

The Abilities of the Church under Orders

Ephesians 4:7-11

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August 7 & 14, 2024 p.m.

Introduction: Previously in this 4th chapter of Ephesians we have considered the aim of the church under orders, the appearance (or attributes) of the church under orders, & the anchor (or articles of faith) of the church under orders. We noted in the past that the unity of the Spirit centers around 7 truths: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, & one God. Without these truths, there can be no true unity. Notice with me over the next 2 weeks the abilities of the church under orders. Consider the giving of the gifts, the Giver of the gifts, & the gifts of the Giver.

I. The Giving of the Gifts (:7)

A. The definition of grace (literally, "*the grace*")

1. "*Charis*" (grace) - unmerited favor; the privilege of a special calling in the service of God
2. The spiritual gifts are the result of God's grace & mercy bestowed upon man.

B. The distribution of grace:

1. "*To all*"
 - a. No one has all the gifts (I Corinthians 12:7-11).
 - b. No one is without some gift (Romans 12:3; I Corinthians 12:7; I Peter 4:10).
2. "*By Christ*"
 - a. This excludes boasting; it is unmerited favor (I Cor. 4:7), according to His sovereign will.
 - b. This excludes berating; each gift, whether great or small, is needed (I Cor. 12:18-25).

C. The demonstration of grace

1. Our gifts discerned > see Romans 12:3-9 & I Corinthians 12:4-11
2. Our gifts developed > see II Timothy 2:15 & II Peter 3:18 (cf. I Corinthians 13:1-13)
3. Our gifts demonstrated > see Ephesians 4:12 & I Peter 4:10-11

II. The Giver of the Gifts (:8-10)

A. His celebration (:8)

1. The prophecy (in Psalm 68:18):
 - a. David's victorious, triumphant return to Jerusalem after a battle??
 - b. David is a type of Christ; this is a Messianic Psalm
2. The procedure (in Ephesians 4:8):
 - a. "*Led captivity captive*" - He captured prisoners & led them in a triumphant procession; Christ has defeated Satan, sin, & death.
 - b. "*Gave gifts*" - The gifts are the offices of Christian ministry (both the man & the office were a gift).

B. His humiliation (:9-10) [A descension]

1. The incarnation
 - a. "*Lower parts*" - in contrast to heaven above (cf. John 3:13)
 - b. Christ's lowly entrance into this world at birth (cf. "Ivory Palaces")
2. The crucifixion
 - a. Philippians 2:5-8 > He humbled Himself unto the death of the cross.
 - b. Isaiah 53:5-12 > He became sin for us, that we might be saved.

C. His exaltation (:9-10) [An ascension]

1. *"Far above all heavens"*
 - a. Exalted to the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3); highest possible honor & glory.
 - b. "As His humiliation was so low, His exaltation is proportionally high" (Eadie).
2. *"That He might fill all things"*
 - a. He fills all things with His presence.
 - b. "He is supreme over all the powers both of heaven & earth; there is nothing that is not subject to Him, no place or order of existence where His presence may not be known or felt." (Foulkes)

III. The Gifts of the Giver (:11)

A. Gifts of the **past**

1. *"Apostles"* - Ephesians 2:20 & Mark 6:7
 - a. "The point is not that He gave to some men the gift of apostleship (or to be prophets, etc.) but that the church as a whole received apostles as a gift from Christ" (Kent).
 - b. Qualifications: 1) saw the Lord, 2) sent by the Lord, & 3) signs from the Lord.
2. *"Prophets"* - Acts 11:27, 13:1, 21:1-11
 - a. Received direct revelation from God (before the completion of the Bible) & reported communication for God to the people.
 - b. Foretelling (prediction) as well as forth-telling (prophecy in the N.T. sense).

B. Gifts of the **present**

1. *"Evangelists"* - Acts 21:8 & II Timothy 4:5
 - a. Itinerant preachers (no permanent flock to shepherd).
 - b. Present-day missionaries as well as evangelists like Mike Shrock.
2. *"Pastors & teachers"* - I Timothy 3:1-7 (one office with 2 characteristics)
 - a. The shepherd of a flock; to guide, rule, & protect the sheep (I Pet. 5:2).
"It implies careful, tender, vigilant superintendence & government, being the function of an overseer or elder. (Eadie)"
 - b. I Timothy 3:2, "...apt to teach" & Titus 1:9, "...by sound doctrine both to exhort & convince the gainsayers."

C. Gifts for a **purpose**

1. To precede with spiritual example (faith) > consider his testimony (I Tim. 3:1-7), his training (Titus 1:5-9) & his trial (Hebrews 13:7).
2. To provide with spiritual food (food) > Acts 20:28, John 21:15-17 & I Peter 5:2.
3. To protect from spiritual danger (fear) > warn of false teachers (Acts 20:29-30), fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16), & of fierce teeth (I Peter 5:8).

Conclusion: Are you part of the body of Christ, His church? Have you discerned the gift(s) Christ has bestowed upon you? Are you developing & demonstrating that gift? Christ has won the victory over Satan, sin, & death. He is now able to fill all things, by manifesting His presence. He ministers to us through His Church & through its gifted members. Although the gifts of apostle & prophet have ceased with the completion of God's Word, there are still the gifts of evangelist & pastor-teacher. These gifted men have the purpose of edifying the members of the body, that the work of the ministry might be fulfilled by all. My prayer is that I & other pastor-teachers or evangelists who minister in this place might precede with a spiritual example, provide you with spiritual food & protect you from spiritual danger. Will you allow the Spirit of God to use such men to edify, encourage, & exhort you unto the work of the ministry?

If you are not saved, not sure that you are a part of Christ's body, why not make sure & accept Him today? Then you, too, can belong to the Church, under the orders of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ!