
From Pentecost to Parousia: Grow in the Unity in Knowledge and Love

I. The text turns from a discussion of ALL of us, to EACH of us.

“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.” [v. 7]

A. One body, individual gifts.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [1 Cor 12:4–7]

II. Grace gifted by our Ascended King.

“Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) [v. 8–10]

A. Therefore *what* says?

1. Psalm 68 was read in Jewish synagogues during Pentecost.

a) Commemorates the giving of The Law to Jews.

“You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.” [Psalm 68:18]

b) Commemorates the giving of The Spirit to Christians.

“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.” [Acts 2:33]

B. Paul changes “receiving gifts” to “gave gifts.”

1. Paul focuses on Christ's fulfillment of Old Testament imagery.

“The ascended Christ may well be pictured as receiving from His Father the gifts which He proceeds to bestow among men.” (Bruce, 82)

“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name,” [Phil. 2:9]

C. It says he ascended *from where*?

1. Paul focuses NOT on the where, but on the gifts given BECAUSE OF His ascension.

a) Scholars disagree.

(1) F.F. Bruce sees it as a reference to Jesus' descent into Hell.

(2) John Stott sees it as a reference to Christ's incarnation and life.

D. All that aside, when we use the gifts Christ supplies, the whole universe will be filled with Christ.

“He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.” [v. 10]

“For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority.” [Col. 2:9–10]

E. “You are not an accident in the body of Christ.” (Piper, 1)

“The unity of the church is due to charis, God's grace having reconciled us to Himself; but the diversity of the church is due to charismata, God's gifts distributed to church members”. (Stott, 155–156)

III. Our gifts are meant to unify THE body of Christ.

“And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” [v. 11–12]

A. Building us into ONE BODY

“The unity of the church, far from being boringly monotonous, is exciting in its diversity. This is not just because of our different cultures, temperaments and personalities, but because of the different gifts which Christ distributes for the enrichment of our common life.” (Stott, 155)

“so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” [Rom. 12:5–6a]

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” [1 Cor 3:5–7]

B. Unity is part of the already-not yet.

“The unity to which we are to come one day is that full unity which a full faith in and knowledge of the Son of God will make possible.” (Stott, 169)

“The church is already the fullness of Christ by the call of God [Eph. 1:23]; now she is to attain that fullness in the spiritual growth and life of her members. (Bruce, 87)

IV. The primary gift in this passage is **knowledge of God and His Son.**

“until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” [v. 13]

A. Knowledge from gifted teachers.

“And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers” [v. 11]

B. Knowledge to prepare US ALL for ministry.

“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” [v. 12]

C. Knowledge to UNITE us in one faith.

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.” [v. 5–7]

“[That you are gifted] proves that you are vitally needed by the church, and [that you're part of the one body] proves that the church is vitally needed by you.” (Piper, 1)

D. Knowledge to GROW us.

“so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” [v. 14]

V. Knowledge enabling us to SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE.

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” [v. 15–16]

A. Don't speak a truth, speak THE truth.

“Not speaking the truth in love, but “**truthing in love**” maintaining, living and doing the truth.” (Stott, 172).

“Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth.” (Stott, 172).

B. The truth is the ligament, unifying and holding the body together.

“So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” [1 John 4:16]

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