"GIFTS FROM HEAVEN"

Ephesians 4:7-12
4-19-2023

INTRODUCTION: If you know Christ, you have received some gift(s) from Heaven! Have you discovered them? Are you using them?

I. The Distribution of God's Gifts (v. 7-10)
(How does God distribute gifts?)

A. God's gifts are distributed to each believer (individually)
"Unto every one of us" (v. 7a)

B. God's gifts are distributed by grace (undeservedly)
"Is grace given" (v. 7b)

C. God's gifts are distributed by choice (selectively)
"According to the measure" (v. 7c)

D. God's gifts are distributed from Christ (victoriously)
"The gift of Christ" (v. 7d-10)

II. The Description of God's Gifts (v. 11)
(What are some gifts God has distributed?)

III. The Design of God's Gifts (v. 12)
(Why does God distribute gifts?)

The Pastor-teacher:

1) Equips the Saints

2) To Minister to others

3) To Edify the Body

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INTRODUCTION: All of us like receiving gifts (We generally give gifts to celebrate Birthdays, Christmas, Anniversaries, and other holidays)

The word "gift" occurs many times in the New Testament.
Charis – (grace – 156x)
Charisma – (gift – 17 x)

The key, foundational, most important gift is salvation (eternal life) (Rom. 6:23).

God's gift-giving does not end with eternal life, however! He (through Christ) not only gives us what we need to inherit the kingdom of God (to come in future), but He also gives us what we need to be a blessing to the people of God (NOW!).

After speaking about the "unity" of the church Body (v. 3-6), Paul now speaks about the <u>diversity of gifts</u> that Jesus gives to nurture that unity (v. 7-16).

If you know Christ, you have received some gift(s) from Heaven! Have you discovered them? Are you using them?

I. The <u>Distribution</u> of God's Gifts (v. 7-10)
(<u>How</u> does God distribute gifts?)

A. God's gifts are distributed to <u>each</u> believer (<u>individually</u>)
"Unto every one of us" (v. 7a)

No believer is without a gift; many, however, have never discovered what theirs is. Reason: The discovery of gifts comes as we are busy working for God! (PHil. 2:12-13).k

"Talent" - the enablement of God to use your natural abilities for His glory and purpose.

When someone gets saved, God heightens, re-directs,
and uses the abilities He gave them through:
1) genetics
2) family
3) previous circumstances, experiences, & training

(Jim Stitzinger)

There are people you can reach that I cannot, because of differing gifts.
There are things you can do, that the person sitting next to you cannot.

B. God's gifts are distributed by grace (undeservedly)
"Is grace given" (v. 7b)

"Grace" - the gift that comes as a result of grace. The words "gift" and "grace" comes from the same root.

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Pet. 4:10).

Because gifts are the result of God's grace, none should take selfish pride in his gift.

See: Rom. 12:3-8 -

--Don't think too much of your gift (v. 3)
--Realize the common purpose of your gift (v. 4-5)
--Use your gift (v. 6-7)
--Use your gift to the fullest (v. 8)

C. God's gifts are distributed by choice (selectively)
"According to the measure" (v. 7c)

"According to the measure" - The Lord measures out the type of gifts and the quantity of gifts He distributes.

The word "measure" means to "allocate" or to designate specific gifts to specific people.

"We have no more to do with determining our gift than we did with determining what color of skin, hair, or eyes we would be born with" (MacArthur, p. 136).

"Believers' gifts are like snowflakes and fingerprints-- each one is completely distinct from all others. . . From the palette of gift colors, the Holy Spirit uses the brush of His sovereign design to paint the mixture of each believer so that no two are alike" (MacArthur, p. 136-137)

No two people have the same amount of gifts and the same exact type.

Since gifts "are sovereignly given (cp. I Cor. 12:4-7, 11), no gifts should be sought; [and] since they are essential elements in God's plan (cp. I Cor. 12:18, 22, 25), no gifts should be un-used; and since they come from the

Lord, no gifts should be exalted (cp. Rom. 12:3).

D. God's gifts are distributed from Christ (victoriously)
"The gift of Christ" (v. 7d-10)

The emphasis in verses 8-11 is on the word "he". --

"He (Jesus) led captivity" (v. 8)
"He ascended. . . descended" (v. 9-10)
"that He that fills all things" (v. 10)
"and He gave some . . ." (v. 11)

The point: Jesus is the sole giver of gifts. Since He is the only giver, since there is only one giver, shouldn't we have unity? (cp. v. 3-6, 13)

We are all gifted by the same Trainer, we are all gifted for the same Boss, we are all gifted for the same job!

