

Eph. 4:7-16

I. The grace has been given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ (7)

“given” in this context means specifically appointed and assigned to each individual in Christ

God (in Christ) is the obvious implied giver of this grace

Each Christian is specifically assigned gifts, experiences, roles and responsibilities as God sees best

Not every Christian has the same measure of the gift, but has the appropriate measure for them personally

“measure” is the quantity, portion of the gift, which is specifically apportioned to each one of us,

- cf. v. 13 – “measure of the maturity of the fullness of Christ”,

and v. 16 – “...according to the working in measure...”

“the gift” is elaborated below as leaders who equip us into maturity, but also has the clear connotation of the grace of salvation described in all the previous sections of Ephesians

-cf. 3:7 where Paul is a minister of the Gospel by the gift of God’s grace

II. Therefore: The Exalted Christ blesses His people with gifts that lead them to maturity (8-16)

A. Christ, as conquering ruler of all, blesses His people (8)

1. Quotation formula: Therefore it says... (8a)

2. Quoting Psa. 68:18 – By ascending, He conquered and blessed His people (8b-d)

a. He ascended to conquer captivity itself (8b-c)

1) Going up into the height/heaven (8b)

-cf. 3:18, Psa. 68:18

The point of “going up” is not primarily physical location. But the emphasis is on status and authority, cf. Phil. 2:9-11

At His resurrection and ascension, Christ [re]took His place as Lord over everything – cf. 1:20-23

2) He took captivity captive (8c)

Possibly, “He took captives” referring to a captured military force

More probably, “He took captivity” referring to the state of being a prisoner

b. He gave gifts to men (8d)

The “gifts” are described and elaborated in vv. 11-16

B. The Exalted Christ gives gifts to His people (9-16)

1. Christ is exalted to authority over all the universe (9-10)

a. What is “the ascending”? (9a)

This could possibly be translated as asking the identity of the one ascending – i.e. “Who is the one ascending?”

However, the neuter gender of this participle, and the fact that “he descended” in 9b is a verb, and not a parallel participle, both argue against this translation

Much more likely, this is rhetorically asking the interpretation and significance of the phrase “the ascending”

This is the question that Paul answers in 9b-10 because that is the point he wants to make (and the reason he asked this rhetorical question)

- b. It refers to Jesus coming to save, and therefore now being glorified (9b-10)
 - 1) If not that He descended to the lower region of the earth (9b)
 - “lower region of the earth” could refer to Jesus burial, and therefore to Hades
much more likely, this is an appositive genitive, and refers to Jesus’ incarnation – “the lower region, which is the earth”
 - The earth is called “the lower region” as opposed to heaven, which was Jesus’ abode before He came to save
 - The emphasis is not that Jesus went to Hades, but that He came to humanity to save
 - Therefore “he descended” refers not only to physical movement, but humiliation in status, cf. Phil. 2:5-8, 2 Cor. 8:9
 - 2) This One Who saved by His humiliation is now glorified above all (10)
 - a) The One Who descended is also the One Who ascended above all the heavens (10a)
 - On “descended” see above v. 9b
 - On “ascended” see above v. 8b
 - b) Purpose: so that He may fill everything (10b)
 - cf. 1:23, 3:19, Col. 1:13-20, Rom. 11:33-36
 - God’s overarching purpose for history is that Christ may be the focus and supreme entity of the entire universe
- 2. Christ gives leaders to equip the body to grow together into maturity (11-16)
 - a. He gave leaders to equip people for service so that people reach maturity (11-15)
 - 1) He gave the church leaders to equip people for works of service (11-12)
 - a) He gave four leadership roles to the church (11)
 - This means that He not only gave the roles, but gives the people to fulfill these roles
 - Of course, not everyone who claims to fill these roles is a gift from God, neither is everyone chosen to fill these roles by fallible humans
 - But everyone who truly, faithfully serves the Gospel in these roles is a gift from God
 - (1) He gave some to be apostles (11a)
 - (2) [He gave] some to be prophets (11b)
 - (3) [He gave] some to be evangelists (11c)
 - (4) [He gave] some to be pastors and teachers (11d)
 - “Pastors” and “teachers” are two terms closely connected with one article and the same conjunction in this series list, while the other three terms each have their own article and a series conjunction separating them
 - This means the grammar shows these two terms refer to the same person and role
 - Of course, pastoring and teaching are two different yet related activities, but the grammar shows them to be two parts of the same reality and role
 - Some speak of the “fivefold ministry” when they speak about this passage. It would be more accurate to say “fourfold ministry” according to the grammar of this verse

b) Purpose: To equip the saints for works of righteousness that build up the church (12)

(1) For the equipping of the saints (12a)

This word “equipping” has the connotation of making fully prepared and adequate for the task

