

Exegetical Notes – Ephesians 4:7-16

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Ephesians 4:7-16

(In these verses, Paul continues his discussion of how right doctrine influences right practice. Here, he discusses the distribution of Spiritual Gifts among believers and the purpose of these gifts.)

Verses 7-10

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says:

***“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”***

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

- Paul made it clear in verses 1-6 that Christians were to be humble and gentle with one another to protect the unity of the Church. He opens this passage with the word, “but,” that is, because. Though God is one and the Church is called to be a united body, not all Christians are the same.
- Each Christian has received grace through Jesus Christ. But Christ is the one who determines the manifestation of that grace in each individual part of the Church. Christ determines the manifestation of grace in each believer, not the believer. We do not pick how the Holy Spirit works through us, God does.
- To make his point, Paul refers to Psalm 68:18. The Psalm talks about a triumphant warrior who returns from battle and enters the city in a parade of triumph. In his parade, the warrior displays the prisoners he has taken and the spoil he has taken. He distributes gifts from the spoil of his victory. Christ is the triumphant warrior who defeated Satan. When He ascends in victory He gives gifts, spiritual gifts, to His followers.

- Paul then explains what he means when he says Christ ascends. He means that Christ will return to Heaven in victory. But He could not return to Heaven in victory unless He had left there first. Jesus came to earth in human form. He “descended” from Heaven to the earth. However, He has returned to Heaven in victory.
- Like the victor He is, Christ gives gifts to His followers.

Verses 11-13

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

- Christ is the giver. But what gifts Christ gives to His followers determines the office they will fulfill in the Church. Not all followers receive the same gifts from Christ, so they have varying functions with the body of Christ, the Church. Some will be “apostles.” The term means, “sent ones.” It was a title reserved for those who were with Jesus when Jesus was here on earth. These were the ones Jesus sent to tell the world that the Messiah had come. This office is not open today. Next are “prophets.” These are those who reveal the word of God to His followers. They say to the people of God, “this is what God says.” Then, there are “evangelists.” These are they who tell people the message of salvation. Then, there are “pastors and teachers.” This is a joined function. These leaders guide the faithful by teaching them how to live as God’s servants.
- The persons who fill these functions in the Church work in unity to equip the Church, the people of God, to do “works of service” so that the body of Christ, the Church, will grow to spiritual maturity until the Church is like Christ.

Verses 14-16

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by

every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- When the Church is like Christ, it will not act like a willful or spoiled child. It will not be misled by people who are not gifted by Jesus' gifts. It will not be subject to the craftiness of deceitful, scheming people.
- Instead, it will know the truth, and it will speak the truth in love, and it will submit fully to Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church.
- The Church will recognize that Jesus is its head; that Jesus holds it together, and that Jesus builds it up in love.
- Rather than be in competition, the members of the body of Christ will function as a team with each player on the team doing the part Christ has assigned it to do and with each part being mutually loyal to Christ.

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