

Receiving the Spoils of Victory

In Ephesians 4:1-6 we observed the urgency of maintaining Church unity, because the world will thereby know that God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ. We also observed that our godly love is integral to the promotion of Church unity. In the text before us today, we see that the exercise of our spiritual gifts is also necessary for the unity of Christ's Church.

Ephesians 4: 7-10

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.”

9 (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? **10** He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

I. Christ has given us very useful gifts (vs. 7)

Paul teaches us that the diversity of gifts in the Church is actually essential to the maintenance of unity in the Church because in the exercise of our various gifts we are able to unify the whole Body. Let's look at what Paul teaches us about these gifts:

A. Our gifts are graciously given by Christ.

The spiritual gifts we have are not earned or deserved. Paul says, “Grace was given.” This, of course, would mean that our gifts are not a result of our intelligence or moral behavior or our training, but simply because He loves us.

B. Each one of us is gifted individually by Christ.

Paul says, “...to each one of us” gifts are given. No one is left out. Clergy are no more favored than laity. One can observe in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 certain lists of gifts that are extravagantly dispersed among the congregation, and everyone has His gifts. This obviously implies that each of us is responsible to exercise the gifts we've been given.

C. Our gifts are intentionally given by Christ.

Paul says, “According to the measure of Christ's gift,” which suggests that we do not choose the gifts, He does. We must not complain about the gifts we have or the gifts we don't have, but exercise the ones we do have!

II. Christ has given us very extravagant gifts (vs. 8-10)

The gifts that we have been given are the result of His supreme rule and reign over every power and authority.

A. Our gifts are the spoils of His victory (vs. 8)

From Paul's usage of Psalm 68, he clearly has in mind that the gifts are distributed to us as the result of Jesus' victory parade on His way to heaven, similar to the victory parade of conquerors returning to their home cities and distributing the spoils of their victory to their fellow citizens.

B. Our gifts are the benefit of His blood (vs. 9)

Paul mentions that just as Jesus ascended, He also descended; that is, these gifts were won by virtue of Christ's humiliation of coming to earth, especially of His death on Calvary's cross.

