

Ephesians 4:7-12 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS

Ephesians 4:7-10: PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT, Part 2

by Dr. Wayne Barber

NEXT

We are going to push on in chapter 4 and find something that is very exciting. In chapter 4 Paul wants us to see how diversified we are. In other words, we are one in the Spirit, but we are so different in our gifts, our personalities and our individualities. This is all by the design of God. Do you ever want somebody else to be just like you? That is the way most of us are. We can't seem to accept the fact that it is God's plan, God's idea, that we are different, that we are totally different, that our gifts are different, that our personalities and abilities are all different. There is diversity in the body. However, when that diversity is properly put under the leading and control of the Holy Spirit of God, that diversity actually works to preserve the unity of the body. He wants us to have unity not only by the way we bear with one another, not only by the way we believe, but by the way we are built together.

Remember in chapter 2 we are told we are of God's household and also His Temple. We are living stones being fitted into His Temple, each one of us with different sizes, shapes, gifts, personalities and individualities, but every one of us under the control of the Spirit of God. If someone played a middle C on the piano for a while, it is a pretty note. If he played it for a long time, you would say, "Will you quit? You are driving me crazy!" Isn't it great that unity doesn't mean uniformity? It doesn't mean we are all alike. Wouldn't that make church the most boring place you have ever been in your life? If that fellow added an E and a G and a high C, all of a sudden you would say, "Whew, that sounds good! Now that blends." You've got more than just one. You've got other diversified notes. But when you put them together played by the same hand, you have unity amongst the diversity. That is what Paul wants you to see. This is the body. This is how it functions. When we are each functioning under the Spirit's power, letting His ability be ours, then our gifts begin to function. Even though our gifts are different, we are still preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are different. Folks, you need to grasp that and stop coveting somebody else's gift and somebody else's ministry and simply say, "God, anything short of hell is grace. I accept what you have given to me. I receive what you have given to me. Let me just be who I am in your power." When you do that, the unity of the body is being preserved.

First of all, let's look at the source of our diversity, our diversified gifts. Where does it all come from? Whose idea is this anyway? Look at verse 7. Paul says:

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

What was the supreme gift of grace? It was the Spirit of God. God gives the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God is the one who gives out the gifts. But remember, it is God's idea. The source of it all is the Lord Jesus and what He did for us in His finished work on Calvary, in His resurrection, His ascension and ultimate glorification. Christ became the source of all of our diversity.

When Paul says "to each one of us grace was given," he is talking about grace gifts. Those grace gifts, as you know from I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, are there to minister inside of the body.

The idea of **"measure"** is a neat word. It is the idea of portioning something out. Someone in the church told me something that I think it is a great idea. He said, "Sometimes we would have pie left from a meal. We knew we had enough for two pieces but it had not been cut yet. We always let one of our children cut the pie, but the other one got the first choice of the piece." Now I like that. That means it is going to be cut evenly. You had better believe it is going to be cut evenly because if you cut it unevenly, and the other one gets the first choice, you get the smallest piece.

Paul is saying it is Christ who cut the pie. Don't you wish sometimes that you had a bigger piece of the pie? I mean, you look around and see what others get to do that has a kind of glamour to it. Then you look at your own piece of pie and say, "Wait a minute. I got short-changed. How come my piece of the pie is so small and their piece of the pie is so large?" Friend, what he is saying here is, we haven't got a thing to say about it. Christ is the one who made sure that the pie was cut. He is the one who made those kinds of decisions. You see, so often in the body of Christ, we don't realize that. We are jealous of others. We are envious of others. We want somebody else's ministry. We want somebody else's gifts without realizing anything short of hell is grace. Just to have a gift at all is certainly beyond what any of us deserve. The word for grace, *charis*, means that which you don't deserve. It is Christ who is the source of every bit of it. Again, unity is not uniformity. We are all diversified in our gifts as to the amount and as to the gifts themselves.

Look with me in Romans 12. I am not going to do a study on gifts because that is not Paul's whole concern here in Ephesians 4. He is just bringing up something to help us learn how to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. In Romans 12:3 Paul is going to share that his being an apostle is by the fact that God chose him to be an apostle. He had nothing to do with it. God cut that piece of pie. He put Paul's name on it. Now I am sure some of the other people around that day would have loved to have been an apostle, but God didn't choose them. He chose Paul. Romans 12:3 says,

"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted [or proportioned or measured], to each a measure of faith."

Every one of us is given something. We are all different, and God did it. He is the source of all this. If you have a problem with what you have, go to Him. He is the one who saw to it that the pie was cut. He is the one who decided what proportion of the pie each of us got in the measure of our grace gifts.

Romans 12:4-5 says,

"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

Do you see that unity, that bond there? Even though we are different, we are still a part of each other. You might be saying, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if I had been given the gift of speaking? I would love it a whole lot better because I like the gifts that are seen, that are visible, that people praise you and applaud you for. I don't like the gifts that are behind the scenes and nobody ever sees. Nobody ever says anything. There is no glamour in it at all." He cut the pie! We didn't! One of the biggest problems people have is they don't seem to be grateful for their portion of the pie that He cut. The source of all these grace gifts, of this diversity of the body, is the Lord Jesus Himself.