This equipping includes mending and restoring what was broken (Mark 1:19, Gal. 6:1 and 1 Pet. 5:10), providing resources for what is lacking (1 Thes. 3:10, Heb. 13:21) and making perfect/fully ready that which is not yet complete (2 Cor. 13:9, 11)

(2) Result: So that they will do works of righteousness which build up the church (12b-c)

(a) into works of righteousness (12b)

(b) Result: into building up of the body of Christ (12c)

This could be a series of results – “works of righteousness” AND “building up the body of Christ”

But I have taken the second phrase as the result of the first – “as a result of the works of righteousness, the body of Christ is built up”

2) Until we reach maturity in Christ (13-15)

a) Until we reach the goal of unity and maturity in conformity to Christ (13)

(1) Until we all arrive, reach the goal (13a)

(2) Result (the goal we reach): Into the unity and maturity that conforms to Christ (13b-d)

(a) Into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (13b)

Notice the result is unity, but unity is not the primary goal. It is a byproduct of the primary goal (of knowing Christ)

And the unity of the faith is connected to the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God

This is because the faith *is* the knowledge of the Son of God

We become more unified to one another as we each grow toward Christ

Unity around anything else is dangerous and can actually be counter-productive to the faith and maturity

(b) into a mature man (13c)

possibly “mature” has the connotation of “perfect” but probably the emphasis is on maturity, characteristic of adulthood, as contrasted with immaturity of childhood in v. 14, cf. 1 Cor. 14:20

And “man” is a specific word notating an adult male in contrast to a boy

Mature in the sense of having reached the purpose for which it was designed, to become a model Christian, to reach the full potential and calling of a disciple

(c) into the measure of the maturity of the fullness of Christ (13d)

“measure” – the standard by which maturity is measured and known, cf. v. 16

“maturity” is a different word than the previous clause. It has the connotation of full stature, being at the peak of development

“fullness, cf. 1: 10, 23, 3:19, Col. 1:19, 2:9

Possibly, “full measure of maturity” or “measure of full maturity”

But probably, “measure of maturity of the fullness of Christ” emphasizing that Christ is and has “fullness” and that mature Christians conform to that fullness.

b) Purpose: To be steady and mature in Christ (14-15)

(1) Neg. So that we will no longer be immature and influenced by deceptive teaching (14)

(a) so that we will no longer be children (14a)

the connotation of “children” is immaturity and helplessness – not contributing to the cause of Christ, but needing to be taken care of, thus being somewhat of a liability

(b) being given the run around by deceptive teaching (14b-c)

i. being tossed back and forth (14b)

ii. and being carried here and there by every wind of teaching, by the craftiness of men, in trickery, for the deceitful scheming of error (14c)

The metaphors here are the opposite of steadiness and solidity, and purposeful tenacity which results from conviction and faithfulness to the truth

The continual change, uncertainty and unsettledness comes from purposeful deceit described as crafty, deceitful trickery, that schemes from a standpoint of conscious and chosen error and deceit

The first two prepositional phrases are parallel, with the same preposition, probably indicating manner. The third phrase is probably indicating purpose.

On “trickery” cf. 2 Cor. 11:3

On “deceitful scheming” cf. 6:11-12

There is a spiritual enemy and his human dupes that consciously purposely oppose the purposes, message and people of Christ. If God’s people allow their schemes to set the agenda, we will always be scrambled and off-balance, instead of purposefully advancing.

There is a need to occasionally defend where the enemy is attacking, but we should always be on the offensive, with the proclamation and demonstration of the truth of the Gospel.

(2) Pos. So that, through the truth, we will grow all things into Christ (15)

(a) Doing/speaking truth in love (15a)

Literally “truthing” – the verb form of the word for truth

“in love” is either manner – “with love” or instrumental – “by love”

both are true, but manner is more likely the meaning in this context

(b) We will grow all things into Him Who is the Head – Christ (15b)

“all things” is the object of the verb “grow”

On “grow” cf. 2:21

all things are to become greater into Him

all things become greater by growing into Him

of course, “all things” includes us as well

Christ is described as “the head”

Christ is the head of all things, with all authority, for the sake of the church in 1:22

And Christ is the head of the church in 5:23

- b. Therefore: The body grows together into building itself up by love (16)
 - 1) The Body grows together, by each part contributing its part in Him (16a-c)
 - a) By each part being united together, all contributing its part (16a-b)
 - (1) Being joined together (16a)

The connotation is being fit together like a building, where each part fits together perfectly into a coherent whole
 - (2) And being united together by every supporting ligament according to working in measure of each part (16b)

This connotation is being fit together like a body, where each part fits and works together
 - b) In Whom all of the body does the growth of the body (16c)

This grammar is a bit roundabout in order to emphasize that all parts of the body contribute to causing the growth of the body
 - 2) Result: into building itself up in love (16d)

Paul mixes the metaphors of building and organic growth
“in love” probably means – “by means of love”