, ~ administrating, ~ and various kinds of tongues. ~ ¶¶ ¶¶ 2/9

→→Are all apostles? ~ Are all prophets? ~ Are all teachers? ~ Do all work miracles? ~ Do all possess gifts of healing? ~ Do all speak with tongues? ~ Do all interpret?

→→Of course not!

▶▶And when all the gifts are functioning properly, ~ they help preserve and protect our unity, ~ because when we are using our gifts, ~ we are working together, ~ we are unified.

▷▷And when all the gifts are functioning properly, ~ they promote our spiritual growth and maturity.

"BUT GRACE WAS GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US," ~ PAUL SAYS IN VERSE 7a.

▶▶So each believer has at least one spiritual gift. ~ 1 Pet. 4:10a

▶▶And our responsibility in this matter is twofold.

▷▷1st, ~ we are to determine what spiritual gifts or gift we have been given. ~ The question is, ~ "How do we do that?" ~ Here are some suggestions.

↳↳Pray ~ Do something, ~ try some ministry out. ~ Watch where God gives you opportunities to minister.

→→Ask self some questions. ~ What do I enjoy doing for the common good of the church?

↳↳Am I drawn to a certain ministry? ~ Have others confirmed I'm gifted in a certain area?

▷▷Our 2nd responsibility is to use our gift or gifts.

↳↳Contrary to popular belief and opinion, ~ God did not design Christianity to be a spectator sport.

↳↳God intends and commands ~ all believers to be active participants in the church and has assigned a function in the body to each one of us.

↳↳As Paul says in Rom. 12:6-8, ~ NIV ~ "6 We have different gifts, ~ according to the grace given to each of us. ~ If your gift is prophesying, ~ then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ~ 7 if it is serving, ~ then serve; ~ if it is teaching, ~ then teach; ~ 77 11 3/9

→→⁸ if it is to encourage, ~ then give encouragement; ~ if it is giving, ~ then give generously; ~ if it is to lead, ~ do it diligently; ~ if it is to show mercy, ~ do it cheerfully.

↳↳ Briefly put, ~ Paul says, ~ "We have different gifts. ~ Use them."

BEFORE WE MOVE ON TO VERSE 7b, ~ WE SHOULD NOTE TWO MORE ITEMS ABOUT spiritual gifts at this point.

1st, ~ WE SHOULD NOTE THAT EACH SPIRITUAL GIFT IS IMPORTANT ~ AND NEEDED.

▶▶ Paul brings this out in his use of the human body as a metaphor to describe the church in 1 Cor. 12.

▷▷ In verses 14-21, ~ he writes, ~ "For the body does not consist of one member ~ but of many. ~ If the foot should say, ~ 'Because I am not a hand, ~ I do not belong to the body,' ~ that would not make it any less a part of the body. ~ ~ ↴↴

↳↳ And if the ear should say, ~ 'Because I am not an eye, ~ I do not belong to the body,' ~ that would not make it any less a part of the body. ~ If the whole body were an eye, ~ where would be the sense of hearing? ~ If the whole body were an ear, ~ where would be the sense of smell? ~ ~ ↴↴

→→ But as it is, ~ God arranged the members in the body, ~ each one of them, as he chose. ~ If all were a single member, ~ where would the body be? ~ As it is, ~ there are many parts, ~ yet one body. ~ The eye cannot say to the hand, ~ 'I have no need of you,' ~ nor again the head to the feet, ~ "I have no need of you."

▶▶ Just as every part of the human body is needed and important, ~ every part of the body of Christ is needed and important. ~ Every spiritual gift is important. ~ Every spiritual gift is needed.

2nd, ~ BEFORE MOVING ON TO VERSE 7b, ~ WE SHOULD NOTE HERE THE PURPOSE OF spiritual gifts.

▶▶ Later in the passage, ~ beginning in verse 11, ~ when Paul talks about specific gifts, ~ he will note the purpose of those gifts. ~ At this time, ~ we can look at the purpose of spiritual gifts in general.

▶▶ In 1 Pet. 4:10a, ~ Peter writes, ~ "As each has received a gift, ~ use it to serve one another." ~ The purpose of our spiritual gifts is to focus on and assist other believers.

▶▶ Paul brings this out as well. ↴↴ 4/9

▷▷ In 1 Cor. 12:7, ~ he writes, ~ LEB ~ "But to each one ~ is given the manifestation of the Spirit ~ [speaking of spiritual gifts] ~ for what is beneficial to all ~ [i.e., ~ to all believers]."

▷▷ In 1 Cor. 14:19, ~ in the context of speaking in tongues, ~ Paul notes, ~ "Nevertheless, ~ in church ~ I would rather speak five words with my mind ~ in order to instruct others, ~ than ten thousand words in a tongue."