Let's make sure that we understand the difference between a **grace gift** (see chart on Spiritual Gifts) and a **talent** or **ability**. I think this would be important right here. You see, a **grace gift** is something given at salvation. You may be able to play the piano. You may be able to sing so well that you make the birds jealous. I mean you have just got talent flowing out of your ears. That is your ability. That is your talent. It has nothing to do with your salvation. A grace gift is given at salvation by the Giver. He gives the Gift of the Holy Spirit of God. When He is in your life, He comes in bearing gifts. Those gifts are for ministry within the body of Christ. "You mean I am seeing things one way but you might be seeing them another way?" Yes. "You mean it is not wrong?" No, because we are diversified. If I take care of what I am seeing and you take care of what you are seeing, then the body is unified as the Spirit produces that unity.

Now He doesn't throw away our abilities. He doesn't throw away our talents. He uses them, but He infuses them with His divine grace gift that comes in at salvation. You must see the difference and see how they work together. So who is the cause of all this diversity? Who thought this thing up? The Lord Jesus Himself. He is the One who wants it this way. He is the One who sees to it that it is going to continue to be this way. He is the source of our diversity.

The second part is the most exciting. There is a sacrifice required in order for us to have the diversity of gifts. If you realize what it cost God for you to have a grace gift, then perhaps you would get busy allowing that gift to function in your life. If you are not using your gift you are frustrating the grace of God. A person who is not willing to be a part of that which God has set up is slapping God right in the face. It cost Jesus something in order for us to have these gifts in His body on this earth.

Let's walk through what we are talking about here. The thrust of what Paul is talking about here is the work of Jesus on the cross. The giving of these gifts, absolutely ties into the result of His triumph as our resurrected and ascended Lord. There is one thing about the Gospel that we don't talk about much. We talk about the resurrection of Christ, but very few times do we ever talk about the ascension of Christ. Somehow we forget the fact that until He ascended into heaven and went into the throne room by His own blood, as Hebrews says, as the God-man, He could not even have a body on this earth. He certainly could not give gifts to that body. He had to ascend and go back to the Father. That is what Paul is about to bring out.

Ephesians 4:8 says,

"Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.'"

Paul is jumping back to the Old Testament to the book of Psalms. Turn with me to Psalms 68:18. This is such a beautiful picture of what Christ did for us. In the Old Testament it was a picture of God, who was always the deliverer of His people. When He ascends to His Holy mountain, there is where He rules and He reigns. Psalm 68:18 says,

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive *Thy* captives."

The writer is giving a picture here of those days when the general would go out to battle. He would win a victory, and then on the way back into town the commander and his chariot would be up front. Boy, he is proud. He has won the victory. The people line the streets and are all shouting, "Hallelujah, the victory has been won." Behind him, chained to the back of his chariot, are all the people that he has conquered, the generals and the leaders of the armies. Then behind them are all the spoils of war. As soon as he gets into town, he goes up to the holy mountain and there on the holy mountain, the riches or spoils of war, are given to him. He in turn disperses them to all the other people. He has to receive the gifts in order to give the gifts.

Now I am saying that for a reason. In Psalm 68:18 it says, "Thou hast received gifts among men,..." When Paul quotes that Scripture, he doesn't say that. He says,

"And He gave gifts to men."

The liberal stands up and says, "There is a contradiction in Scripture right there. It says in the Old Testament that He received gifts. Paul says He gave gifts. There is something wrong here." Friend, how are you going to give them until you have first received them? Paul just takes it that extra step that the Psalmist did not take. He is not contradicting anything. He is just fully explaining what the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross when He ascended back in to heaven.

Now, let's go back to Ephesians 4:8.

"When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."

The Lord Jesus came down and conquered sin, death and many other things. He ascends back to the heavens. He has His captives with Him. Then and only then can He give gifts unto men.

There is a wonderful picture here of what Christ has done for us. You see, without the ascension, there would never be a Christ who could send His Holy Spirit, the Gift, who in turn could display all the different gifts. What did He say in John 14? "I must go to My Father." Why? "So that the Holy Spirit might come." He is the gift. The Holy Spirit is the one who is going to be making sure He carries out God's desires of having the pie sliced in the way that it is sliced. But Jesus has to ascend first. You say, "I don't understand. He is the Son of God. Why does He have to qualify for anything? Why does He have to ascend in order to do anything? He is God." That is right, but He is also the God-man. We forget this. He uniquely became a brand new creature never seen before. He became the God-man. Not only that, but when He ascended, He went into the throne room by His own blood and there received the name that is above every name. He was exalted on high. Now, as Lord of the Universe, He qualifies to give gifts unto men.

