

## Text— Ephesians 4:7-16

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Immediately preceding our text, the Apostle Paul writes, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:1-6) Thus, Paul is addressing fellow Christians, people called to faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice the beloved apostle desired that his fellow Christians would endeavor to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit because it is He who makes us Christians and keeps us in the faith, for the Holy Bible in 1 Corinthians 12:3 clearly states, “no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” And, Romans 8:26-27 declares, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Hence, we Christians should certainly be grateful for the gracious assistance we regularly receive from God the Holy Ghost, who is also known as the Spirit of God.

Let us never forget that with the help of the Holy Ghost we must continually strive to remain in the true faith of Jesus Christ, grow in that faith, and increase in fruitfulness therein since we all dwell in sinful flesh while living in this world, for Galatians 5:17 reports, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do

the things that ye would.”

Thankfully, we believers in Jesus can actually be of help to one another when the Holy Spirit works within us, for our Scripture selection informs us about:

### “GIFTS OF GRACE FOR CHRISTIANS”

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Who gives such gifts of grace
- 2) What gifts of grace are given, and why

-1-

Verse 7, ----- (Ephesians 4:7)

Observe that every Christian is given a gift of grace by Jesus Christ, for our text which is addressed to Christians opens by informing us: *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

Interestingly, Jesus Himself is the greatest gift of grace, the greatest gift of God’s undeserved love, to us sinners, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Yes, without Jesus Christ we would all be lost and damned, for Holy Writ clearly states, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [and] the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 3:23; 6:23) Therefore, let us honestly say, as does the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:15, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” Yes, Jesus Christ Himself is the greatest gift of grace that every Christian has been given, for Romans 8:9-10 says to all Christians, “ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” All thanks and praise be to God!

Verses 8-10, ----- (Ephesians 4:8-10)

Notice that Jesus Christ our Savior is not only in Himself our greatest gift, but God says of Christ: *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* Yes, Jesus Christ gave gifts – plural – unto men. Thus, Jesus Christ is who gives gifts of grace to Christians.

Note that our text also says in regards to Jesus Christ: *Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.*

Think about the fact that Jesus Christ *descended first into the lower parts of the earth*, for that statement surely refers to the fact that Jesus as a real human being was formed in His mother's womb as described in the following words found in Psalm 139:13-16, where we read, "thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Indeed, the eternal only begotten Son of God was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary in whose womb He had grown as His human body was formed and fashioned.

My friends, Jesus Christ is He who came to earth in humility, for Jesus is He, as Philippians 2:6-11 informs us, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and

given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Yes, Jesus took upon Himself a real human nature so that He could take our place under God's Law and keep it perfectly for us, and subsequently pay for our lack of keeping the Law by suffering and dying for our sins, paying for them in full with His own holy and precious blood which He shed while nailed to the cross of Calvary. Then, after three days in the grave Jesus victoriously bodily rose from the dead, and forty days later He removed His visible presence from earth as He *ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.* Indeed, Jesus Christ the God/man now fills all things according to both His divine and human natures. Hence, Jesus Christ certainly has the power to give gifts of grace to His followers, and He does so as He sees fit.

Accordingly, Hebrews 4:14-16 declares, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Yes, Jesus Christ is always ready, willing, and able to help us as He certainly has the power to give gifts of grace to His followers, and He does so as He sees fit.

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As we ponder our text to its conclusion, let us see what gifts of grace are given, and why.

Verses 11 & 12, ----- (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Notice that the gifts of grace given by Jesus Christ are various talents and abilities dispensed to different Christians as He sees fit to distribute, for our text reports: *he gave some, apostles; and*

*some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.*

Observe then that all Christians are NOT apostles, for Christ gave SOME the gracious gift of apostleship. The term “apostle” refers to a person chosen and sent forth with a message, a special ambassador for Christ. Thus, the apostles were workers called and trained especially by Jesus to proclaim Law and Gospel, repentance and remission of sins, in order to rapidly grow the early Christian Church in a big way. Consequently, the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 declared, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

All Christians are NOT prophets, for Christ gave SOME the gracious gift of prophecy, the ability to accurately report future events as revealed to them by God. All Christians are NOT evangelists, for Christ gave but SOME the gracious gift of being specially talented and effective missionaries in proclaiming the Gospel. All Christians are NOT pastors and teachers, for Christ gave SOME the gracious gift of being able to preach His Word and/or teach His Word to others.

