

# Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 12

**CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11**

Title: **“Gift Giving Time”**

*Ephesians 4:7-10 ~ May 8, 2011 – Mother’s Day*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help believers understand each of us is called to use our spiritual gift to strengthen the church and help the unity of the church.

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## Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- VBS Sign-ups today
- Youth Fundraiser lunch – next Sunday 8/15 – reserve your lunches today in the courtyard
- Men’s Breakfast – Saturday 7 a.m.
- AWANA – TKU Dale Beyer!
- Quarterly Bus. Mtg. on 5/22 after 2<sup>nd</sup> service
- OIKOS is coming!
- Tucson Padres Baseball Game – 5/27 – tickets available today in courtyard

## THE MOMMY TEST!

I was out walking with my 4 year old daughter. She picked up something off the ground and started to put it in her mouth. I took the item away from her and I asked her not to do that. "Why?", my daughter asked. "Because it's been lying outside, you don't know where it's been, it's dirty and probably has germs", I replied. At this point, my daughter looked at me with total admiration and asked, "Wow! How do you know all this stuff?" "Uh... (I was thinking quickly), all moms know this stuff. It's on the Mommy Test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a Mommy." We walked along in silence for 2 or 3 minutes, but she was evidently pondering this new information. "OH...I get it!", she beamed. "So if you don't pass the test you have to be the daddy." "Exactly"--- I replied back with a big smile on my face and joy in my heart.

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 4:7-10

## The individual nature of spiritual gifts vs. 7

They are customized...personal...tailored to you!

NIV – “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”

NASB – “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

There are many things in this short verse that deserve our attention – and will help us understand the nature of spiritual gifts.

As we speak of spiritual gifts, I realize that there may be many here who don't know what a spiritual gift is or why they're important. So, let me give a brief definition and explanation of spiritual gifts, so we can get to the details we find in vs. 7.

**Definition:** *A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability Christ gives to all believers that enables them to perform functions in the church with increasing effectiveness and skill to strengthen and increase the unity of the church.*

Spiritual gifts are for the benefit of the church – not the benefit of the individual with the gift...it's not so they can be praised and admired, but for the church to be expanded and strengthened.

There are four passages in the N.T. where the various spiritual gifts are listed: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:7-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11 – 2-12's, 2-4's

And there are approx. 20 specific gifts listed in these N.T. passages. We're not sure if this is an exhaustive list or not – but this list would certainly identify the vast majority of spiritual gifts within the church. (See list of gift in Swindoll's

commentary/study guide – p. 112)

Now let's take a close look at vs. 7 in our passage this morning.

The first word in our English translation is "But". This is an adversative particle, which acts to contrast what Paul has just finished stating in vs. 4-6. Remember, last week we looked at these verses, where Paul gives a very clear explanation and proclamation that there is "...one body and one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

His point was that we need to be humble, gentle, patient and loving with one another because this is the only true church – there is no other Savior other than Jesus – so we need to exercise the virtues (vs. 2-3) to care properly for each other.

We are completely unified in Christ. "But", vs. 7

begins...could also be translated: "On the other hand" or "in spite of that"...we are also vastly unique and different!

Unity in faith, hope, spirit, baptism, etc., does not mean uniformity of work.

"...to each one of us" – every believer in Christ receives a spiritual gift – nobody is left out. This means that if you're not a believer in Christ, then you don't have a spiritual gift. Don't wait any longer...put your faith in Christ! Admit to God that you are a sinner, believe that Jesus died to pay the price for your sins, and commit to following Christ each day. If you are a believer, then you have at least one spiritual gift...are you using the gift God has given you?

"...grace was given" – the fact that this is an issue of grace points out that this is not something we deserve in any way. Christ gives us our spiritual gift(s), not because we earned them, but

simply out of His grace. Now this grace is not the same kind of grace that we think of in reference to our salvation. It's similar, but different (see 3:2, 7-9). The grace Paul refers to here is a grace that enables us to fulfill God's calling on our life. By grace we are saved through faith (2:8-9), and it's by His grace that we can be used by Him in our spiritual service. John MacArthur says, "*This grace is the enabling power that makes the special gifts function to the glory of God.*" (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Ephesians, by John MacArthur, p. 135) Gifts are not of human origin or based on human talent, but they are from God for the benefit of the Church.

