

Sermon 14: Rejoicing in Christ's Triumph: Ephesians 4:7-13

Text: Ephesians 4:7-13 "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ..."

Part 1: Grace: God gave gifts to the church: 4:7 "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ..."

- **Three important observations:**
 - **"Unto every one of us:"**
 - Each member of the body is important to the body.
 - They are gifted to contribute to the body's wellbeing.
 - These gifts are not limited to leadership.
 - **"Grace:"**
 - This enabling is entirely rooted in God's grace.
 - This grace is given to the individual to equip to serve.
 - God's grace is channeled through people to bless the body.
 - **"According to the measure of the gift of Christ:"**
 - Not all gifts are manifested equally within the body.
 - God determines which gifts He grants.
 - He also determines the proportion of those gifts.
 - He gives grace proportionate to the challenges we face.
- **He gave gifts to individuals to edify the body.**

Part 2: Triumph: He did it through the cross: 4:8-10 "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men..."

- **Scene 1: The triumphant Warrior:** "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men..."
 - **He did two things at the same time:**
 - He led captives
 - He gave gifts
 - **This is a quote from Psalm 68:17-20** "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels...Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the

LORD God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation..."

- His quote from Psalm 68 affirms Christ's deity.
- It connects this event to God dwelling amongst His people.
- It states that God's salvation is for the rebellious who are now the objects of daily blessings.
- **This harmonizes perfectly with the context:**
 - **We were slaves to the flesh and this world's system:**
 - **2:1** "Were dead in trespasses and sins..."
 - **2:2** "Walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air..."
 - **2:3** "Conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh...and of the mind..."
 - **2:3** "By nature the children of wrath..."
 - **We have been rescued from this miserable enslavement by Christ's triumph:**
 - **2:4** "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us..."
 - **2:13** "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ..."
- **Christ conquered this kingdom that enslaved us and allows us to participate in the spoils of victory.**
- **Scene 2: The suffering Savior:** "He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"
 - **This statement emphasizes the nature of the victory:**
 - The "lower parts of the earth" is a challenging statement.
 - It does not teach that Christ went to hell to pay for our sins.
 - He paid for our sins in full on the cross, not in hell.
 - The price paid for our sin was not to "death" or to Satan, but to God: **Isaiah 53:10** "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand..."
 - **He told the thief on the cross that today He would be with Him in paradise: Luke 23:43** "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise..."
 - It means He came in the flesh, died, and was buried before He arose and ascended to the Father.
 - **Victory came through the cross and Christ's death:**
 - **John 12:31-33** "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die..."

- **Hebrews 2:14** "The children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil..."
- **Ephesians 2:13-16** "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace...that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby..."
- **Colossians 2:13-15** He "Blotted out the handwriting of ordinances...against us...nailing it to his cross...spoiled principalities and powers...made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it..."
- **Scene 3: The exalted King:** "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things..."
 - **Philippians 2:7-11** He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow..."
 - **Hebrews 1:3** He "Being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high..."
 - **Revelation 5:2-5** "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof..."

Part 3: Authority: These gifts ground us in the truth: 4:11 "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers..."

- **There is a progression in the gifts given to the church:**
 - **We need a standard:**
 - Timeless
 - Outside of ourselves
 - Absolutely certain and true

- **We need to be reconciled to God:**
 - We need the Law to show us how we fall short.
 - We need the gospel to be explained so we understand there is hope in Christ.
 - We need someone to call us to repent and believe.
- **We need to grow in Christ:**
 - We need to be taught who we are in Him.
 - We need to be taught how to grow.
 - We need to be shepherded by people who feel the weight and will be held responsible to God for how they care for our souls.
- **A sure standard: "Apostles and Prophets"**
 - **Ephesians 2:20** We are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone..."
- **The Ministry of reconciliation: "Evangelists"**
 - **2 Corinthians 4:5-6** "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ..."
 - **2 Corinthians 5:18-21** "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation...and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God..."
- **Shepherding Souls: "Pastors and Teachers"**
 - **1 Peter 5:2-4** "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away..."
 - **2 Timothy 2:24-26** "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will..."

Part 4: Edification: They build up the church: 4:12-13 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ..."

- **Edification comes in four forms:**

- **Spiritual maturity: 4:12** "For the perfecting of the saints..."
 - **Last week, four marks of spiritual maturity:**
 - Theological depth
 - Godly affections
 - Active service
 - Engagement in the body
 - **Earlier in the book**
 - **2:10** "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..."
 - **3:17** "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love..."
 - **3:19** "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God..."
- **Tools to minister: 4:12** "For the work of the ministry..."
 - **Serving the body should be spread around, not concentrated in a small group: Galatians 6:1-2** "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ..."
- **Growth of the body: 4:12** "For the edifying of the body of Christ..."
 - **Growth comes to the parts and whole: Hebrews 10:24-25** "Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..."
- **Endurance till faith meets sight: 4:13** "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God..."
 - **Run your race: Hebrews 12:1** "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us..."
 - **Finish your course: 2 Timothy 4:6-7** "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith..."

Applying the Passage:

- **To the Unbeliever:**

- We are born into this world dead in trespasses and sins.
- We have lived as slaves to our passions and this world's system.
- Satan's right to us was visibly crushed at the cross.

- No matter where we have been and what we have done, salvation is available.
- Turn to Christ in repentance and trust in the gospel.
- He will rescue you and give you the spoils of His victory on the cross.
- **To the believer:**
 - **We need to ponder the cross:**
 - It was Christ's greatest moment of weakness, yet His greatest triumph.
 - We were slaves and enemies, now we are beneficiaries of His triumph.
 - God's grace started at the cross but did not end there.
 - **We need to ponder the blessing of the church:**
 - This body is filled with redeemed sinners, uniquely fitted to serve one another.
 - He has given us one another for our mutual edification.
 - We should never neglect it.
 - **We need to ponder His role for us in it:**
 - Every part is important.
 - Every part should serve a distinct function.
 - In what way is the church lacking because you are failing to embrace the purpose He has for you in it?
 - In what way have you allowed complacency to blunt the cultivation of the gifts He has given you for the benefit of others?

Simple point of this passage:

- At the cross, Christ triumphed over the Kingdom of darkness and through this triumph, graciously blessed us, though we were rebels and slaves to that kingdom.
- May God help us to channel the joy of these truths into practical service.