"He saith" - Paul paraphrases Ps. 68:18 (SEE: Psalm 68:18-19)

Ps. 68:18 - *received gifts for men*
Eph. 4:8 - *gave gifts unto men*

NOTE: Christ first received these gifts from the Father; He then gave them to those He saves.

The purpose of the parenthesis of verses 9 & 10 is to show who is meant by the word "He" in verse 8. Who is the one who ascended? Who was Psalm 68:18 speaking about? Answer: The one who ascended (went up) is the same one who descended (came down). The only one who "came down" from Heaven and walked this earth is Jesus Christ!

After Christ's ascension up to Heaven (Acts 1), He sent His Spirit (Acts 2), who is the agent by whom we receive our spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12).

"He led captivity captive" - He captivated captives.

*Jesus took people who were once captives of sin and Satan, saved them, and then made them His captives!

"The lower parts of the earth" - the lower region of the earth - most likely a reference to the grave, where Christ was for 3 days (cp. Ps. 63:9; Acts 2:27).

Verse 9 is simply saying that the Ascender is the Descender. The one who went up is the same one who came down.

Verse 10 says that the one who came down then went up so that He might fill all things.

When Jesus was on earth, He could not be everywhere at the same time (this is the sense in which the Father was greater than Him) (Jn. 14:28).

God "the Father" being purely Spirit (jn. 4:24), had a more extensive influence on the world than the Son, who was limited to a physical human body while on earth. However, when Jesus received a glorified body after the resurrection, and after He ascended, He was restored to His former greatness, and can now work on a larger scale geographically (He pervades the universe with His presence!)
--*"He now fills all things"*

SEE: Eph. 1:20-23; cp. Col. 1:19

"Far above all heavens" - Christ ascended (Acts 1:9-11) to where no telescope or satellite can reach.

II. The Description of God's Gifts (v. 11)

(What are some gifts God has distributed?)

Even though there are many, many gifts, Verse 11 describes 4 specific official gifts Christ gave to men (cp. v. 8)

NOTE: the phrase "*and He gave*" - shows that no minister is to be self-appointed. He must be called of God! He must be appointed by Christ!

In order for the Church to be what God intended it to be, He gifted the Church very carefully.

In Ephesians 4:11, the Bible unfolds in one verse the specific gifts of leadership that God gave to the Church (more general gifts are described by Paul in I Corinthians 12 - 14 and Romans 12:6-8; the four gifts dealt with here are more specific in nature).

1. APOSTLE

   a. Definition:

      1) The word means "sent one."

      2) The New Testament office of apostle was reserved for certain men who met very demanding qualifications.

         a) He must have been an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (I Cor. 9:1; 15:7-10)

         b) He must have been personally commissioned by Christ (Gal. 1:15-17)

         c) He must manifest the miracle-signs of an apostle (II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4)

         d) He must bear fruit in his ministry (Jn. 15:16; I Cor. 9:2; II Cor. 3:1-5)

b. Function of the apostle

1) He laid the foundation of the local church for the entire age (Eph. 2:20; cp. I Cor. 3:10)

2) Two primary means by which the apostles accomplished this:

a) They served as the channels through which God gave the revelation which became the foundation of the Church.

b) They served as guardians (overseers) over the very important first generation of churches.

c. Specific characteristics of this office.

1) It was temporary; there was only one generation of apostles.

a) As proven by their qualifications -they had to have seen the resurrected Christ, etc.

b) As proven by their function - they were to lay a foundation.

c) As proven by the fact that they were channels of New Testament revelation; once that revelation was given, apostles were unnecessary.

2) It was restricted: there were only 13 official apostles.

a) 12 apostles to the Jews

b) 1 apostle to the Gentiles (Paul)

2. PROPHET

a. Definition

1) The word has two aspects:

a) One who foretells divine revelation (Acts 21:10-11)

b) One who forthtells divine revelation (I Cor. 14:29, 32, 37; Acts 15:32)

2) The New Testament office of prophet was necessary because of:

a) The absence of the completed New Testament

b) The demand for divine counsel during the Apostolic age (e.g., Acts 11:27-30)

c) The Gospel spread across the Mediterranean world, making it impossible for the limited number of apostles to adequately minister to all the churches.

b. Function of a New Testament prophet.

1) A prophet received direct revelation from God before the New Testament was complete (I Cor. 14:29-32; Acts 11:27-30)

"The transition from Law to grace and from Kingdom teaching to Church truth required new, direct revelation from God. The prophets especially were raised up for this purpose." (McCune)

2) A prophet assisted in the establishment of new churches during the Apostolic age (Eph. 2:20).