Paul is pointing to what it cost God for us to have our gifts! Jesus had to go to the cross! Jesus had to resurrect! Jesus had to ascend! Jesus had to go into the presence of the Father before the Spirit could come who is the actual one who disburses the gifts unto men.

During World War I there was a tradition in the towns, particularly in France. During the war, many times the cities defended themselves. Therefore, their little army was the army of that particular city. They had a tradition. They had walled cities with huge gates and walkways over the gates. When the group of men who had left the town to represent them in battle came back, the people would get on top of that gate. They would have a choir who would chant. The men would come back, wounded and broken and bleeding from battle, but they came back waving their flag, which meant they had won the victory! The people on top of the wall would shout at them, "What right do you have to enter through these gates?" They would hold up the hands of the wounded. They would hold up the hands of the bleeding. Then they would raise that flag and say, "We have been to battle, and we have won the victory!" The gates would swing open, and they would walk through. The streets would be lined with people. They would shower them with hallelujahs for the victory that had been won.

Can you imagine the Lord Jesus' return back into heaven? He ascended. He is the ascended Christ. Without His ascension, we would have no gifts. Without His ascension we would have no body. Without His ascension, we would have nothing. He had to ascend and go back to the Father so that the Spirit could come and give gifts to the body. As He walked up to the gates of heaven, the choir of heaven on that gate would say, "What right do you have to enter these gates?" The Lord Jesus Christ would hold up His hands with the nail prints in His wrists. He would show them the nail prints in His feet and the spear mark in His side. Then He would say, "I've been to Calvary, and I have won the victory!" Then the gates would open up in heaven, and the Lord Jesus would march triumphantly to the Father and sit at His right hand, the name above every name, the One who is going to send His gift to His body who will dispense the gifts unto all men.

It cost God everything for us to be diverse. It cost God everything for us to have our gifts. Until we are free in His Spirit, empowered with His might, then the church is not operating. Whatever we are doing is nothing more than a secular organization on this earth. We have got to see that. We are not preserving the unity of the Spirit when we criticize a brother because they see things differently. They are gifted differently. Friend, we need to function in the gift that was blood bought for each one of us. You've got enough to do simply living in your own gift.

That is why Paul says to work out your own salvation. Begin to function in the gifts that you have and honor the fact that it cost Him everything for you to have those gifts. He illustrates them in verses 9 and 10.

"(Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?"

Here is where theologians jump on this thing. They say, "Well, Paul says, 'the lower parts of the earth.' Where are the lower parts of

the earth? The grave. That's Sheol or Hades in the New Testament." That is not what he is trying to show you. He is saying He went as far down as was necessary. He descended to the very pits, as far down as He could go. He says in verse 10,

"He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things."

There are a lot of different definitions of "fill all things." I think he is talking about His power and His presence, as a result of His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and glorification. His power and presence now fill all the universe and all things. He fills it. It is there. Do you know how it is manifested? Through the people of God who have tapped into the divine ability of His Spirit working in them. The church is the body of Christ, the dwelling of God in the Spirit, people with gifts to minister to that body.

Do you realize that the very moment you get in touch with your gifts and start living, you are preserving the unity of the body? The only unity we have is the unity that the Spirit produces when we are being filled and controlled by the Spirit of God. Otherwise, we are tearing the ligaments and have no clue about what oneness is all about. What you think about the unity of the Spirit dictates the way you live.

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Ephesians 4:11-13: PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT—PART 3

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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We are talking about preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One of the most sensitive and precious things that the Spirit has done for us is that He has bound us together in the bond of peace.

In verse 3 Paul says, "being diligent to preserve," not produce. We cannot produce unity. He produces unity. We preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You see, the Holy Spirit is the divine ligament that binds us together. We are to preserve that unity. "Preserving" has the idea of urgency, be alert, be awake, preserve, be sensitive, watch out, protect it at all costs.

Now we do that by the way we behave towards each other. That is in verse 2. Not a single one of those characteristics is of man's capability. It is what God gives a man, the ability and the capability of doing. The humility in verse 2 is what God produces within a man. It is the character of Jesus Himself. That humility, that gentleness, that patience and that forbearance of one another in love is something God the Holy Spirit has to produce. We preserve the unity of the Spirit as we are willing to be filled with the Spirit of God, thereby, the Spirit continues to hold us together.

Secondly, we preserve it by the way we believe. In verses 4-6 the word "one" is used seven times. That flames the cardinal doctrine of what we hold to and what gives us identity. It says in verse 4,

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

We have covered all of that.

The third thing we see of how we preserve the unity of the Spirit is by the way we are built together. The reason I say it that way is because in chapter 2 he says we are the household of God. We are the temple of God. As odd as it might seem, we are one in the Spirit, however, we are diverse in our gifts. It is amazing how God did that. He didn't throw away our personalities. He didn't throw away our individuality. He gave us gifts to accentuate those things. He made us uniquely different in the body of Christ. When I am filled with the Spirit of God, when I am aggressively letting my gifts work in my life and the ministry that God has given to me, even though we are diverse in some strange, mysterious way, I am actually preserving the unity of the Spirit.

