

I. REVIEW FROM LAST WEEK

- A. In Ephesians 4:1–7, Paul shifts from teaching what God has done for us in Christ to how we should respond. He calls believers to walk worthy of their calling by living with humility, gentleness, patience, and love—Christlike qualities that preserve the unity of the church and reflect the gospel to the world.
- B. Paul also warns that unity in the family of God can be damaged by pride, gossip, false doctrine, and especially evil suspicion. Rather than assuming the worst about others and making judgements without evidence, believers are called to pursue a love that “believes all things”, extend grace, and diligently preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

II. CONTEXT OF OUR VERSES TODAY

- A. Having described the attitudes that preserve the unity of the family of God in the preceding verses, Paul now explains how that unity is strengthened and sustained through the gifts Christ has given to His Church. These gifts include both gifted leaders and the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit distributes to every believer for the building up of the body of Christ into mature love.
- B. Paul's emphasis in this section is not primarily on individual spiritual growth but on the growth and maturity of the body of Christ as a whole. Every believer contributes to the unity, strength, and edification of the Church by faithfully using the gifts and abilities Christ has given them in service to one another.

III. EPHESIANS 4:7-16

- 1. *⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)¹¹ 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.

IV. VRS 7

1. ***⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift***

B. Every believer has been given a measure of grace proportionate to a specific gift that is used to build the body and keep its unity.

V. VRS 8

1. ***⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."***

B. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18

1. ***You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell there.***

C. Psalm 68 is a Psalm of war. It celebrates God's victorious ascent to Mount Zion after defeating His enemies. In the ancient Near East, a conquering king would receive tribute from the conquered and then distribute the spoils to his own people.

D. Christ, having conquered sin, death, and Satan through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, now pours out gifts on His Church.

1. *As a Victorious King He celebrates with His people not by receiving gifts from His people but lavishing supernatural ones on them.*

2. ***Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because He poured out His soul unto death-Is. 53:12***

- E. Paul describes Jesus as a conquering King who has defeated His enemies and now distributes the spoils of victory. The spiritual gifts given to the church are part of those spoils, enabling the church to grow and mature into His likeness.

VI. VRS 9

1. ***⁹ Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean, but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?***

- B. Paul is speaking about Jesus’ incarnation. This is a description of the length of God’s love mentioned in chapter 3. God’s love stretched from high above all things descended to the depths of a teenage girl’s womb.

1. ***The One who was infinitely exalted willingly descended to the lowest place so that sinners might be raised to the riches of His grace.***

VII. VRS 10

1. ***¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.***

a) ***The one that is so high came so low so that He can return so high and fill all things with His glory.***

- B. ***Jesus returned to Heaven differently then He left it.*** He returned to heaven not just a Spirit, but in a glorified, resurrected human body, something He did not possess before His incarnation.

1. ***This is a profound truth because it means the Son of God did not merely take on humanity temporarily, He permanently united Himself to our human nature.***

2. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

— John 1:1

- C. After His death, resurrection, and ascension, He returned to the Father as the God-man, possessing a glorified human body while remaining fully God. He will return to earth in that same glorified body, and believers will one day be raised and conformed to His glorious likeness.

1. *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.-1 Jn 3:2*

VIII. VRS 11

1. *¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers-Eph 4:11*

- B. I hold to the continuationist view which believes all five of these ministry gifts and offices continue today. I do reject the idea that anyone today possesses authority equal to the Twelve original Apostles, or can add to biblical revelation. There needs to be a distinction between the authority of the New Testament Apostles and modern apostolic ministry.

- C. Jesus not only gives gifts to His people, but He gives some of His people as gifts to His church.

1. Paul's central emphasis in this part of his letter is that Christ gives gifted leaders not to do all the ministry themselves, but to equip the whole church for ministry.

IX. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FIVE FOLD MINISTRY

1. The five-finger illustration is a popular teaching tool used by many pastors to describe the fivefold ministry. While it is not found in the Bible, it is a memorable analogy that highlights the distinct functions of each ministry gift.

B. THE THUMB-APOSTLE

1. The thumb touches every finger.
2. Functions as pioneer, builder, and leader.
3. Connects and strengthens the whole body.
4. Provides vision, and emphasizes the big picture in the redemptive story. Lays foundation, and gives oversight.
5. Plants churches and establishes ministries.
6. Equips and mobilizes others.

C. POINTER FINGER-PROPHET

1. Points the church back to God.
2. Calls the Church to holiness, repentance, and faithfulness.
3. Brings biblical exhortation, encouragement, and comfort under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:3).
4. Gives direction and spiritual discernment.

D. MIDDLE FINGER-EVANGELIST

1. The longest finger that reaches the farthest.
2. Reaches those who are far from God.
3. Proclaims the gospel.
4. Calls sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.
5. Equips the Church to share the gospel.

E. RING FINGER-SHEPHERD (PASTOR)

1. Loves, nurtures, protects, and cares for God's people.
2. Shepherds the flock by feeding, and tending.
3. Helps believers grow in Christ.

F. LITTLE FINGER-TEACHER

1. The smallest finger, but essential for precision and balance.
2. Explains and applies God's Word.
3. Grounds believers in sound doctrine.
4. Protects the Church from false teaching.
5. Helps believers mature in their understanding of Scripture.

a) PREACHERS INSPIRE A MOVEMENT BUT TEACHERS
MAINTAIN IT

X. **PAUL DESCRIBES THE PURPOSE OF THE FIVE FOLD IN VRS 11-16**

1. To equip the saints for ministry.

a) ¹²***for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry,***

***(1) Ministry belongs to the entire body of Christ not just
people who stand on platforms***

2. To build up the body of Christ.

a) ***for the edifying(strengthening) of the body of Christ,***

3. To bring the Church into unity in the faith and the knowledge of
Christ.

a) ¹³***till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God***

(1) *Help position the family of God to grow in the knowledge of God together.*

4. To help believers mature into the likeness of Christ and avoid spiritual instability and inconsistency

a) ***to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴that 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 ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ***

XI. VRS 16

a) 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.***

2. This describes a healthy church where every part of the body is interdependent to one another.
3. Every believer has a spiritual gift. Every gift matters. When members of a church neglect their gifts, the whole body suffers. When members faithfully serve, the Church becomes healthy and mature.

