

Ephesians 4:8-16

Author: Paul

Recipients: Church in Ephesus

Location: Western shore of modern day Turkey; Aegean Sea

Key Theme: "The Body of Christ is Blessed"

v. 8

Psalm 68:18

- A Psalm to the choirmaster, written by David.
- This is a psalm of victory in which we see the victor defeating his foes and receiving gifts from men.
- Paul equates the victor of Psalm 68:18 with Christ.
- The only difference is that instead of receiving gifts *from* men, Christ shares in His victory on the cross by giving gifts *to* men.
- When a king conquered a people he would often take captives along with him.
- What he would do with those captive is either make them slaves and use them for forced labor, sell them, or hold them as ransom for people to pay for their freedom.
- He would also take the spoils such as clothing, food, and money.
- He would then give gifts to his own people and supporters.
- The captives mentioned here are the elect, the saved.
- Every believer in Christ is part of His royal train or entourage.
- As part of His people we are given gifts.
- Paul then goes on to explain what these gifts to the church are.

v. 9-11

The Nature of Jesus

- Co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit.
- Became a human when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb.
- Jesus descended from Heaven down to Earth.
- He never lost His deity, God status, or His divinity.
- He laid aside some of His attributes like omnipotence, omnipresence, for a time and took on a limited set of attributes such as being able to fail, to feel pain and sorrow, etc.
- To clarify: Jesus' failures would've been along the lines of having to learn everything just as we humans have to do. He never sinned in that process.
- Jesus left His lofty dwelling in Heaven and descended to Earth.
- When He completed His work He ascended back into Heaven after securing a whole host of captives.
- Again, these captives are the elect, the saved, the church.

Gifts Given to the Church

1) Apostles

- Those were appointed by Jesus Himself. Even Paul was. This office has since left.
- These were men who had been with Jesus, heard Him teach, and witnessed His miracles.

2) Prophets

- In the early church God gave special revelation to people.
- Their function included prediction, exhortation, encouragement, warning, and explanation.
- The apostle and prophets laid the foundation for the church to grow but certain aspects of their work related to that unique task have been discontinued such as foretelling the future, healing, etc.

3) Evangelists

- These were those that went and preached the Gospel in places that had not heard.
- They were especially gifted with explaining the Gospel to crowds who had never heard it before.

4) Shepherds and Teachers

- These would be the elders/pastors of the local churches.
- These men were specifically gifted with the everyday care of the church, handling the Word of God, teaching, and leading.

v. 12-14

The Purpose of the Gifts

1) Equipping the saints for the work of ministry

- It is oftentimes assumed that the work of the ministry is supposed to be executed by the pastors/elders as well as deacons. This is partially correct.
- The pastors/elders ministry is to equip the church to do the bulk of the ministry.
- The deacons are to be servant leaders as seen in Acts 6.
- While pastors/elders should absolutely be a part of the local church ministry they are largely responsible for equipping the members of the church to perform those tasks.
- It's a Teacher-Student relationship.

2) Building up the Body of Christ

- The church needs to be built up spiritually and that is accomplished through the teaching and application of the Scriptures, prayers of supplication, partaking of the Lord's supper, etc.

3) To attain the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ.

- In a divided world the church is to be a body that is united under the banner of its Master.

4) Help with maturation in the faith

- This is vital.
- In order to know the real from the fake we must be so immersed in Who the real is that we can spot false doctrine a mile away.
- If we don't know the real then we may be tossed by every wind of doctrine.

The Lord has given these gifts to the Church so that we will be able to carry out the tasks that He has laid out in His Word and to know Him fully.

v. 15-16

Imitate Christ

- Speaking the truth isn't easy but it is something that we are called to do.
- We do this because Jesus did this.
- He called people to repentance and He did it from a place of love not condescension.
- We are to imitate Christ in every way because we have been made members of His body, the Church, and He is the One who holds it all together.
- When the members of the body are united under Christ then He accomplishes His mission in and through us.

Small Group Questions

- 1) Paul hearkens back to Psalm 68 as an example of Christ. In what way are the two passages parallel? What about the differences between the two?
 - In Psalm 68 we see a victory over foes and the people give gifts to the victor. Christ won victory over sin and death at the cross. His death provided the payment but His resurrection sealed the deal. In doing that He gave us apostles, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. The victor of Psalm 68 *received* gifts in his victory but Christ *gave* gifts in His victory.
- 2) Discuss the nature of Christ.
 - Co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit
 - Never created
 - Descended to Earth but didn't lay aside His divinity or God-status. He laid aside some of His attributes like omnipotence.
- 3) What are the 3 offices that Jesus gifted to the early church and what were their functions? (Look back on page 1, last section)
- 4) What was the purpose of these gifts to the church? (Look back on page 2, first section)
- 5) Discuss speaking the truth in love.