"...according to the measure of Christ's gift." – The enabling grace that we receive is not the same for each believer. Each believer's gift is unique to them, and some factors that give variety to the gifts might be their level of faith, their natural abilities or talents, the environment they are in and how God will use them for His purposes.

Romans 12:3

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

I may have the same gift as another person, but a variety of factors will cause the same gift to be exemplified and used in different ways.

Romans 12:6

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith."

(This is not referring to 'salvation faith', but faith as it relates to your gift.)

1 Peter 4:10

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”

We don't compare ourselves and our spiritual gifts to one another, because God calls each of us to different areas of ministry. The gifts of teaching may be used by one person to teach the entire congregation, and by another person to teach a S.S. class of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The same gift, but different measures of it are given. One isn't better or more important than the other.

1 Cor. 12:11

“All these (Different gifts) are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

So, we see in vs. 7 that the unity of our belief does not equate to uniformity of the work of our faith. Each believer is given grace not only for our salvation, but also to enable us to serve the Lord in the unique application God has called us.

Two Important Questions:

What is your spiritual gift?

1. *Begin by studying what the Bible has to say about spiritual gifts.*
2. *Pray and ask God to help you know what your spiritual gift(s) is.*
3. *After doing these things (#1&2), make a sober assessment of your spiritual strengths and abilities.*

Are you spectating...or serving? (***Illus.*** – sports – love to watch golf on TV – love to watch pros at the course – would rather play it though!)

**Jesus – His humility and generosity** vs. 8-10

Vs. 8 is taken from Psalm 68:18a and Paul is using this as an analogy to help us understand the humility of using our

spiritual gifts, and the generous nature of Christ who gives us our gift.

Before we read vs. 8-10 in our passage today, I want us to read

Psalm 68:18a

“When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men...”

This is a Psalm of praise that speaks to the greatness of God. It describes a victory parade into Zion/Jerusalem. In ancient times, a victorious king would hold a victory parade, and he would lead enemy captives (prisoners of war) in this parade (Col. 2:15 – “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”).

Also, a victorious king would receive many gifts from his own people and dignitaries from other nations. This is why David writes “you received gifts from men.” In David’s context, he is writing at the time when Mosaic Law was in full effect, and for man to connect with God, they had to bring a gift – a sacrifice to the altar.

But Paul changes the Psalm – because Paul’s purpose is not to quote it exactly, but to apply it to Christ and the Church. So, instead of the king “receiving gifts from men” he says that Jesus “gave gifts to men.” Historically, a victorious king might share the spoils of victory with the people. But Paul is showing us how Christ as the victorious king, has changed everything!

In the N.T., the church age, God has put forth the final sacrifice – the greatest sacrifice – His only Son, Jesus. Now, it’s not up to us to bring our gifts to God, but He gives us the gift of grace, and faith...and also, spiritual gifts!

**8** This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

Then Paul explains the quotation from Psalm 68, to make sure we understand he is interpreting this as a Psalm about Christ.

**9** (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? **10** He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

There is some confusion – and some very godly theologians and scholars hold different views on how these verses should be interpreted. I believe Paul is using this explanation of Psalm 68 to describe the great depths that Jesus went to in humbling Himself through His incarnation. I believe that the “lower, earthly regions” refers to the extent of His great humiliation – that He not only clothed Himself in human flesh, but He endured all the temptations of human flesh, and even suffered death – even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). How much lower on earth can you get than to die a horrible, criminal’s death, and then to not even have your own grave!

After He accomplished this great victory over sin on the cross, and the great victory over death through His resurrection, Jesus then ascended to Heaven – to the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:54-56 – Stephen’s vision) where He is sovereign over all things. In His resurrected, glorified state, Jesus is not limited by a physical body, but is over all, in all, and through all (4:6).

So Paul is helping us realize that Christ had to humble Himself in order to serve before He was exalted and glorified. The same applies to each one of us when we speak of utilizing our spiritual gifts within the Church.

I don't want this to sound negative, but when you serve in the church, you will be hurt by comments people say – things said from a critical spirit, etc. This is true of working / serving anywhere – and the church is not immune to it. But just as Christ willingly took all things upon Himself, we need to realize that when through His grace, Christ gives us a spiritual gift according to His measure and our faithfulness in utilizing that gift is going to help the church, but it's a part of our spiritual worship and thanksgiving to Him!

## **Application**

Discover your spiritual gift.

Put your spiritual gift to use.

Have a servant's heart when you serve.

Close in prayer