This was basically by ministering to churches new revelation and answers to problems they encountered. Again, this prophetic ministry became more necessary as the Gospel spread and apostles were not able to minister to all the

churches.

c. Specific characteristics of this office.

1) It was temporary

The N.T. Prophet along with the Apostles were the "foundation builders" of the Church. Hense, when the foundation was complete the office of Prophet disappeared. (Eph. 2:20)

2) It was expedient; God utilized prophets because of the needs of that day.

The point: God normally uses written revelation; it was only because of the absence of completed revelation that prophets were raised up in the first century.

3. EVANGELIST

a. Definition:

1) Greek "euangelistas" =
"eu" - good; well" "angel" – messenger

"Euangelistas" = a messenger of good
Hense - a messenger of the Gospel (good news)

"Euangelion" = the Gospel (good news)

"Euangelizo" = to proclaim the Gospel

2) Essentially, a New Testament evangelist was a preacher to the unsaved, unevangelized world (cp. Philip - Acts 21:8; Acts 8)

3) The gift of "evangelist" was a work as well as a specific order of men (I Tim. 4:5).

b. Function of a New Testament evangelist.

The evangelist was a "pioneer gospelizer"; he took the truth of the Gospel to geographical areas where it had been hither-to unknown. An evangelist was actually a missionary. He was a church planter.

c. Specific characteristics of this office:

1) It is abiding; there is no Scriptural indication that it has been done away with.

2) It is itinerant; the evangelist endeavors to work himself out of a job, and then to move on to a new area.

4. PASTOR/TEACHER

a. Definition:

1) The word "pastor" means: "shepherd"

2) The New Testament office of pastor is that of an overseer of God's flock (Acts 20:28), one charged with feeding (Jn. 21:17; I Pet. 5:1-3), guarding (Acts 20:28), and strengthening a specific congregation of believers.

3) The pastor must also be an effective teacher (I Tim. 3:2 - "apt to teach"); every member of the flock is dependent on the Word of God, and thus the pastor must be able to effectively minister the Word to the flock.

The Greek conjunction kai, which comes in between *"pastors and teachers*" shows that this office is one and the same. . . "pastor-teacher"

Every pastor is a teacher! (I Tim. 3:2), who must feed God's flock (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2).

III. The Design of God's Gifts (v. 12)
(Why does God distribute gifts?)

The Pastor-teacher

1) _ the Saints

2) _ To to others

3) _ To the Body

"For (pros) . . . for (eis) . . . for (eis . . ."

Those gifted offices were given for 1) specific purpose leading toward 2) results

"Perfecting the saints" is a significant phrase itself. It speaks of bringing believers to maturity -- not sinless perfection, but spiritual excellence (MacArthur)

"Perfecting" -

3 ideas in one word:

1) To **repair** (to mend; like a doctor
   a) Used of repairing broken bones (ancient secular use)
   b) Used of mending broken fishing nets (Mt. 4:21)
   c) Used of restoring an erring brother (Gal. 6:1)

2) To **equip** (to outfit; furnish)
   To furnish (II Tim. 3:17) or outfit. To provide what is necessary for the task. (Heb. 10:5; 13:21)

3) To **complete** (to make like the Master so that nothing is missing – Luke 6:40; cp. 1 Th. 3:10)

"For the work of the ministry" - for the work of serving ("diakonia")

The work of the evangelist and pastor-teacher is to get every believer involved in serving (whether in an official or unofficial capacity)

The goal of preaching is not to simply educate God's people; it's to motivate

them to serve!

Preaching is to be not only doctrinal but practical.

Every Christian is saved to serve (Eph. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58; I Pet. 2:5, 9; 4:10-11)

NOTE: God's progressive plan for His church:

1) Equipping 2) serving 3) building

"Edifying" - (i.e. edifice) building up; growth; both spiritual and numerical growth occur when everyone is using his/her gift in a ministry.

"The Body" is built up externally through evangelism and internally through discipleship and training.

Only the Word *"is able to build you up"!* (Acts 20:32)

A Body that has parts not working is a sick one.

CONCLUSION:

What gifts has God given you to use in building the Body of Christ. . . and are you using them?

Who are you building right now?

Are you yielding daily to the Holy Spirit's control and allowing Him to use you as a willing vessel?

No believer can be a spectator. We are all on the team. We are all on the field (the mission field).

Often people will give you gifts on special occasions (EX: Christmas, birthday, wedding, etc.) We often get gifts for which we have little or no use, so they end up being stored in the attic in the drawer, or in the back of the closet. God never gives a gift we cannot use.

It is an insult to God when we bury our talent and don't use it.