

# Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 4:7-16

Ephesians 4:7–16 (NKJV)

*“7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ 9 (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

## Gifts

God has graciously equipped His Church with gifts designed to bring edification and comfort. It is in His own will that He chooses to give those gifts, and that He sovereignly assigns those gifts to the individuals of His own discretion.

God has chosen to provide segregated gifts so that the body of Christ might be a cooperative of individuals who serve one another and complement one another by utilizing the gifts He has chosen for each specific individual. The purpose of this assignment is to teach us that we are not independent of one another but are called to rely on and support each other. When everyone in the body of Christ is serving, the ministry is fruitful and enjoyable, bringing edification to all.

Specific to the list Paul mentions here is apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. These five gifts identify offices and attributes.

The Apostle is one who is sent. In the first century Church all the apostles were eye witnesses to the ministry and resurrection of Jesus. Since that time, the office of apostle might be better understood as what we commonly call a missionary. Typically we send missionaries into parts of the world where ministry is not occurring. Therefore the missionary goes to reach others with the gospel and establish a Christian body where one does not already exist.

A prophet is one who speaks for the Lord and brings exhortation, edification, and comfort.

An evangelist is one whose primary gifting is to call those who don't know the Lord to faith – and therefore salvation. An evangelist primarily has a focus on those outside the Church.

A pastor is one who oversees the spiritual life of the Church. His role is to lead and protect.

Finally, a teacher is one who brings biblical instruction to the other members of the Church.

Often, men who are called as apostles demonstrate (at some level or another) all five attributes named herein. However, as a church is developed God will raise up others with similar or distinguishable gifts that the work of ministry may be done by all.

It is God's will that a church be led by a pastor. However, under the leadership of a pastor each local church should function by the interaction and service of all. The members are called to come together and serve one another for the edification of all. Paul shows that the gifts named herein are designed to allow others to grow up in the Lord and to be active participants in ministry. However, far too often, churches have a select few who serve and the others remain at the receiving end. If this pattern is left unaddressed, the church will become unhealthy and develop into a place where people congregate to "watch the show" and resultingly grow more and more self centered. A healthy church will allow for every member to serve and should encourage the same.

Each believer has been given one or more gifts. Those gifts are not given that the believer might serve himself or herself, but rather, humbly serve others.

The gifts God gives are designed to complement the others. Therefore we all need each other in order to be a growing healthy church.

Even as much as a healthy physical body needs a heart, a liver, lungs, etc., we as individuals within the body of Christ, with individual and segregated giftings, are designed to work together just as do the lungs, liver or heart. When one part of the body does not do its part, the whole suffers.

The gifts given to the body listed here in Ephesians are just a few of the gifts given. In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 we read of several others. (Please read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12)

### **Sound Doctrine**

In verse 14 Paul indicates the importance of sound doctrine; He does not want the church tossed to and fro by various belief systems and/or bad teaching. This exhortation carries special emphasis in a day when doctrine is given the back seat while unity at the expense of truth takes the lead. The ecumenical movement is nothing more than a return to Babylonian philosophy and should be condemned as such.

### **Unity in the Truth**

Paul does point the Church toward genuine spiritual unity based upon the truth. In fact, true spiritual unity can be based upon nothing less. Man-centered humanistic unity will fall while true Biblical and spiritual unity will bring believers into greater and greater harmony. This maturity in Christ will never fail. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of God abides forever.

### **Unique to the Church Age**

Paul said that the gifts Jesus has given His church began "*when He ascended on high...*" (vs. 8) Therefore we know that the resurrection of Jesus was the climactic end to the Old Covenant Dispensation and made way for the beginning of the Church Age.

After Jesus' ascension the disciples were told to gather in Jerusalem and wait for the *"promise of the Father."* (Acts 1:4) He said that when the Holy Spirit came He would empower the Church with the indwelling person of the Holy Spirit Who would provide them gifts and authority to accomplish His will throughout the Church Age. (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:5)

The fact that Jesus *"descended into the lower parts of the earth"* (vs. 9) has been a subject of some controversy. However, we believe that Jesus did do just as Paul said.

Some insight into this discussion can be gleaned from the words Jesus gave to one of the thieves who were crucified with Him at Calvary. There at the cross Jesus told the repentant criminal, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."* Luke 23:43 (NKJV) Although it seems that the terms "Paradise" and "Heaven" are used interchangeably in some passages of Scripture, the word "Paradise" as used in this text describes what we know as "Abraham's Bosom."

Apparently Abraham's Bosom was a segregated section of what was known to be "the place of the dead" in Old Covenant times. Although the Jews used the term "Hades" to describe the place of the dead, "Paradise" was not what we would refer to as Hell. It seems that "Paradise" was the place where the faithful were located until the resurrection of Jesus. This is clearly delineated in the account of the rich man and Lazarus.

In Luke's gospel we read,

*"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" Luke 16:19–31 (NKJV)*

The rich man was tormented in the flames of Hell while Lazarus waited in Abraham's Bosom. When the Lord descended into the "lower parts of the earth", He allowed for those waiting in "Paradise" access to the eternal dwelling place with God in Heaven.

Prior to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus it seems that "Abraham's Bosom" was the temporary dwelling place of the faithful. We know this because those who die as believers in the Church Age go directly into the presence of the Lord.

Paul wrote, *"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."* 2 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV)

When Paul says that Jesus *“led captivity captive”* (vs. 8), He is indicating that those who were captive in *“Abraham’s Bosom”* were finally allowed access to *“Heaven”*, and therefore *“Paradise”* was no longer a necessary component in the dimension of the Spirit.

Furthermore, it seems that when Jesus went into the *“lower parts of the earth”* (vs. 9), He also proclaimed His victory to those who were disobedient – in that place we *do* refer to as Hell.

Peter spoke to this when he said, *“...He [Jesus] went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”* And, *“For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh...”* 1 Peter 3:19b–20 (NKJV) and 1 Peter 4:6a (NKJV)

Therefore, all men, whether they were born prior to the Church Age, within the Church Age, or thereafter, are both aware and accountable to God. It should be noted that Jesus’ preaching to the unrighteous dead was not in order to provide them a *“second chance.”* For, *“it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”* Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)

### **Read:**

Romans 12:3–13 (NKJV)

1 Corinthians 12 (NKJV)

### **Questions**

- 1) True or False: Every genuine believer in Christ has been given gifts designed to serve the Church.
- 2) True or False: At the present time Jesus is seated in the heavenly places at the right hand of the Father.
- 3) Before Jesus ascended to heaven He first \_\_\_\_\_ into the lower parts of the earth.
- 4) True or False: Christ suffered in Hell – at the hands of the Devil – for our sins.
- 5) True or False: When Jesus *“gave gifts unto men”* He did so in order that the body of Christ (the Church) would have all the gifts needed for effective growth and ministry – by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 6) True or False: To *“fill all things”* means to leave nothing undone.
- 7) True or False: Certain believers are special because they have better gifts than others.
- 8.) True or False: Gifts used to edify the body are greater than those used to edify yourself.
- 8) True or False: All believers are called into the ministry.
- 9) True or False: It is God’s will that the Church of Jesus Christ enjoys genuine Biblical unity.
- 10) All the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit are important. They are the Holy Spirit’s work and power in the Church.
- 11) True or False: God desires that the Church is healthy and growing.