

## EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

### Message #13

### Ephesians 4:11-16

Most of us love to hear an orchestra play beautiful music. If you take 100 talented musicians and put them under the directorship of a skilled conductor, they can produce music that is breathtaking. However, if you take those same 100 musicians and each decides to play something on his own without any conductor, the result is confused, pathetic noise. If you have ever gone to a concert, you know that prior to the concert the musicians warm up and tune up and it sounds terrible. But the moment the conductor takes the stand the beautiful sounds of music come to life.

So it is with the church. If we take a church that is functioning together under a conductor who is directing it according to God's Word, you have a body that is effective and beautiful. However, if you take a church in which each does their own thing apart from the whole, it is a body that makes strange noises that are almost laughable.

The subject of spiritual gifts is a critical subject of the Grace Age. To have body unity God's people must realize that there are a variety of gifts and most of them are non-public. Now think about your own body for a moment. Most of the organs of your body are not publicly seen. The ligaments, the arteries, the lungs, the heart, the liver, the kidneys are not publicly seen, but without them you cannot function and live right. The same is true with the body of Jesus Christ. Most gifts are not publicly seen. There are a few that are, but most aren't. But if you don't have those gifts operating properly, the body will not function properly.

All gifts are needed to form the body, but a big problem is that many people want more of a public gift and they think more highly of themselves than they ought. Every Grace Age church needs to understand this point. We may recall that in **verse 7**, Paul said that a grace gift was given to each one of us but not to the same measure. **God does not give public speaking gifts to most people. But He does give public speaking gifts to a few and this text tells us why.** What Paul reveals here is this:

**GOD HAS GIVEN TO THE GRACE AGE CHURCH CERTAIN GIFTED MEN TO COMMUNICATE AND TEACH HIS WORD SO THAT HIS PEOPLE MAY DEVELOP AND MATURE AND MINISTER TO OTHERS IN THIS GRACE DISPENSATION.**

Now one thing is very clear from Ephesians; the church is very important and very sacred to God. God's people will derive strength and power from church that they will not find anywhere else.

We would like to approach this by asking and answering four major questions:

## **QUESTION #1 – What are the key speaking gifts God gave in the Grace Age? 4:11**

It seems that Paul is specifically interested in discussing the public speaking gifts here. In other passages it discusses non-speaking spiritual gifts (Romans 12:7-8; I Cor. 12:28-30; I Pet. 4:10-11). It appears to me that because of the fact that every believer in Christ has been the recipient of the grace of God and has been given the wealth of God, including the indwelling Holy Spirit, that some perhaps questioned the public speaking gifts.

There apparently was a pride in some of God's people in that they thought a little more highly of themselves than they should. So Paul says you need to know that these special public gifts are critical. In **verse 11**, there are four grace gifts specifically named that God has given to His church, which were operative when he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. They are all speaking gifts and they all could accurately communicate Grace Age truth. The first two gifts in the list he has already mentioned twice (2:20; 3:5). They were critical to the Grace Age:

### **Gift #1 - The gift of an apostle. 4:11a**

The actual word "apostle" means that one had to have been sent on a specific mission or expedition by God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 54-55). The gift of an apostle was a key foundational gift of the Grace Age (Eph. 2:20). Now an apostle had to have met certain key qualifications.

- 1) He had to have been specifically selected by Jesus Christ (Acts 1:24);
- 2) He had to have spent time physically with Jesus Christ (Acts 1:21-24);
- 3) He had to have been an eyewitness to the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21-22).
- 4) He had to have been given a special gift of an apostle (I Cor. 12:28);
- 5) He had to have been able to perform apostolic sign miracles (II Cor. 12:11-12).

These apostles communicated and wrote inspired truth.

### **Gift #2 - The gift of a prophet. 4:11b**

The gift of being a prophet was also a foundational gift of the Grace Age (Eph. 2:20). The gift of a prophet was a gift in which one received direct revelatory messages from God that could forth tell God's Word and foretell God's future. **A N.T. prophet received direct revelatory truth from God before the Scriptures were written. This gift has ceased since we now have the written Scriptures (I Cor. 13:8/Rev. 22:18-19).**

H.A. Ironside told a story that happened to him once. He said a Mormon elder approached him and asked "What church do you belong to?" Dr. Ironside said "I belong to the one true Church that has apostles and prophets." The man said "then you must be a latter-day saint." Ironside said "No, I am a former day saint" (*In the Heavens*, pp. 186-187). Truth is the first century church is the only church that really did have apostles and prophets. There are no apostles and prophets today and biblical churches today are the only ones built on their foundation.