We saw the ultimate source of this diversity in the last study. Whose idea is this anyway? Verse 7 tells us that it is the Lord Jesus Christ. It was His idea. We are different because He wanted us different. Our gifts (see chart on Spiritual Gifts) are different because He wanted them to be different. Ultimately, He is the source of all the gifts, even though I Corinthians 12 says the Spirit really dispenses the gifts. Remember, Jesus had to ascend in order to send the Spirit. Then the Spirit comes and He cuts the pie the way the Lord has told Him to cut that pie. Every one of us have different gifts. Some of us have more than one. But the source of them all is the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 7:

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

So we know that He is the source ultimately of all the diversity of gifts.

Secondly, the ultimate sacrifice that was required so that we might have these gifts was the fact that Jesus came, paid a terrible price on the cross and resurrected from the dead. But He had to ascend before we could have our gifts.

Now, the whole point of this is in verses 8-10.

"Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.' (Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

Paul is simply saying He stooped down to the very lowest depths He could stoop. He came down as far as He could come down. Now He has been exalted as far as you can be exalted. He is the one now who has been given all authority over every principality that is under His feet. Now He is the giver of our gifts.

Look at what it cost God for us to be a gifted member of the body of Christ on this earth. Hebrews says He went back to the Father by His own blood. The Father saw that blood. Then there was satisfaction with the Father that sin had been paid for and the Lord Jesus was given a name above every name. Now He stands to rule over all as the God-man. Now we can understand what it cost Him in order for us to be a part of His body and in order for us to have the gifts and the ministry God has given to us. Think about it for a second. If you are not functioning in the gift God has given to you, if you haven't even stopped to consider that you are a divine part of a One Body on this earth, then friend, it is almost like slapping God in the face. You are insulting Him by not being willing to accept the portion of the pie that He gave to you and also to function in the gift that is uniquely given to you.

Well, the ultimate sacrifice that was required was the Lord Jesus had to die, resurrect and ascend to the Father before these gifts were made possible to all of us.

Now in verse 11 Paul narrows the scope to one more point about these gifts. I want us to see the ultimate standard of the gifted individuals that make up the body of Christ. What you are going to see is where we are headed with all of this. What are the gifts for? What is the goal? What does God want for us with all the gifts which have been given to the body of Christ? Look in verse 13:

"until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."

In other words, until the whole body is able to stand up, function and bring visibility to Christ, then we have not yet reached that goal. What God wants with these gifts is that every gift function. He is not pleased when gifts are not functioning in the power of His Spirit. What He wants is for the body, His body, the church on this earth, to rise up and give visibility to the Lord Jesus, not to ourselves, not to our denomination, only unto Him.

The goal of the body of Christ then is that the whole body come to its full maturity in Christ. Now if that is going to happen, we have some work to do. If everybody has been gifted, then all those gifts are going to have to function. When a person discovers his gift, it is out of being surrendered to the Lord Himself. When he begins to live that exchanged life, then God begins to burden him in certain areas. He begins to pinpoint the gifts that God has given to him. We have got a lot of work to do if the body is ever going to reach the stature of the fulness of Christ, to where every gift is functioning and where the church on earth is bringing visibility to the Lord Jesus Himself.

There are three things about this standard that God has for us. First of all, in verse 11 I want you to see the Master's men who are given to the body to help it mature to the fulness of Christ.

"And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers."

He changes from grace gifts, which are bestowed upon men, to gifted men being bestowed upon the church. He is not talking here about gifts. He is talking about gifted men assigned to the body of Christ to help the body attain to that standard—the measure of the fulness of Christ.

He begins by mentioning **apostles**. We have already been told in Ephesians who these apostles and prophets are. Go back to 2:19. They are connected with the infant church way back when the church was just being founded and was beginning to grow.

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."

Now, who are these apostles? There were two kinds of apostles: primary apostles and secondary apostles. Now let me explain to you what I am talking about. A primary apostle was called and commissioned by the Lord Jesus as His own sent-out one. These were the primary apostles. He called them Himself. He sent them out and commissioned them Himself. Now remember, Paul was one of these. Look in 1:1:

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God."

In other words, he didn't go to school and study how to be an apostle. It was God's will that he be sent out and commissioned as an apostle. These were the ones sent out by Christ Himself. In First Corinthians 15:8 Paul says,

"I am an apostle, born out of due season."

Paul was saying, "I am not one of the original twelve, but yet in a sense I am. God is going to use me to give doctrine to the church." So when he spoke, he spoke in the authority of a primary apostle. Primary apostles were men who witnessed the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. If you didn't witness the Lord Jesus Christ resurrected in that day, you could not qualify to be an apostle. They had to have seen and witnessed the resurrected Christ.

You say, "Now wait a minute. When did the apostle Paul witness Him?" On the road to Damascus. God appeared to him, and he immediately realized who it was that he was dealing with. He repented, and God commissioned him as His apostle.

