

God's Gifts of Love and Grace

Ephesians 4:11-16

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ - ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

George Truett was one of the greatest preachers in Christian history, and pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, died in 1944. As his health grew worse, he sought to resign his pastorate, but the church refuse to permit it. The 47-year relationship between Dr. George W. Truett and the First Baptist Church in Dallas was dissolved only in death. **Not long before Dr. Truett’s death, arrangements were made for him to preach his last sermon to his congregation by telephone from his bed.** As the people listened over loudspeakers placed in the church auditorium, Dr. Truett over and over repeated this one and final challenge to his beloved congregation, “Be true to Christ. Be true to your calling.”

In our last study of this epistle we looked at our **ascended Lord**, and were told in verse 8 “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive...” We studied the fact that when Christ ascended to heaven, he returned there as our victorious King, having won the battle over death, hell, and the grave.

This week we are going to look at God's gifts to man, as they relate to God's own purpose. Look at verse 11, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." This verse of scripture deals with only one aspect of God's gifts to man. The giving of gifts is a progressive matter and is revealed to us throughout the Scriptures.

In the Old Testament God dealt with the Jews in particular, and His divine ministry related to, and revolved around, His chosen people. But tonight we are going to look at God's gifts as they relate to the New Testament era, and the church in particular.

The first stage and the essence of God's giving began with Christ. And the passage that we are familiar with is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This verse of scripture tells us that God's gifts, to mankind are measured by His love for us, and that God gave heaven's best to remind us of that love.

Look as we examine some of the characteristics of God's gift to the world.

First, Christ was a gift of suffering, as seen in Isaiah 53:3, "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." The desire of the Christian life is seen in Philippians 3:10, "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"

Second, Christ was also a gift of substitution, as seen in 1 John 2:2, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." And 1 John 4:10 we are told, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." **Because of the love of God, there is**

mercy for the sinner, but judgment for sin. I have been forgiven and justified because my sins were laid on Christ and judged in His Person.

Third, Christ was also a *gift of salvation*, as seen in Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Matthew 1:21 gives us this insight from the angel’s proclamation, “And...you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

It is obvious from scripture that God’s gift to the world was a special gift, for it was something the world could not offer, for only God could offer Himself. Therefore, that was the first stage in God’s gifts to men.

The next stage of God’s gifts is seen in our present setting – the Church. Look at verses 11-12; “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” When our Lord went back to heaven, he poured out rich gifts upon the church, and these gifts were the ministers themselves.

Some of them are "apostles." The Greek word here means, “to be sent forth.” In other words an apostle is one who is sent forth for the cause of Christ.

There are two ways the office of the apostle was used in the New Testament. There was the office of the twelve apostles that were with Christ, and there were also apostles in the sense of missionaries. This is seen in the case of Barnabas being called an apostle, Epaphroditus is called an apostle, and there are others. In other words, the word “apostle” is used technically for the twelve, but generally means any person that is involved in a missionary endeavor for the cause of Christ.

Some of them are "prophets." The Greek word here simply means, "to speak forth," "to proclaim," or "to speak out." This word carries the idea of **one who stands up to deliver God's message to a lost and dying world.**

In the Old Testament era God called Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi, and John the Baptist to be prophets. They told the people the things of God. But, today, there is also the general use of the word "prophet" that still abides with us. **It is the gift from God that inspires men and women to stand up and deliver God's message without apology and without compromise.**

Some of them were "evangelists." In Paul's writing to Timothy, he says this in 2 Timothy 4:5, "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." An evangelist was an office that for some time was over looked and frowned on, and the reason for this was that more and more people realized that some of the so-called "evangelists" were no more than "flybynight" con artists. But that should not take away from the true ministry of for the Godcalled evangelist.

Some of them were "pastors and teachers." There are **three words used in the New Testament to describe the office of pastor,** and they are used interchangeably. Sometimes he is called "bishop," which literally means "an overseer." **Sometimes he is called "elder," which refers to the dignity of the office.** And sometimes he is called "pastor," which refers to his relationship to his people.

You will notice the connecting conjunction between "pastor and teacher." A pastor cannot do, the job that God has called him to do without being a good teacher. **It is the pastor's responsibility to lead his people into a deeper spiritual experience with God.** This truth is seen in Christ's instructions to Peter, as seen in John 21:15-17, "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? He said to

Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Tend My sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.” This was a conversation and truth that never left this great man of God, for in 1 Peter 5:2 Peter himself admonishes pastors to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it, not by constraint but willingly...”

The responsibility of church leadership has been designated to the “pastor” by divine commission. Therefore, God's gifts to His church were *Godcalled*, *Godsent*, and *God-ordained* men to carry forth the message of salvation as offered by the Christ of Calvary.

The next stage of God’s gifts deals with *spiritual gifts*. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-11, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant... There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” **These gifts are “spiritual gifts” and have to do with matter of, or from the Holy Spirit.**

Just as the other gifts we have studied are built around Christ, and the message of Christ, let me remind you that every spiritual gift is given for the sole purpose of bringing praise to Christ, as seen in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” **Jesus**

himself put it this was in John 16:13-14, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” **The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to point men to Christ.**

Now look at verses 12-16 as we find the reason God has given us His gifts of love and grace, “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

This is the very same truth given for us in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.” **In other words, God gives His gifts of love and grace to insure unity among His people.** It is a sad commentary on the church that the very gifts that God has given to maintain unity often are the cause of disunity.

As one studies the scripture, it becomes very apparent that God went to great lengths to place the Body of Christ together in a way that we might accomplish His purpose of ministry. And we walk in a manner worthy of our calling (and so display God’s wisdom and glory) as we serve the body. **Within the unity of the body, each of us has a specific ministry to carry out.**

We have said many; many times that God has a purpose for your life. Therefore, God did not give us these gifts that we might sit idly by while others serve the body.