↳↳ Paul is making the point that he would rather speak five understandable words to help others ~ than ten thousand words in an unknown language that would not.

▷▷ And in 1 Cor. 14:26, ~ speaking about orderly worship, ~ Paul writes, ~ LEB ~ "Therefore ~ what should you do, ~ brothers? ~ Whenever you come together, ~ each one of you has a psalm, ~ has a teaching, ~ has a revelation, ~ has a tongue, ~ has an interpretation. ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ All things must be done for edification" ~ [I.e., ~ all these things must be done for the spiritual strengthening and growth of our fellow believers]."

▶▶ Both apostles make it quite clear. ~ The purpose of spiritual gifts is not to draw attention to ourselves ~ or for our own benefit ~ or to give us an ego boost.

↳↳ They are tools, ~ tools to be used for focusing on, ~ benefitting, ~ serving, ~ and helping our brothers and sisters in Christ.

BACK TO EPH. 4. ~ NOW WE'LL TAKE UP VERSE 7b. ~ FOR CONTEXT, ~ TAKE IT with all of verse 7.

"BUT GRACE WAS GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US according to the measure of Christ's gift."

▶▶ Paul is teaching us here that Jesus sovereignly chooses what gifts we receive.

▷▷ More specifically, ~ known from other Scriptures, ~ we can say that Jesus is the giver of our spiritual gifts through God the Holy Spirit.

▶▶ We've discussed this before, ~ back in Eph. 3:7, ~ when we talked about God's sovereign choice in what gifting Paul received.

▷▷ As we noted, ~ we can desire certain gifts.

↳↳ In 1 Tim. 3:1, ~ Paul says, ~ "The saying is trustworthy: ~ If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, ~ he desires a noble task." ¶¶ 5/9

▷▷But, ~ ultimately, ~ Jesus, ~ through God the Holy Spirit, ~ sovereignly decides which gift or gifts each believer should have.

↳↳As Paul notes in 1 Cor. 12:11, ~ "All these ~ [referring to spiritual gifts] ~ are empowered by one and the same Spirit, ~ who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

▶▶If you'll recall, ~ back in Eph. 2:10, ~ Paul said, ~ "For we are his workmanship, ~ created in Christ Jesus for good works, ~ which God prepared beforehand, ~ that we should walk in them."

▷▷As we noted, ~ God has prepared specific works of ministry for us ~ and has gifted us to carry them out.

↳↳Our responsibility in this ~ is, ~ after determining our gifting, ~ to determine the ministry works that God has planned for us and carry them out. ~ If teaching

IN VERSE 8, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT THE OT PREDICTED THAT JESUS WOULD GIVE HIS people spiritual gifts.

"THEREFORE IT SAYS, ~ 'WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH HE LED A HOST OF CAPTIVES, ~ and he gave gifts to men.'"

▶▶This is a little hard to understand

▶▶Many feel that Paul is quoting from Ps. 68:18. ~ But that presents problems, ~ since Paul's wording is different.

▷▷Received/gave ~ And then they have to try to harmonize the two verses.

▶▶However, ~ I agree with the view that it's better to consider Eph. 4:8 as an indirect quotation summarizing all of Psalm 68.

▷▷Paul's wording is consistent with the content of the whole psalm. ~ Psalm 68 is a victory song written by David, ~ in which God is praised for victory and deliverance.

↳↳Specifically in verse 18 it refers to God as the Divine Warrior who achieves a great victory over his enemies, ~ leads his vanquished foes in procession, ~ and ascends his holy mountain.

↳↳And it seems to be implied in Ps. 68 that God would give gifts to His people as Paul portrays in Eph. 4:8. ~ And in fact, ~ verse 35 of Ps. 68 talks about God blessing His people. ↴↴ 6/9

BUT NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, ~ PAUL, ~ HERE IN EPH. 4:8, ~ TEACHES US that Ps. 68 is a Messianic Psalm, ~ i.e., ~ it is prophecy concerning Messiah Jesus.

▶▶It looks like Paul is saying that Psalm 68 points to Jesus' ascension into heaven, ~ to Jesus' victory over His enemies, ~ and to Jesus giving gifts to His people.

PAUL SAYS "WHEN HE ~ [I.E., ~ JESUS] ~ ASCENDED ON HIGH HE LED A HOST OF captives, ~ and he gave gifts to men."

▶▶When Jesus came to earth, ~ He experienced the depths of humiliation. ~ But when He ascended to heaven, ~ He experienced the very highest exaltation possible.

