

Paul's Letter to the *EPHESIANS*

CHAPTERS 4, 5, 6: *God's Plan for the Church* (the Body of Christ)

Principles for Maturity (4:7-16)

4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. The word "but" is a transition in the discussion from the unity of believers ^{Ephesians 4:3-6} to the uniqueness of each individual believer ^{v.11}. Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, dispenses His spiritual gifts (including grace), individually according to His sovereign will ^{Romans 12:3-6, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11}. Grace is a single-word expression of the heart of the gospel ^{Romans 5:20-21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:11}.

Every Christian has been given at least one gift ^{1 Corinthians 12:7,27}, and each saint "should use whatever gift [they] have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" ^{1 Peter 4:10} within the Body of Christ ^{Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:7}.

If a person has "been anointed with grace", then "God has blessed [them] forever". ^{Psalm 45:2}

4:8 This is why it says: "When he ascended ¹ on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." [¹*anabaino*: to go up (lit)] Paul used a Davidic psalm of victory ^{Psalm 68:18} to illustrate Jesus' victory over Satan and death on the cross ^{Colossians 2:13-15} and His ascension to the heights of heaven ^{Acts 1:9-11}. The victory of Jesus earned Him the right to return the redeemed prisoners of sin to God ^{2 Corinthians 5:17-21} and bestow spiritual gifts to mankind ^{John 14:26, Acts 2:33}.

The Davidic psalm Paul quoted ^{Psalm 68:18} was celebrating God's conquest of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (Canaanites). The referenced ascension was God rising to the top of Mount Zion.

4:9-10 (What does "he ascended ¹" mean except that he also descended ² to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) [²*katabaino*: to go down (lit)] Jesus "ascended" to heaven ^{Acts 1:9-11} following His having "descended to the lower, earthly regions", which referred to either His incarnation on earth ^{John 1:14} or His descending into the pit of demons (the "spirits in prison")

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between His Crucifixion & Resurrection ^{1 Peter 3:18-22} to declare His victory over Satan, death and sin ^{1 Corinthians 15:54-57}. Jesus' ascension was to the highest position ^{Philippians 2:5-11}, giving Him the right and power to create everything ^{John 1:3} and to provide for mankind ^{Philippians 4:19}.

4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists ³, and some to be pastors ⁴ and teachers, [³*euaggelistes*: declarer of good news, ⁴*poimen*: shepherd] As a consequence of His perfect fulfillment of His Father's will, Jesus Christ possessed the authority and sovereignty to give certain abilities to certain individuals.

Paul listed 5 of the many classes of gifted service positions ^{Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31}:

1. **Apostle:** The term apostle (*apostolos*: sent forth) was applied to the twelve men who had been the closest disciples to and were chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ ^{Luke 6:12-16}. Acts states that apostles were with Jesus "the whole time" of His earthly ministry and had seen the risen Lord Jesus ^{Acts 1:21-22}. The criteria not only fit the original twelve apostles ^{Mark 3:16-19}, but also Matthias ^{Acts 1:23-26}, who replaced Judas Iscariot. Later, God chose Saul/Paul of Tarsus ^{Acts 21:39}, who also had a miraculous encounter with the risen Jesus ^{Acts 9:1-19a}, to be His chosen apostle to the Gentiles ^{Romans 11:13}.
2. **Prophet:** The job of the prophet is to "strengthen, encourage, comfort" ^{1 Corinthians 14:3}. A prophet is a person who either foretells ^{Acts 11:27-28} or forth tells ^{1 Corinthians 13:2} a message from God. Their messages are to be judged by other prophets. ^{1 Corinthians 14:32}
3. **Evangelist:** Men who proclaim the good news of salvation (the gospel). ^{Romans 1:16}
Based on the phrase "and some to be", the next two positions are often seen as one:
4. **Pastors:** A man who follows in the footsteps of "our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep" ^{Hebrews 13:20-21} who chose to "[lay] down his life for the sheep" ^{John 10:11}. A pastor is also an "elder" ^{Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4} and an "overseer" ^{Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-7}.
5. **Teachers:** Certainly a pastor/preacher must be a teacher, but a teacher does not have to be a pastor. Teachers are to "teach ... the ... truths of God's word" ^{Hebrews 5:12}. They must not teach "stories they made up" ^{2 Peter 2:1-3} or "say what [unbelievers'] itching ears want to hear" ^{2 Timothy 4:3}, because, as with all the leadership positions in service to God, a teacher must recognize the huge responsibility of the task ^{James 3:1}.

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4:12-13 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature ⁵, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. [⁵*teleios*: perfect] The five leadership positions (above) were designed by God for various "works of service" ^{1 Corinthians 15:58} to edify "God's people" (Body of Christ) ^{Romans 14:19, 1 Corinthians 14:3-5} through the Word of God ^{Acts 20:32}. The "unity in the faith" refers to an agreement on all truths of essential Christian doctrine, centered on the gospel ^{Colossians 1:3-6}. Deep knowledge of Jesus is acquired by practicing steadfast prayer, faithful study of His Word ^{2 Timothy 3:16-17} and consistent obedience to His commands ^{Philippians 3:8-14, Colossians 1:9-12}. The constant application of these principles ^{Matthew 5:6} applied to times of great trial, will produce a life of maturity and fullness ^{James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 5:10}.

4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching ⁶ and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. [⁶*didaskalia*: doctrine] The troubles of life ^{John 16:33} and the "deceitful" teaching by "scheming" men ^{Matthew 24:24, Jude 1:4} will shake immature believers ("infants" ^{1 Corinthians 14:20}), producing doubts and an unstable life, like churning waves ^{James 1:6}. Christians are called to follow His plan ^{v.12-13} and move on to maturity ^{Hebrews 5:12-14}, learning discernment ^{1 John 4:1} about false teaching ^{Romans 16:17-18}, especially in these last days ^{1 Timothy 4:1-7, 2 Peter 3:3-4}.

4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Love is the foundation of Christianity ^{1 Corinthians 13:13}: for all relationships (with God ^{Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:30}, believers ^{1 John 4:7-21} and with non-believers ^{Matthew 5:43-48}) and for acts of service ^{Galatians 5:13, Revelation 2:19} (e.g., evangelism ^{Matthew 28:18-20}) by the saints. Christians are called to love internally (in heart ^{Psalms 13:5}) and externally (in actions ^{1 John 3:18}). As the "Head" ^{Ephesians 5:23}, Christ is depicted as the church's authoritative leader ^{Ephesians 1:22-23}.

4:16 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. Paul makes it known that an effective Christian walk (individually and as a body) starts with power "from him" (Jesus, the "head") and is held together by Him ^{Colossians 2:19}, but matures in love as a result of obedience to Him and His teachings ^{Psalms 103:17-18, John 14:15, 23-24, 1 John 3:21-24, 2 John 1:6}.