They were given the task of imparting the New Testament truth to the church by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. Now this was the assignment of these early primary apostles.

There were also secondary apostles, who were also called apostles. The secondary apostles were intimately associated with the primary apostles. It was the primary apostles who give us doctrine. The secondary apostles, however, were right there along side of them for that period of time. Let me give you some illustrations. Acts 14:14 describes Barnabas as an apostle. Silas is describe as an apostle in 1Thessalonians 2:6. James, the brother of Christ, is mentioned as an apostle in Galatians 1:19. I have only selected three but there are more mentioned in the New Testament. These secondary apostles were intimately acquainted with the primary apostles and all of them were associated with the infant church.

Now many people say, "But the word 'apostle' simply means sent out. Isn't there the sense that people are sent out today?" Certainly there is. But in the sense of the apostle and prophet of this day, they are over with. They are associated with the infant church. They were given by God for the early maturing of His body on this earth.

Secondly, Paul mentions the **prophets**. Remember, apostles and prophets are associated in the same group in 2:20. The prophets he speaks of here spoke by direct illumination of the Holy Spirit. God would illuminate them and they would go and speak what God had put upon their heart to the early church. Their task was to proclaim New Testament truth before the completion and distribution of the New Testament. On occasion, they would foretell something. Just like their Old Testament predecessors, they would foretell an event that was about to happen.

Paul said they are associated with the early church. We are living in a time when people don't endure sound doctrine. They would rather have somebody walk in and say, "Hey, I've been with Jesus." Well, I have too. He lives inside of me. I didn't have to go get Him. He is already here.

New Testament prophets, which he is speaking of here, did not foretell, they forth-told truth. That is all they were there for. A prophet came down and told Paul, "Don't go to Jerusalem. I believe God has a message for you. Be careful." He foretold that. That's fine. They declared forth the message of the gospels. The apostles guided the church in the way it ought to go. The prophets guarded them in what they ought to know. Those are the two groups that worked with the early church.

Well, thirdly he mentioned **evangelists**. The last two groups, to me, are the functioning ones today. They are the ones that God wants to minister life and truth to the church through. Verse 11 says,

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists."

It seems to me the evangelists and the pastor/teachers worked side by side in the local church in doing their task in their assignment of maturing the body of Christ. Let me show you why. You see, some people think an apostle is the missionary, the one sent forth. I don't. I think the evangelist is.

An evangelist in the New Testament was the one who went out and brought the people who were lost to Christ. They were church planters. They were missionaries in every sense of the word, whether it was in the neighborhood or whether it was around the known world of that day. They would lead them to Christ, plant a church and then structure it so that they could be discipled and grow up in Jesus. Then they would move on to another church. They always stayed with the people they ministered to. It wasn't a hit and miss proposition. That is not the same thing that we think of evangelists today.

Every church needs these people. Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist. Philip was called an evangelist. Those are really the only two times we can see illustrations of evangelists in Scripture. An evangelist was one who went out with a burden to reach the lost. He brought them into the church, got them set up and moved on after a while when they were structured.

Then along comes the **pastor/teacher** to pick up where he left off. He takes them and grows them into their maturity in the faith. One of the problems we have so often is the people who are the gifted evangelists get on the people who are the gifted pastor/teachers and make them think they are not doing what God has called them to do. All of us are commanded to evangelize. I am not saying we're not. Every time I get on a plane, I say, "God, I will share with whoever is on this plane whatever you want me to share with them." Every time He gives me an opportunity to share with someone it is not an unsaved person. It is a believer who has not been helped to grow up in his faith. I start smiling the moment I hear it. I say, "God, you are exactly what you say you are."

Now you put an evangelist on that plane. He will never run into a discouraged Christian. He will run into a lost old deacon who thought he was a Christian, or a Sunday School teacher who never met Jesus. That person will sit right beside that evangelist. It will only take a second until he is leading him to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that person will come to know Christ.

Listen, we need to work hand in hand because once you have led a person to Christ, once you have got him to where he can begin to grow, then what are you going to do with him? I will tell you what an evangelist is going to do. He is going to turn him over to a pastor/teacher and take off looking for somebody else. That is the way God designed it.

Then we come to that gift that I am a little more familiar with in verse 11:

"and some *as* pastors and teachers."

Now, you say, "Why do you put pastor and teacher together?" Every one of these gifts has a definite article in front of it. When it comes to "pastor and teacher," there is only one article for both of them. That automatically hyphenates them and puts them together. You can't have one or the other. You have got to have both of them built in. A lot of people say, "Well, we have a great pastor at our church, but he can't preach a lick." Have you ever heard that? Friend, that person should have never been in the pulpit to start with. Just because he cares about the body does not mean he is gifted and qualified to grow the body up into maturity. People with that kind of gift should be working alongside somebody in that ministry, but not in the pulpit. Churches have fallen apart all over our country because the people in the pulpit don't have a gift of teaching the people and growing up and equipping the body. Now remember who cut the pie. God did.