Nevertheless, ALL the aforementioned gifts of grace are spiritual talents given by Jesus Christ, *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* Hence, Romans 12:4-9 states, “as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be

without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Therefore, take it to heart that Jesus Christ gives the various gifts of grace to benefit His body, the Holy Christian Church.

Jesus desires that the saints – His believers – be perfected, that is, that Christians grow in the faith and in fruitfulness of the same, that we all “might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”; that we “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” (Colossians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:18)

Yes, my friends in Christ, it is by the work of the ministry, the work of serving Jesus Christ, that the body of Christ – the Holy Christian Church – is edified, built up. Realize that Jesus Christ’s Church is not built up without the gifts of grace which He supplies to those whom He has chosen to receive gifts from Him, for 1 Corinthians 1:21 informs us, “after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Thus, the Word of God needs to be proclaimed and taught.

Verses 13-16, ----- (Ephesians 4:13-16)

Observe that the work of the ministry which takes place by means of the Holy Word of God proclaimed by those Jesus has graciously gifted – some being apostles, some being prophets, some being evangelists, and some being pastors and teachers – is to continue, *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which*

*every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Note the importance of achieving unity of faith in the knowledge of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Take it to heart that the goal of becoming a perfect man to the measure of the stature and fulness of Christ refers to the fact that the Holy Christian Church is the body of Christ which is accounted righteous – perfect – for Jesus’ sake, and will actually be totally perfected at the end of days when Jesus “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:21) Thus, the body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church, will be perfected completely when the sinful flesh of the believers is changed with all traces of sin and its effects being removed, which is the goal we all look forward to reaching.

Now, since we Christians presently dwell in sinful flesh, we are ever striving toward that future full perfection as we continue in the faith of Jesus Christ, realizing it is imperative to continue in faith and grow in the faith since Jesus promises in Revelation 2:10, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Therefore, it’s quite important *that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Indeed, there are always false prophets pedaling their false doctrines with their devilish tricks as they lie in wait to deceive true Christians by perverting and corrupting the Word of God. We need to be on guard against falsehood by being thoroughly grounded in the full truth of God’s Word by making regular proper use of the pure preserved Holy Bible, for 2 Timothy 3:16-17 plainly states: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That

the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

Let us never forget that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, warns us in Matthew 7:15-20, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” So, let us beware of deceivers by being well grounded in all sound Scriptural doctrines.

Let us Christians be found *speaking the truth in love, that we may grow up into Jesus in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.* Yes, as I mentioned earlier, the Holy Christian Church is the body of Christ, for the Apostle Paul in writing to fellow Christians declares in 1 Corinthians 12:27, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” Accordingly, it behooves us to build-up ourselves in the love of Jesus Christ by persisting in the use of the pure preserved Holy Bible, for Jesus says to us as He once said to some Jews of old who believed on Him, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Fellow Christians, speaking the truth in love means sharing God’s pure preserved Holy Word – which includes all of its doctrines – without compromise, unashamedly proclaiming Jesus Christ the one true Savior of the world, for Acts 4:12 plainly reports, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Indeed, it’s a fact, for concerning Christ Jesus the only begotten Son of

God, John 3:36 clearly states, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Let us be ever grateful for the gifts of grace for Christians because those gifts help us Christians continue in the faith and move unbelievers to come to faith, for Romans 10:17 reports that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Furthermore, we read in Romans 1:16-17, “the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

Let us be thankful that Jesus Christ, being one with His heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost, is the Giver of gifts of grace. Let us also be thankful for the gifts of grace given because if they were not given we would all be lost and damned since we would be without faith in the only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who Himself is the greatest gift of grace ever given, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10) Praise be to the Spirit of Christ, God the Holy Ghost, and the amazing, necessary, gracious, and powerful work He does.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward being fruitful in the faith, showing gratitude for the gifts of grace for Christians that our text has brought to our attention. Amen.

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