

The Spirit-Filled Believer Is Gifted

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“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men’”

(What does “He ascended” mean except that He also descended 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). It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 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, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 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 men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ. 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” Eph 4:7-16.

The above passage of Scripture begins with “But”. This is a very crucial point in the context of the message. The previous verses deal with the walk of the Spirit-filled person and unity and now it deals with the gifts, in the body. As Spirit-led believers, we are gifted. However our gifts are diversified. Though we are united as members of one body yet we are different in functions. The apostle Paul, in Romans 12:3-8, talked about the body of Christ being one yet different in gifts:

“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 judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many from one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 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. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

Paul used the analogy of the human body to represent the church. Our human body has many members with different functions but yet there is no dispute or envy among them. Likewise, the body of Christ should keep and maintain unity in light of the diversity of gifts. We are to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” Eph 4:3. Gifts are given by God through the Holy Spirit and are to be exercised in a spirit of unity and harmony.

The passage Ephesians 4:7-16 can be divided into four different parts:

1) **Every Believer is Gifted** (v. 7)

The Spirit-filled believer is gifted. Jesus gives us the grace to use our gifts. Romans 12:6 says, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.” “Grace” simply means the wisdom, courage, strength, love, concern and the faith to use the gift. We are to use the gift according to the grace God has given us. It is not to be used for our own selfish desires. We live and serve according to His grace. Do not boast or take the glory for yourself when the gift is manifested. Paul reminded us of this in 1 Cor 4:7- “For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”

2) **The Gift Costs the Greatest Price** (vv. 8-10)

The gift is not cheap. God had to do some thing in order to bestow the gift on us. God had to pay a very costly price. To bring us into and make us members of His body, to place us where we are now, Jesus paid this high price for us. The price was to descend from heaven (v. 9). Jesus had to descend “to lower, earthly regions” which means

- To earth - Jesus had to leave heaven to be born and ultimately to die as a man
- To the tomb - Jesus died for all of us
- To Hades - Jesus descended to the abode of the dead where Satan’s kingdom is. He took the keys of hell and defeated Satan.

Man is no match for Satan. The only way to overcome the devil is through Jesus. Man has to depend on Jesus to overcome sin, death and Satan. Jesus accomplished what man could not do. He triumphed over Satan. He then ascended up to heaven. After His ascension, He gave us gifts to build up His body.

3) **The Gift is Christ-Centred** (v. 11)

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who gave us gifts. So then, every gift should be controlled by Christ. He should be the centre of everything we do. He gave the five-fold gifts to the church - the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers - for the building up of His church, that Christ be edified and glorified and that we are to come into the fullness of Christ.

As we obey and yield ourselves to the grace of God and exercise the gift, we will grow to be more and more like Christ. As we become Christ-centred, we will shine for Him in our deeds of love and kindness. When we exercise and develop the gift Jesus has given to us, He will be lifted and glorified.

4) **The Perfecting of the Saints** (vv. 12-16)

This involves training and discipleship. We need to be trained and discipled in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, evangelism, the study of God’s Word and so on. God has placed gifts in the church to teach, lead, guide and train us in these disciplines so that the church may “be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the wholesome measure of the fullness of Christ.” Training and discipleship also help us to grow in the knowledge of God: “And we pray this in order that you may please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” Col 1:10.

You may ask yourself, “What is my gift? What is my function in the body of Christ?” Here are 3 guidelines that may be of help to you:

Know Yourself - Ask God to show you who you are in His body. An honest assessment of your capabilities without conceit and false modesty is essential. Ask God to reveal that to yourself. God definitely wants to show Spirit-filled believers their placement in the body of Christ. How can you do so? Ephesians 4:2 tell us to: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

You need to come to God with an attitude of humility and ask Him to show you who you really are. God knows you better than you know yourself. Often difficulties, struggles and problems arise because you do not know and accept yourself as you are. Sometimes you cannot accept the real you and want to be someone else. Do not seek to be what you are not. It will only make you miserable and leave your discouraged. Function at the place where you should be. Know yourself, your capabilities, your gifts and exercise them diligently. God will enable you.

Accept Yourself - It has been said that one of the beliefs of the Stoics is that there is a spark of God in every living creature. The sceptics, however, mocked and laughed at the Stoics. They asked: "Is God in worms too?" The Stoics replied, "Why not? Can't God use an earthworm? Do you suppose that only a General is a good soldier? Cannot a private give his best and live for the cause and be considered a good soldier?" You need to accept yourself for who you are and serve God with your best for without it the church and you can never be what God wants the church and you to be. God has placed His Holy Spirit in you. Allow Him to use you just as you are for His glory. Be motivated rightly.

Have the Right Motive - What is your motive in the exercise of your gift? Prestige? Self-glory? Fame? These are impure motives and you should never allow these to have a hold on you. Your motive should be one of conviction of being duty-bound and the privilege that God has given you to contribute to the body of Christ. The Spirit of God sees the needs of the body of Christ and so He gave gifts so that these may be ministered to. These gifts can be desired by the individual. 1 Cor 14:1 says, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts..." Pray and ask God to show you your gift. Then exercise it, develop it and use it for the building up of the body of Christ.