

*Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

*Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 7/6/16*

*Letter To The Ephesians*

## **Gifts From The Ascended Lord**

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**Scripture: Ephesians 4:4-16**

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." <sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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."

In Ephesians 4:4-6, emphasis is given to those great fundamental facts of the Christian faith which are at once its unifying features. In verses 7 - 16, the apostle writes of the diversity of gifts which characterize those who are members of Christ's Body, the Church. This is an intriguing theme, and we need also to refer to three other New Testament passages which deal with the subject of spiritual gifts - look up Romans 12: 3-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11 (indeed, chapters 12, 13 and 14); and 1 Peter 4: 10-11. Let us confine our study to the teaching embodied in Ephesians 4: 4-16, and notice the following:

### **1. The GIVER of the Gifts.**

This is brought out in verses 7, 8 and 11, where we are told that Christ Himself gives spiritual gifts to the members of His Church; but especially notice verse 8, which is a quotation from Psalm 68: 18. The Lord Jesus went down into death, was raised and then ascended to Heaven. When He ascended, having conquered sin, death and Hell, He "led captives in his train" - (these were the Old Testament saints who up until the

Ascension dwelt in Paradise), and then He received gifts from the Father in order that He might bestow these gifts upon the Church. But who does He give these gifts to?

## 2. The RECIPIENTS of the Gifts.

Are spiritual gifts only for a few members of the Body, the Church? - look at verse 7, and underline the words, "to each one of us". That refers to every true believer. Every Christian, without exception, has received some gift from the risen and exalted Lord - see Romans 12: 4, where we are told that we all have some "function"; also 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 and 1 Peter 4: 10. It is wrong for any Christian to say, "There's nothing I can do", or, "My days of service are over now!" But note this wonderful fact: to every Christian has been given grace as Christ apportioned it (verse 7). You see, the nature of the gift determines the measure of grace that is supplied in order that we may exercise the gift. Grace is given to the preacher to preach, to the pray-er to pray, to the teacher to teach, to the helper to help (1 Corinthians 12: 28), and so on! But do all have the same gifts?

## 3. The DIVERSITY of the Gifts

Look at verse 11. Here Paul mentions five special gifts which the Lord has given to His Church, (or, five kinds of men to whom are given these special gifts):-

- **Apostles and prophets** were given for the purpose of laying the foundations of the Church, as Ephesians 2: 20 tells us.
- **Evangelists:** An evangelist's ministry is especially directed towards the unconverted - look up 2 Timothy 4: 5.
- **Pastors:** The word means "shepherds" - compare John 21: 15-17 and Acts 20:28. This is a caring ministry for the sheep in Christ's fold.
- **Teachers:** The work of the teacher is to instruct the Church in the things of God, to give milk to the babes (1 Peter 2: 2), and meat to those who are more mature (Hebrews 5: 14) in order that there may be growth and stability.

## 4. The PURPOSE of the Gifts.

In verses 12 and 14, we are told of a three-fold purpose that the Lord has in giving these gifts to His Church.

- **To Prepare us for Service.** This is what verse 12 tells us. The meaning is this: "The Lord has given evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc..." to prepare God's people for works of service." The evangelists, pastors and teachers are not to do all the ministry, but their chief task is that of getting the saints to function actively as members of the Body.

- **To Help us to Grow.** Verse 12 goes on to say, "so that the body of Christ may be built up" God does not want us to remain as *babies* spiritually (1 Corinthians 3: 1-3), but He wants us to grow up (2 Peter 3: 18); therefore, He has given gifts to the Church, in order that the members may grow - look at verse 15!
- **To Protect us from Harm.** The Enemy is always ready to deceive even the "elect" (Matthew 24: 24), and in order that we may be protected against his "false prophets" (Mark 13: 22), and their "destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2: 1), the Lord has placed teachers in the Church so that we may be instructed in the truth and know how to detect the Devil's deadly counterfeits and lies! The ultimate purpose that the Lord has in giving gifts to His Church is indicated in verse 13 - which tells us also about:

### **5. The DURATION of the Gifts.**

How long will the gifts be needed in the Church? Only until - verse 13! When we are with Christ, who is the Head of the Body, the Church, then He will be "all in all" (Ephesians 1: 23), and there will be no room for, or need of, gifts! He will be ALL!