

MINISTRY AND MATURITY

Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus can be dissected into two major themes.

- 1. Our position in Christ and the privileges that come with this position. (Ch 1-3)**
- 2. To transform our behaviour to become more Christlike. (Ch 4-6)**

In *Ephesians 4:7-16* Paul shifts from what Christians have in common, to the variety and individuality that is within the unity of the Spirit.

*vs 7: But to each one of us **grace** has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

Greek word for *grace* is "charisma", referring to spiritual gifts given by Christ.

Jesus has graced believers with His spiritual gifts to use for the benefit of others.

vs 8: This is why it says: "When He ascended on high, He took many captives and gave gifts to His people."

Paul is quoting *Psalms 68:18*.

In the Old Testament the conquering king demanded and received gifts from men.

In the New Testament the conquering Christ offers and gives gifts to His people for building His Church.

vs 9-10: What does “He ascended” mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly region? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

Jesus came from heaven to earth and faced death; to rescue all people from eternal damnation and no one is beyond His reach.

Christ has given His church an enormous privilege and responsibility to present His Good News, to people all around the world to become His followers and disciples (*Matthew 28:18-20*).

vs 11: So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers...

Why did Christ give these ministry gifts to His Church - His physical representation on earth?

vs 12: to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. ¹³until 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.

The five ministry gifts are to help us discover what gifts God has given to each of us.

Then to assist us in developing those gifts and to release us to use them for the benefit of others in fulfilling God's purposes.

1st Evidence of Maturity is Using our GIFTS.

*vs 7: But to each one of us **grace** has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Our unity in Christ does not hinder our individualism in using our God-given gifts.

We can accomplish more together than we would by ourselves.

2nd Evidence of Maturity is STABILITY.

vs 14-16: 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 people in their deceitful scheming.

The maturing believer is not tossed about by every new religious fad that comes along.

The maturing believer recognizes false doctrine and stays clear of it.

3rd Evidence of Maturity is TRUTH Joined with LOVE.

vs 15: Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Truth spoken without love can be brutal but love without truth is shallow.

Proverbs 27:6 (erv) You can trust what your friend says, even when it hurts. But your enemies want to hurt you, even when they act nice.

Speaking the truth in love is not always easy, convenient or pleasant – but it is beneficial.

4th Evidence of Maturity is COOPERATION.

vs 16: 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.

As members of a local body - a local church, we belong to each other, we affect each other, and we need each other. Every one of us are gifted to minister to each other.

Spiritual unity is not something we manufacture. It is something we already have in Christ – we are united with one another in Christ. But we do need to protect and maintain it.

Let us therefore equip and edify one another,
that all of us may grow up to be more like Christ.

Ephesians 4:12-13 (eeb) He gave all these gifts to help God's people to serve Him in different ways. As a result, the church, which is like Christ's body, would become strong. ¹³ In that way, all of us will become united, like one person. We will all believe in Jesus as the Son of God. We will all know Him. We will become like a man who has grown up well. We will be completely as God wants us to be, just like Christ Himself.

The overarching evidence of Christian maturity is that we are continually becoming more like Christ in our thoughts, character, conduct, relationships and our representation of Christ Himself.