

**Ephesians: Forwarding God's Care
God's Care Expressed
Caring Toward Maturity
Ephesians 4:7-16**

Intro: God gives to the church, not just his Spirit and not just his salvation, but also his ministers—gifted individuals such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. They operate in the church to equip God's people for "works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12).

Maturity among believers is important to God because immaturity makes us vulnerable to all kinds of pressures, enticements, and entanglements. Immature believers do not understand either their place in the purposes of God or the work he has committed to their care.

It's time for all of us to get off the bottle and grow up!

I. Discover Your Grace Gift: v7-9 (Show all these verses here)

***Mention Graceworks classes now going on.

A. "To each one" includes you (v7)

B. This giftedness comes by grace, not by merit. You have received this giftedness from Christ, and you cannot take credit for it.

C. Apportioned by Christ in his sovereign rule over his church

D. Picture the victory train of Christ:

1. "Captives in his train" recalls "prisoner" from verse 1 and suggests that Paul, a former enemy of Christ, was captured by Christ and became a gift of grace to the church.
2. The descent and ascent of Christ here described in reverse. The ascension is obvious. The descent is his incarnation. The lower parts of the earth describe his humiliation and obedience unto death, even death on a cross.
3. The ascension of Christ means, not his deserting this world but his filling this world and this universe. His ascension is like the lifting of a light in the darkness. If the light is sufficiently bright, the higher it is lifted the greater the light that floods all around.
4. Note the Christology of this passage. The one who ascended and fills the universe is the same one who descended, that is the incarnate Christ. We worship the One who fills this universe in part because he is the one who descended to the lowest parts of the earth. His descent to suffering and death makes him the perfect high priest for us—the perfect one to go to when we are hurting and in trouble. He has been there before, and he is able to help us in our infirmities.

II. Prepare and Repair the Saints v10-12 (Show these verses here)

A. Your gift of grace comes to you for the express purpose that you may pass it on to others around you. All spiritual gifts are given for the "common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

B. The word *katartismos* is instructive. It is translated "perfect" or "equip." But I like its usage as a verb by the Sea of Galilee when it describes what James and John are doing with their nets in the boat—"mending" or "preparing." The word may have at times a notion of restoration or repair as in Galatians 6:1, "You who are spiritual restore (*katartizo*) him gently."

1. Equipping is the task of helping others learn and use their gifts for service.
2. Perfecting is the idea of maturing, finishing the work of grace in the life of the believer.
3. Repairing indicates the HEALING POWER of the Fellowship of believers when all members are using their giftedness for the common good.

C. "For works of service" means that EVERY BELIEVER is to be serving the Lord. "Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45).

D. SPECIFIC GIFTS given to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors-teachers.

1. Three of these are itinerant and do not reflect offices in the church. The offices in the church are mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and other places as PASTORS and DEACONS.
2. Apostles and prophets and evangelists are given to the church in its larger expression, not just to local congregations. Pastor holds an office in the local congregation.

III. So that the body of Christ may be built up v12-16 (include all verses here)

A. Unity in the faith

B. Knowledge of the Son of God

C. Attaining the full measure of the FULLNESS OF CHRIST

D. So that we won't be victims of falsehood.

1. Immature believers, not anchored in Christ in head and heart, are susceptible to deceit and cunning. These words describe both methods and motives of people who want your allegiance and your money. Deceit and cunning of false prophets is not a new phenomenon. It has been around as long as there was a church. The church is a human institution made up of fallen and sinful people. It has flaws and failures.
2. The completed Bible did not do away with deceit and cunning in spreading falsehoods about Christ and the gospel. The Spirit-inspired apostles and prophets, such as Paul, were doing their best to combat heresy in the church, and it still came. But we have as much or more heresy in the church now, even with a completed Bible.

When we downplay the role of the Holy Spirit in the contemporary church, we do not protect the church from heresy. We insulate the church from the Spirit's power. This is demonstrated around the world now where by far the fastest growing part of the body of Christ is the charismatic movement that emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit. Charismatics also are more likely to believe the fundamental tenets of faith in Christ than any other group including Baptists. The Holy Spirit does not take us into heresy. He protects us from it.

E. Speak the truth IN LOVE. When you speak the truth without love you are participating in a different kind of heresy, but still it is heresy. It is not "orthodox" in tenor, feel, or delivery.

F. Christ himself is the one into whom we grow. We grow up into him.

G. The body of Christ is built up IN LOVE and in no other way. Without love, we have departed from Christ and are not truly his disciples.

H. Each part does its work. Are you doing your work?