So you have your evangelists, then you have your pastor/teachers. These are the Master's men. Instead of gifts bestowed upon men, we have got gifted men bestowed upon the church. Why? So that the church can begin to grow and come into the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is required to be equipped, so He gives the equippers to the church.

We also see the Master's plan. What are the evangelists and pastor/teachers doing? Look in verse 12:

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

I want to take that apart and just look at it. Every saint has a grace gift. Does that mean they are using it? Not necessarily. As a matter of fact, you know they are not. If they were why would He give these people so they would start using them? How are they going to learn to use it? God gave gifted men to help people be equipped so that their gift might begin to function and they can walk and live inside of that gift when it comes to ministry to the body of Christ. Every saint needs to understand and be equipped in using his gift. The word "equip" is the word *katartismos*. That is the word used in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

How do you equip somebody? A lot of people say, "To train people you need to have seminars and tell them the methods, etc." Now wait a minute. The word "equip" is always associated in the word of God with the word of God. You cannot be equipped apart from the word of God. Understand that. Look at II Timothy 3:16-17:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Guess what the word "adequate" and "equipped" is? It is the same basic word as *katartismos*. It is the same word that he uses over in Ephesians.

Well, now wait a minute! Paul says "equipped for every good work." The whole thing is that the body of Christ rise up and begin to work, out of the gifts that God has given, the deeds that God wants to do through them, the ministry out of the gifts that God has given. What comes first, the work or the word? The word. God has sent gifted men to the church in order to get people up under the Word of God and get them relating to Christ properly so that they can begin to exchange their lives. Then they begin to function in their gifts so that the whole body reaches to the stature of the fulness of Christ. That is what it is all about, folks. "Well, I don't think you have to do it that way." That is okay if you want to try another way, but that is the only thing I can find in Scripture. The only way we are equipped is when we are up under the authority of this book. We bow to it. Whatever it says we do. We are surrendered to the Spirit of God who lives within us. As a result of that, the Spirit begins to fill us with divine ability. He energizes our gifts and gives us the ministry we are looking for. Then the body of Christ can mature and rise up to the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Paul goes on to say in verse 12:

"to the building up of the body of Christ."

The word is *oikodome*. It means the literal building of a house. The house is built externally by evangelism. It is built internally by the pastor/teacher equipping the saints to mature and to walk in that relationship with Christ. So we see the house being built through gifted men given to the church to equip the body for the work of ministry.

Acts 20:32 says,

"I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

What builds up the church?

The word. What equips the church? The word of His grace. God has sent gifted men to the body of Christ to do just that. There is no ministry until people are up under the Word of God.

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Ephesians 4:12: PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT— Part 4

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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If you somehow disconnect the prayer of chapter 3:14-21 from what is going on in chapter 4, you have done a great disservice to this passage. Paul has prayed a prayer that is dynamite. It sums up what he said in chapters 1, 2 and 3 and sets up what he is saying in chapters 4, 5 and 6. The crux of the prayer, the very foundation of it is verse 16 and 17 of Chapter 3. Paul prays that they might be strengthened by the means of God's Spirit with power. The word "power" (*dunamis*) means divine ability for the works which are required: "to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

Now you say, "How do I do that? I want to get in on what God is up to. I don't want to be working for Him. I want God to work through me. How do I do that?" Verse 17 of his prayer says,

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

The word "dwell" means that He might be made to feel at home. How do I accommodate Jesus in my heart? By my faith. What does that mean? To put it in simple terms, by my willingness to obey His word and His will, by my surrender and submission to Him, I am accommodating Him in all the areas of my life. Thus, I begin to experience His power, His presence and His ability in me that I do not have apart from Him.

The Holy Spirit is the divine "Ligament"

When we do this, when all of us are walking in the Spirit, when we are strengthened with His power, we are in fact preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. Now what am I talking about? In 4:3 Paul says,

"being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

You see, the Holy Spirit is the divine ligament that holds you and me together. As I am filled with the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit, and as you are controlled by the Spirit, we are preserving the unity of the Spirit. It begins to be made manifest in the way we behave to each other. 4:2 says it begins to be manifest by what we believe. We are identified and defined by our doctrine.

Chapter 4:4-6 says we are also identified and defined in the way we are being built up as the dwelling of God. Each of us have different gifts. When we are filled with the Spirit of God, those gifts operate. They were given by the Spirit. Some of us have more gifts than others. Some of us have gifts that are clearly seen. Some of us have gifts that are behind the scenes. God is the one who cut the pie. None of us should ever want somebody else's gifts or feel bad about the gifts that we have. They are given according to His grace gift. Everything we have that God has given is worth dignity in our life. Therefore, whatever gift you have and whatever gifts I have, we ought to be grateful.