**Gift #3** - The gift of an evangelist . **4:11c**

An evangelist is one who is uniquely gifted by God to communicate the Gospel. In fact, one of the marks of one with this gift will be his heart will be unusually burdened for the unsaved lost world and he will have a very supernatural power to reach it. This particular gift was geared toward the unbeliever .

In the book of Acts we discover that Philip had this gift (Acts 21:8; 8:5-6, 12, 40). **The gift of an evangelist is a very peculiar gift that enables one to present the Gospel with some very unusual immediate results (8:6, 12).** Now all of us should look for opportunities to do the work of an evangelist, but most do not actually have the gift of being an evangelist (II Tim. 4:5). This is a very high ranking gift given to the Grace Age in view of the context in which it sits.

**Gift #4** - The gift of a pastor/teacher . **4:11d**

When you have an evangelist using his gift and bringing people into the church to be taught by the pastor/teacher, you have a rich combination in the church. The evangelist is out reaching out to the lost and they believe and then he brings them into the church where they may be taught the Word and led to green pastures by the pastor/teacher.

**The gift of pastor/teacher or “shepherd/teacher” may be viewed as one gift based upon the grammatical fact that there is one article “the” that goes with both nouns “pastor” and “teacher.”** If these were two separate gifts, there would be two separate articles. In this text each gift has its own article: “the apostle,” “the prophet,” and “the evangelist.”

The double noun usage indicates the gift is necessary to lead and protect the flock in a shepherding way that teaches them and feeds them the truth of God.

This particular gift is a gift of God that enables a minister to accurately understand the Scriptures and communicate them to the church in a shepherding and leading way. A true pastor or true shepherd must be able to accurately teach to feed his flock. He must watch over it and protect it and nurture it. In fact one commentator said “No man is fit to be a pastor who cannot also teach and the teacher needs the knowledge which pastoral experience gives” (John Witmer, *Ephesians*, p. 171). The primary responsibility of a shepherd/teacher is to see to it that his flock is well fed and well protected.

The pastor/teacher is a gift of God given to the Grace Age church that is also a high ranking gift in view of the fact that Paul mentions it in this context with other speaking gifts.

I recently heard an interview with Phil Mickelson, who is a great golfer. He was asked why he always took time to sign autographs for people. He said because I have the greatest job in the world in that I am paid to play golf and I always want to show my appreciation.

I beg to differ. A pastor/teacher has the greatest job in the world. He is paid to study God’s Word to feed a flock. What a wonderful calling to have- to be pastor/teacher of a church.

## **QUESTION #2 – Why did God give these gifts to the Grace Age church? 4:12**

There are three reasons stated as to why God gave these gifts to the church. Now do not overlook these verses because most churches do overlook these verses. Many believe the real job of the church is to bring in the lost or the unsaved so they may hear the Gospel and be saved. As a result, just about every service is turned into some evangelistic appeal for people to be saved.

**The purpose of the church is to primarily equip and build up the body of believers who are already saved**, so that they may become mature. As each body part ministers, the church is built up.

### **Reason #1** - God gave these gifts to equip the saints. **4:12a**

The word “equip” has the idea of mending or fixing something. This particular word was used in reference to surgically setting or fixing a broken bone so that it could be restored to full productive health and use (Smith, p. 239).

The purpose of church is to surgically feed the flock God’s Word and truth so that people can be fixed and mended so that they become mature and healthy and strong. Faulty theological notions and weak, broken people are to be carefully taught God’s truth so that their lives may be reset in a right way so all will become healthy. God’s Word will mend broken hearts and heal broken lives. You can become strong and healthy in a church where God’s Word is accurately taught.

### **Reason #2** - God gave these gifts to be able to do ministry work. **4:12b**

All Christians are to be ministers. The word “ministry” (διακονία) is one that means every believer who goes to church is to go and listen and learn so that they may carry out the sacred service ministry of a deacon.

