

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 17 – Ephesians 4:7-13

Responsive Prayer – In Unity and Peace CWS 773 v. 2 with refrains

ALL: How good it is and how pleasant to live in unity and peace. How good it is and how pleasant to live together in one Lord.

M: Live a life that is worthy of your call;

C: Be humble, gentle, and patient.

M: Bear with each other in ways that are loving;

C: Preserve the unity of faith.

ALL: For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. How good it is and how pleasant to live in unity and peace. How good it is and how pleasant to live together in one Lord.

Picking up from where we left off – Ephesians 4:5-6 – **One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

1. Paul is talking about the unity of the body of Christ, an idea he will revisit later in chapter 4 and in other letters he writes. We talked last week about the things that unify us—one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all. The last unifying feature is baptism. Read **Romans 6:3-4**.
 - a. First, how does baptism unite and unify Christians?
 - b. Second, what does baptism have to do with “walking in a manner that is worthy of our calling”?
2. “over all and through all and in all” – There is a belief that this means you can “encounter God in the woods” or “find him in nature.” That is not what this verse is saying. Instead, what truth is being taught here?

Ephesians 4:7 – Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

But to each one of us was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

3. Paul is now appearing to make a turn from unity to _____. In what way does this (the word in the blank) still aid in unifying the Church?
4. Χάρις – While this word is normally be translated “grace,” as it is here (and rightly so), there can be different “kinds” of grace. The main one we think of is God’s undeserved love. But this one is a little different, even though it stems from God’s undeserved love. Paul used “grace” in this way back in **Ephesians 3:7-8**. How might you define that use of “grace”?
5. Each form of this kind of grace is going to be different, as Paul will get into in a few verses. What is the comfort, however, as we look at the varied graces that God gives to us?

Ephesians 4:8 – διὸ λέγει, Ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἤχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

Therefore it says: “When he ascended into height, he led captivity captive, and he gave gifts to the [or his] people.”

6. Paul quotes **Psalm 68:18**. Let’s look there quickly. What do you notice is different?
7. Whether Christ led captives or captivity itself captive ends up being relatively moot. What’s the main point that Paul and the Psalmist are making about Christ?
8. For what reasons do we say this happened at Christ’s ascension and not his crucifixion or resurrection?
9. While the article on “people” is “the,” remember, Greek can work in such a way that “the” can become “his” if the context allows you to do that. I think it does here.
10. The “gifts to his people” will get picked up again in verse 11 after a brief “side note” by Paul in verses 9 and 10.

What comments and questions do you have?

Ephesians 4:9-10 – τὸ δὲ Ἀνέβη τί ἐστίν, εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς; **10** ὁ καταβὰς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβὰς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα.

What does “he ascended” mean, except that he also descended into the lower parts, that is, the earth? ¹⁰ The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.

11. This is a logical conclusion that Paul makes. You can ascend without having first descended! Note that this is likely not a reference to the descent into hell. If it’s not that, then what descent would Paul be talking about?
12. Paul wants to remind his readers that Jesus was the same when he descended as when he ascended. Why is that important to remember? Think about the angels in Acts 1:11 who echo that thought: “This same Jesus...will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”
13. In ancient thought, there was likely a “layering of the heavens.” Paul refers to this in **2 Corinthians 12:2-4**. So, when the Bible talks about “all the heavens,” it’s likely saying that it’s farther than our minds can conceive, which is an accurate description of where heaven is.

Ephesians 4:11-12 – καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, **12** πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

And he gave the apostles, and the prophets, and the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers, for the purpose of the equipping of the saints, for works of service—for the building up of the body of Christ...

14. Here are descriptions for each office that Paul lists here:

- a. **Apostles** – Charter-witnesses of the resurrection of Christ who are given authority from Christ over doctrine, but also servants of the Church.
- b. **Prophets** – Vessels of Spirit-inspired messages. This is not just Old Testament prophets, but certainly includes them.
- c. **Evangelists** – Likely traveling missionaries who were not direct witnesses to the resurrection.
- d. **Shepherds** – This is normally translated “pastors,” but the word is literally shepherds, which is fitting. These would be spiritual leaders in each city or house church.
- e. **Teachers** – If the pastors were the leaders of the entire city’s churches, then the teachers would be those who would teach outside of the public worship setting.
 - i. Some take “pastors and teachers” to be one group because only one definite article is used for the two nouns. That would mean that pastors are essentially those who teach others about God’s Word—which is true. It could very well be the opposite, that there are two separate offices that Paul is referring to here. We can’t really know for sure. In the end, the purpose is what’s important, not the specific type of person who was carrying out the purpose. We’ll get to that next. But first...

What thoughts or comments do you have about the office of the ministry in particular?

15. What is Christ’s purpose for giving all these different offices of servants of the Word?

- a. What are they equipped to do?
- b. What is the result of that?
- c. This calls to mind Ephesians 2:10, where Paul had said that we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works. What’s the connection from that verse to this one?

Ephesians 4:13 – μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οί πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

...until we all reach the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

16. μέχρι – “Until” – Does this word indicate a duration of time or a purpose?

17. καταστήσωμεν – “we reach” – This would be the word that would have likely been used in Greek for when a plane landed—“you have reached your destination”—or perhaps the captain of a ship would say that to Paul on his journeys across the Mediterranean Sea. The idea is that you’ve reached a goal or geographical location.

18. When does full unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God take place?

- a. Notice that Paul brings up both faith (spiritual) and knowledge (mental). While faith is certainly the most important thing we have from God, he also calls us to learn more about himself. We achieve both a better knowledge and stronger faith by the same means—Word and Sacrament.
- b. For what reasons should ministers still do the work God has given them to do, even though the full unity won’t be achieved until later?

19. So, how long is the ministry supposed to remain in place?

What comments and questions do you have?

Closing Prayer – CW 546 Lord Jesus, You Have Come v. 4 and 5

The servants you have called And to your Church are giving

Preserve in doctrine pure And holiness of living.

Your Spirit fill their hearts And charge their words with pow'r;

What they should boldly speak, Oh, give them in that hour!

Bring those into your fold Who still to you are strangers;

Guard those who are within Against offense and dangers.

Press onward with your Word Till pastor and his fold

Through faith in you, O Christ, Your glory shall behold. Amen.