The key for every believer is submission, surrender to the Spirit

When these gifts properly function the body is being built up and we are preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. It is incredible to be so diverse and yet so one. That only happens when the Spirit of God is empowering us. The key for every believer is submission, surrender to the Spirit of God in every area of their life. Then the work of the ministry takes place. Then we tap into the divine ability God has given each one of us.

Let's make sure we are very clear what Paul is teaching in verse 12. There are three things about these gifted men God has given to the church. The apostles and prophets gave us our doctrine. The evangelists build it externally. The pastors-teachers carefully explain and teach that doctrine building the body up internally. First of all, let's look at their tasks. What is the task of these gifted men? Well, it says it very clearly in verse 12:

"for the equipping of the saints."

The assignment given to the gifted men is the equipping of the saints. What does it mean to equip the saints? The word "equip" there is the word that describes the completion of the process. It implies the process itself, but it describes the completion of a process, the process being fully preparing someone for a task of which he is assigned. In other words, they are assigned the task of fully preparing, developing and equipping saints for a task that God has assigned unto them. This is the assignment of the gifted men to the church.

As I was studying this, a thought came to my mind. How do you equip people who don't want to be equipped? Then it hit me. If you will stay inside the context of what Scripture says, it already answers the question. Go back to Ephesians 1:1. Paul already tells you the saints he is talking about. When you are to equip the saints, what kind of saints are there to be equipped?

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, [Now watch the last phrase] and *who* are faithful in Christ Jesus."

As soon as I asked the question, God gave me the answer: "You cannot equip people who don't want to be equipped, but you can equip the saints who are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, those who are seeking what He wants in their life." You know, it is like setting the table. I can't make my children eat, but we can definitely put the food out there. So what Paul is basically saying and what I am saying to you is, you cannot make people eat. You cannot make people grow. Only the people who are faithful will grow. Only the people who are faithful can be equipped by the proper teaching of God's Word.

Now, how are they to equip? We know their task is to equip. How are they to equip? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 has a powerful phrase right at the beginning of it, "all Scripture." That word "all" is a wonderful Greek word. It means "all."

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

What comes first, the word or the work? It is very obvious. Until a person is being equipped in the Word of God, he is not equipped. If you disconnect Ephesians 4:12 from the prayer in chapter 3, you have missed the point. When does the Spirit of God empower us with divine ability to minister to one another? When Jesus is made to feel at home in a person's life; when a person is profiting from having surrendered to God's Word; then the Word produces the work that is eternal.

Now what is their task? Their task is to equip the saints. That is why we try to get people in the Word. Until we get up under the authority of the Word of God, you can forget the task the church has, and you can forget the gifts ministering. You can have polished programs with polished results, but you do not have the good works that God can produce through a surrendered life. Equipping comes from the Word of God.

Why? Let's go to the second point, and I think you will understand the thrust of their task. What is their task? Equipping the saints. What is the thrust, the aim, of their task? Well, the aim is very clear. He says it in Ephesians 4:12:

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service."

That word "service" is better translated "ministry." You probably say to that, "Ministry! You mean to train those who have gone to seminary and are ministers?" No. That idea says the only ministers are the people who have been to school to learn how to minister. That is ridiculous. As a matter of fact, many people who have been to school don't qualify. What is a minister? A minister is any believer surrendered to Christ and empowered with divine ability. That ability enhances his gift and through that gift reaches out and serves and touches somebody else inside the body of Christ. A minister is a surrendered believer. What is a missionary? A surrendered believer. They are synonymous. Whether it is across the street or around the world.

Every person who is a believer and is surrendered has already been given a gift. Now that gift is operable. He ministers. He has a mission of reaching others for Christ. Isn't that incredible? God has given gifted men. It is one thing to have a gift. It is another thing to be in a position where God is letting you use it. There is a huge difference.

A lot of people go through a spiritual gifts class and say, "My gift is mercy. My gift is serving. My gift is [whatever]." Well, you may know what it is, but if you are not under the Word of God, if you are not profiting from it, if you are not surrendered to the Spirit of God, you have no ministry at all. What you are doing is going to burn at the judgment seat of Christ. It is only what God does in and through you as you cooperate with Him, surrendered to His Word, empowered by His divine ability that ministry can ever take place.

Now, why would He give gifted men to equip gifted believers for the work of the ministry? "I thought you had a church staff to do the work of the ministry." As a matter of fact, there is not any one individual who has enough gifts, enough time or enough energy to do all the work that is involved in ministering to the saints in the local and universal body of Christ. God says, "I've got them out there. They are everywhere. You do what I tell you to do. If they are seeking Me, and are faithful, then they will be equipped to do what they are called to do. You've got a good thing going when the people are being equipped for the work of the ministry."

I think one of the greatest pictures is Romans 12:1-8. (Click for exposition) It shows how you need to be equipped, it shows the attitude that comes from being equipped, then it shows the gifts that flow out of being equipped. Romans 12:1 says,

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice."