As the pastor/teacher teaches the Scriptures, more and more body parts should surface that minister in a variety of ways. These speaking gifts should present God’s Word and that Word should have an affect on us in that we want to serve God. Notice it isn’t the pastor who is supposed to be doing all of the ministry work, it is the flock.

### **Reason #3** - God gave these gifts to build up the body. **4:12c**

The role of a pastor/teacher is not the same as an evangelist. The evangelist needs to be taught and then go evangelize. The pastor/teacher’s job is to equip the saints by carefully teaching God’s Word.

H.A. Ironside said that he read that D.L. Moody, the great evangelist, would listen to expositions of Scripture on Sunday morning at church and then go out and preach them and win souls with them. He would go back to the pastor and tell him he preached his sermon five times and forty people came to faith in Christ. That is the way it is supposed to work. The pastor/teacher does his job and the evangelist does his job (*Ibid.*, pp. 193-194).

Do you see this point? The primary job of the church is to build up the body through the Scriptures and not entertain the lost.

**QUESTION #3** – How long are these gifts operative in the Grace Age? **4:13**

There are three time answers given which ultimately convey this idea- these gifts will be operative until the Grace Age is over.

**Time Answer #1** - Until we all attain the unity of faith. **4:13a**

As every believer develops and plugs in using his or her gift, there is a unity to the body of Christ. These gifts will be needed until the entire body of Jesus Christ is united in heaven.

**Time Answer #2** - Until we all attain a deep knowledge of the Son of God. **4:13b**

When the church is functioning properly, there is a real focus on deep knowledge of God's Word. These gifts will be needed until all have deep knowledge of the Son of God. By the way, the word is "deep knowledge" of the Son of God. We are not talking here about the Christmas story; Paul is speaking of the depths of Christology. Many times we hear people say well the main thing is that we know Jesus loves us and saves us. Well that is a wonderful thing, but the church is not to be a place where God's people keep hearing that over and over again. It is to be a place that teaches the deep doctrines of Christology.

**Time Answer #3** - Until we all attain to a spiritually mature stature. **4:13c**

Every believer should be developing and becoming more and more Christ-like. These gifts are needed until we are all mature and since we all have work to do, we all need these gifts.

**QUESTION #4** – What are the results these gifts should produce in the Grace Age? **4:14-16**

There are three results given:

**Result #1** - These gifts should affect our stability in doctrine. **4:14**

One of the major warnings Paul gave to the Grace Age church was the warning against false teachers. In fact, he specifically warned this Ephesian church of this very thing- Acts 20:26-31.

**God does not want His people doctrinally gullible.** God does not want His people drifting along like a tumbling tumbleweed in doctrine. If we are to do the work of God in a mature way, we need to be doctrinally solid. We are in a world of fickle theology when it comes to God, the Bible and Jesus Christ. We need to be solidified in God's Word and God's truth so we may stand for truth. We need to be able to draw solid doctrinal boundary lines in the sand and we need to take a stand.

Children may easily be misled by what is false and God does not want us to be deceived or deceivable. In the early days of the church, the deity of Jesus Christ was under attack. God's people need to be able to go to church to hear God's Word carefully taught so that they will not be able to be deceived.

**Result #2** - These gifts should affect our speech to others. **4:15a**

This not only should affect our speech, but the attitude in which we use our speech. We should lovingly speak the truth. We should not ever concede a lie. The more Christ-like we are the more truth-oriented we will be. We will not believe half-truths, twisted truth or distorted truth. We will be truth-oriented and fact-oriented.

If we truly love people, we will speak truth to people. We will not distort truth or lie about truth.

**Result #3** - These gifts should affect our growth in Christ. **4:15b-16**

In **verse 15** our growth is into Christ and in **verse 16** our growth is literally "out of" Christ. Jesus Christ is the head and we are the body and we are to grow. He is the one who enables us to grow to become a properly working body part.

We all need each other. We all need to grow, we all need to learn and we all need to be mended at times. As we gather to listen and learn we will see God use us and develop us for His glory.

Two parting points are very clear:

- 1) Each person is important to the church.
- 2) Each person needs to realize the importance of going to church.