▷▷Phil. 2:6-11. ~ Paul says that Jesus, ~ ⁶ "though he was in the form of God ~ [i.e., ~ though in very nature God], ~ did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped ~ [i.e., ~ He did not consider His deity something to be used to his own advantage], ~ ¶¶

↳↳⁷ but emptied himself, ~ by taking the form of a servant, ~ being born in the likeness of men. ~ ⁸ And being found in human form, ~ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, ~ even death on a cross. ~ ¶¶

→→⁹ Therefore ~ [i.e., ~ as a result of doing this] ~ God has highly exalted him ~ [means that God raised Jesus to the loftiest height, ~ there is no one higher] ~ and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ~ ¶¶

↳↳¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ~ in heaven and on earth and under the earth ~ [no exceptions], ~ ¶¶

↳↳¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ~ [no exceptions], ~ to the glory of God the Father.

▶▶And we, ~ His blood-bought church, ~ share in Jesus' victory and have been given gifts.

▷▷"Hallelujah, ~ what a Savior"

PAUL SAYS "WHEN HE ~ [I.E., ~ JESUS] ~ ASCENDED ON HIGH HE LED A HOST OF captives."

▶▶Jesus, ~ the Divine Warrior, ~ led his conquered adversaries in procession.

▶▶The best explanation for the identity of these conquered adversaries that Jesus has defeated is that they are "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." ~ A couple of lines of evidence point in this direction. ¶¶ 7/9

▷▷E.g., ~ Paul refers to them two other times in Ephesians.

↳↳They are mentioned in 1:20-21, ~ where Paul talks about the absolute sovereignty of Jesus over them.

→→Recall that Paul said that Jesus is infinitely superior to all of His, ~ and our, ~ spiritual enemies. ~ I.e., ~ Satan and his fellow fallen angels.

→→And remember, ~ he emphasizes that Jesus is now ~ and always will be ~ infinitely superior to Satan and all his fellow demons.

↳↳Paul assured us there ~ that there will never be a time when any demonic being, ~ Satan or otherwise, ~ **in any way will threaten or rival the absolute supremacy of Jesus.**

↳↳Paul will return to speaking about "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" in Eph. 6:10-18.

→→A long passage dealing with "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

▷▷And in Col 2:15, ~ which is very similar to Eph. 4:8, ~ Paul says, ~ "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, ~ he ~ [i.e., ~ God] ~ made a public spectacle of them, ~ triumphing over them by ~ [or through] ~ the cross."

▷▷Therefore, ~ more than likely, ~ these defeated foes, ~ these vanquished "captives," ~ in Eph. 4:8 are Satan and the other fallen angels. ~ And emphasis on

↳↳And though this world, ~ with devils filled, ~ should threaten to undo us, ~ We will not fear, ~ for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us: ~ ~ ¶¶

→→the Prince of Darkness grim, ~ we tremble not for him; ~ His rage we can endure, ~ for lo, ~ his doom is sure, ~ one little word shall fell him.

IN VERSE 9, ~ PAUL INSERTS A PARENTHETICAL COMMENT ABOUT JESUS.

"(IN SAYING, ~ 'HE ASCENDED,' ~ WHAT DOES IT MEAN BUT THAT HE HAD ALSO descended into the lower regions, ~ the earth? ~ ~ ¶¶

▶▶¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, ~ that he might fill all things. ~ [i.e., ~ with His presence and power]."

THIS TOO MIGHT BE A LITTLE HARD TO UNDERSTAND. ¶¶ 8/9

▶▶ But one of the best, ~ if not the best, ~ ways to study the Bible is to compare Scripture with Scripture. ~ That is because Scripture interprets Scripture.

▷▷ And a careful comparison with the passage we just read a few minutes ago, ~ Phil. 2:6-11, ~ will show, ~ in my opinion, ~ some definite parallels.

▶▶ So, ~ I would suggest that, ~ even though Paul does not say it as poetically or as fully in Eph. 4:9-10, ~ he is basically saying, ~ or summarizing perhaps, ~ the same thing he said in Phil. 2:6-11.

▷▷ Jesus did not consider His deity as a possession to be exploited for selfish interests.

▷▷ He gave up his divine privileges and wrapped His deity in flesh; ~ he took the humble position of a slave ~ and was born as a human being.

▷▷ And when Jesus appeared in human form, ~ he humbled himself in obedience to God the Father, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and, ~ though not a sinner, ~ He died a sinner's death on a cross, ~ the most cruel and disgraceful of deaths, ~ so that you and I might have eternal life.

▷▷ And as a result, ~ God the Father raised Him up, ~ and "has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ~ in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ~ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, ~ to the glory of God the Father.

→→ "every tongue," ~ "every knee," ~ absolutely no exceptions!

CONCLUSION.

"WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Rev. 5:12.

LET'S PRAY ~ 9/9