Friend, that is the attitude of worship: "God, it cost you everything to give to me what I have. I am giving everything back to you. I am presenting my body as a living sacrifice." Now when that happens, look out. You are about to become useable real quickly. You are not useable until you come to this attitude. Romans 12:1 goes on to say, "accepted to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship." When you start worshipping Him, look out. Ministry is about to take place.

There is presentation in Romans 12:1, and in verse 2 there is a renovation and a transformation. Watch.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

"You mean if I am not presented to God as a living sacrifice, if I am not in the Word letting it renew my mind, if I am not being transformed, I know nothing about the will of God?"

That is absolutely right. You cannot test it. You cannot know it until you are willing to submit and let it be what God wants it to be in your life. That is an incredible thought here. How many people are missing this? They are not surrendered, therefore, they are missing it. They have come up with a form, but they don't have any idea of what the ministry is all about.

In Romans 12:3 (Click for exposition) Paul speaks of what has happened to him.

"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think."

All of a sudden, you stop coveting somebody else's ministry and somebody else's gift and remember, "Hey, God cut the pie. If I got a small piece, it is alright with me. I'll take it." You don't become high-minded. All of a sudden, you no longer know how to run the church. All of a sudden, you no longer know how to administrate somebody else's gift. You just fit into the slot God has given to you and you begin to think of yourself like you ought to think. Verses 3-6 go on to say,

"but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly.*"

Then Paul mentions the gifts down through verse 8. Just look at that, and I won't get any further into it. You start off with

a presentation,
a renovation,
a transformation, and
an attitude of humility.

Suddenly you begin to realize that you are not the big shot anymore and you just simply fit in as a team player in the body of Christ. Then you begin to realize, "Hey, this is why I am different than him and he is different than me. We are gifted differently. We are different individuals." We begin to fit in to a ministry God begins to develop in our lives.

Now when you have gifted men equipping, and the body, who is gifted, responding and being equipped, you've got a good thing going. That is exactly what God designed it to be. The task of the gifted men is to equip the saints. What is the thrust of that task, the aim of that task? For the work of the ministry.

God has given gifted men to equip, but you can't equip somebody who doesn't want to be equipped. If you are not faithful, if you are not seeking what God wants in your life, if you have just chosen to be miserable, that is your choice. But if you have chosen to be that way, you are going to continue to be that way and it is going to get worse. At some point you are going to say, "Hey, wait a minute. Maybe God's will is good. Maybe it is acceptable. Maybe it is perfect. I would like to get in on it." Get on your knees. Surrender. Get under the Word, and God will enrich your life like you did not think was possible. That is the whole aim, the thrust of their task. The work of the ministry is not just something you do in serving somebody else. It is what God does in you. It brings all

your joy to you. This is what God does to thrill your life as you become a part of what you have been hoping somebody else would do.

In 1 Peter 5, Peter instructs the elders and says, "Listen, guys, don't do for the flock what the flock is designed to do." I can name real quickly pastors who have gone by the wayside because of churches who have said, "No, sir. You will not equip me. Bless me if you can." They have sat and soaked and run some poor guy flat into the ground. Why? Because they thought they were all paying him to do what they in fact were gifted to do. Folks, it is never going to happen until faithful saints begin to seek Him and want to get in on His will which is good and acceptable and perfect.

What is the test of their task? Look at the verse. What are they for? The equipping of the saints. For what? The work of the ministry. How do you know it is happening? He says,

"to the building up of the body of Christ."

The word "building up" means to build a house. I am beginning to understand what contractors go through. They have to put up with subcontractors and people who won't show up on time. How do you build a house when you are supposed to have the plumbing go in on Tuesday and the carpet go down on Thursday, but the carpet doesn't show up for three weeks and the plumber doesn't show up for two weeks? What are you going to do? The house just doesn't seem to get off the ground! Everybody has got to contribute at the right time and the right place. Then in a coordinated effort the house can be built. That is exactly what he is saying. You have got to have a building superintendent who tells them what to do and tells them where to put the stuff. You have got to have the people to do the job. If everybody is functioning in the place that God has given grace to function, then the house, the body of Christ, is built up.

Do you know how to tell when it is not working? When you come to any church and find a lot of people who sit and soak. They are all telling somebody else what they think needs to be done in that church. You've got one of two problems. Number one, the Word of God is not adequately taught or number two, you have got a lot of saints who are not faithful and who are not willing to get busy about dying to self and getting in touch with what God is up to. They are people who have lost their joy, friend. You have to go back to where you have lost it. Remember, if you are filled with the Spirit, you are also dominated with joy. It goes along with the package. If you are not surrendered to Christ, then there is obviously no joy in your life. You won't get it when I do what you are called to do. You will get it when you get in touch with doing what God has assigned you to do. The joy comes in serving Him. The joy comes in seeing His gift manifested in your life.

Well, when the Word of God is prospering and the people are profiting from it, then the saints of God are going to be ministering through the gifts they have. That is the picture Paul is drawing.

The gifted men are equipping,
the gifted body is ministering and
the whole body is being built up.

This is what the real church is supposed to be.