

"The Practice of the Believer"

Ephesians 4-6

Part 3

Introduction: In our study of Ephesians we are looking at the practical part of this letter which begins in chapter 4. As Paul opened Ephesians 4 his focus UNDER THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT was unity.

I. A Call for Unity

Part 3

A. The Foundation for Exhortation.

Notice Ephesians 4:1

He calls upon believers to walk worthy of their calling based upon all that God has done for us. He then exhorts his readers to exercise the 7 graces of Ephesians 4:2-3.

B. The Character of a Worthy Walk.

Notice Ephesians 4:2-3

C. The Grounds for Unity

Notice Ephesians 4:4-6

D. The Gifts for Unity - Part 1

Notice Ephesians 4:7

The first word of this verse introduces a contrast. In the previous verses Paul told us that we are one in Christ. Now the contrast here is that while we are all one with one God, we have different spiritual gifts.

GIFTS ARE NOT NATURAL ABILITIES!

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

⁴ *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

⁵ *And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*

⁶ *And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*

Notice Ephesians 4:7

Every one of us who are saved have at least one spiritual gift and with that gift God has also given to us the grace to exercise our gift or gifts.

This means that we will never have an excuse as to why we have not exercised our gifts. We have no excuse because God has given to us the grace to use our gifts.

Now, let me show you why it is so important that we discover our gifts and exercise them.

1 Corinthians 12:7

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

The spiritual gifts are given to believers in order to edify/build up the church. When we do not exercise our gifts then the entire body of Jesus Christ suffers.

Let us notice what Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

Let me show you something we have been studying on Wednesday nights.

Romans 12:4-8

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

⁶ *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

⁷ *Or ministry [serving], let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

⁸ *Or he that exhorteth [helping others walk in the Word], on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy [encourager], with cheerfulness.*

In this list of gifts, we can clearly see how important it is that we all come together and exercise our gifts. Can you imagine what the church would be like without these gifts?

The question often comes up, **“How can I know what my spiritual gift or gifts are?”**

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

We receive our gifts the moment of salvation. We do not need to pray for a gift. We cannot request certain gifts. The Spirit gives us our gifts according to His will.

1 Corinthians 12:11

¹¹ *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Now there are some believers who are just not concerned about knowing their gifts and exercising their gifts. This thought then brings us to the next verses.

Notice Ephesians 4:8-10

Verse 8 is a quote from Psalm 68.

Psalm 68:18a

¹⁸ *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men;*

So, what does all of this mean?

Some believe that the phrase descended into the lower parts of the earth here refers to Jesus leaving His throne in heaven to come into this sinful world. I personally believe it goes further than that.

When Jesus died on the cross, He was dead for three days. Where was He in that three-day period? The Bible makes it clear that He entered into Hades.

Psalm 16:10

¹⁰ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:27, 31

²⁷ Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

³¹ He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Notice Ephesians 4:8-9 again.

We see that when He descended, He led captivity captive.

Luke 16:20-26

²⁰ And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

²¹ And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

²² And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

²³ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ And 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.

²⁵ But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

²⁶ *And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

When people in the Old Testament who were saved died, they did not go to heaven but instead they went to Paradise which was separated from Hades by a great gulf. The reason they did not go to heaven was because their sins were not paid for.

Hebrews 10:4

⁴ *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

The Old Testament saints had their sins covered by the blood of bulls and goats. So even though they were saved they went to Paradise where they were captive by their sin.

When Jesus died His death paid for their sins as well as ours. So, He descended into Hades and He led captivity captive.

In other words, He gathered all the Old Testament saints and He led them out of Hades and into the presence of God.

The picture is one of a victorious military General. When they would overtake a city, they would lead the captives that had been taken by the enemy back to their home city where they were set free and he would then divide the spoils he gained from the enemy he conquered.

The spiritual gifts which we have were made possible by the victory of Jesus on the cross.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

⁵⁵ *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now let me get back to exercising our gifts and let me give you two points of motivation:

1. **Jesus Christ suffered and died so that we could receive spiritual gifts.**

To place little value on spiritual gifts is to belittle the suffering of Jesus Christ.

2. **There is coming a day when we will answer for how we used our gifts.**

Matthew 25:14-19

¹⁴ For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

¹⁵ And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

¹⁶ Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

¹⁷ And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

¹⁸ But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Conclusion:

2 Corinthians 5:10-11

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.