

Ephesians 4:11-16

Verse 11:

--**And He Himself**. . . brings us back to the glory of the One who is giving these gifts. **He Himself** is emphatic and necessary. It is not “the church” or “the denomination” or human “ordination” that gives these gifts. Only Jesus does. *There are too many ministries where man’s authority without Christ’s gift is okay but Christ’s gift without man’s authority is not. If Paul lived today, whole sections of the so-called church would not recognize his teaching, recognize him as a member, or permit him to baptize or serve communion!*

--Paul already made it clear that Jesus has given gifts **to each one** but now the focus is going to be on the gifts that He **gave some**.

--It is also important to recognize here that the emphasis of this passage is not on the relation of these gifts to official church offices (No “five-fold” offices) such as elders or deacons. The emphasis is on Christ’s gifts to the Body for the purpose of growth and maturity.

1) **Apostles**: There is quite a bit of debate here. There are those that say that there are no more apostles—no modern or continuing gift of apostleship. There was the twelve and Paul and then that was it. No one can meet the requirements given to replace Judas as laid out in **Acts 1:21-22** and no one has the present authority to write Scripture.

--I understand these concerns. I also understand the abuses they are working to protect us from. I just don’t see any Biblical authority to say those concerns negate the spiritual gift of apostleship. There is not a single verse in all of Scripture that clearly states that the spiritual gift of apostleship is no longer granted to the Church of Jesus Christ.

--In fact, this verse states the exact opposite. The way the Scriptures speak about apostles doesn’t guard apostleship the same way we tend to when we speak about it. Let me give a few reasons why I believe the gift of apostleship is still given to the church today (but not the weird abusive versions as false apostles are also still around!).

--First, the Scriptures clearly take for granted that the gift is continuing for the church.

***1 Corinthians 12:29: Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ***

Revelation 18:20: Rejoice over her (Babylon), O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!

--Here (**4:11**) the apostles are declared as gifts to the Church—from Christ ascended, not given on earth before Christ’s resurrection and ascension.

--Even Paul’s warning to the Corinthians about false apostles (**2 Cor. 11:13**) and Jesus’ commendation to the Ephesian church for rejecting false apostles (**Rev. 2:2**) actually assumes an apostolic continuance. Why not reject all apostles if the only legitimate apostles were the original twelve? Why would those warnings be written for the church of all ages if it only applied to the days of the original twelve?

--Second, the Bible clearly states that other men were apostles. There is no qualifying of the gift for fears of abuse despite the reality of abuses in those days! These are men who clearly didn't fulfill the qualifications laid down in **Acts 1:21-22** but are still named apostles: James (**1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19**); Barnabas (**Acts 14:14**); Apollos (**1 Cor. 4:6-9**); Timothy and Silas (**1 Thess. 1:1+2:6**); and possibly Epaphroditus (**Phil. 2:25**).

--Third, people fear that modern apostles would have to possess the authority to add to Scripture but not all of the Scriptures were written by the apostles. Luke, Mark, Jude, and possibly the writer of Hebrews were not apostles. Maybe they had prophetic gifts but they are clearly not apostles. Also, not all of the original apostles wrote Scripture. Most didn't.

--That doesn't mean that the original twelve were not unique. It is an abuse to claim "apostolic succession" in the sense that modern apostles are the same as the original twelve. The divine principles of **Rom. 12:6 & 1 Cor. 12:4-6** are still true of the apostolic gifts as well.

--Only the original twelve and Paul helped to lay the foundation of the Church and were directly commissioned by Christ to do so. Only they were eyewitnesses and live recipients of Jesus life and teachings. Only they were apostles appointed *before* Pentecost. Only the original twelve were promised thrones in **Mt. 19:28** and the heavenly foundation stone reward of **Rev. 21:14**. They were unique *as* apostles not just because they *were* apostles.

--In this manner, some differentiate between the "office" and the "gift" as in **Acts 1:20+25**. Judas' office was filled and the eleven in **Acts 1:26** are again the twelve in **Acts 6:2**. All this to say that it is clear that Jesus Christ Himself sent out the original twelve—plus Paul as a unique addition—to lay the foundation of the Church (**Eph. 2:20 + 3:5**). No other apostle could ever claim that place which was obvious to the first and second generation of apostles.

--All that to say, we don't have to toss the modern gift out to keep the original twelve unique. The Scriptures do not, so we must not.

--So what is the gift today? Modern apostles, "sent ones" or "messengers," are those who continue to build on the original foundation. They don't add anything to it. It is already laid. They simply continue the work that Christ began through the power of His Spirit.

*Morgan (The Ministry of the Word): *"In the simplest sense of the word then, an Apostle is one who is rigorously set apart, in order to go on an embassy on behalf of the One who separates him."**

--In this manner, the Holy Spirit still gifts some with an apostolic gift of ministry when God knows a man is needed to be His messenger to build or rebuild on the foundation the original apostles laid. *Augustine, Luther, Count Zinzendorf, Whitefield, Wesley, William Carey, Chuck Smith, etc.*

2) **Prophets**: There is still debate here but a little less than with apostles. Most agree that there is still a modern prophetic gift given to the church. We see both men and women mentioned as prophets or prophetesses in the OT and NT (**Lk. 2:36; Acts 21:9+10**). *How* that gift operates is where most of the division comes to play.

--The gift of prophecy relates to three specific things in Scripture:

- 1) The understanding of mysteries and knowledge (**1 Cor. 13:2+9**).
- 2) The expression of truth that edifies, exhorts, and comforts (**1 Cor. 14:3**).
- 3) The declaration of the testimony of Jesus Christ (**Rev. 19:10**).

--Like all other spiritual gifts, prophecy is given in different measures, to different people, and is expressed in different ways. *Just think how different all the OT prophets were!*

Romans 12:6: Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.

--Biblical prophecy relates to insight as well as foresight. Present truth as well as future truth.

*Morgan (The Ministry of the Word): *"The Prophet is one who makes Truth known to men in such a way that it arrests the attention. He is one through whose ministry the Truth shines forth upon men, so that they find themselves in its light. . . In prophetic ministry we find therefore what we may describe, for lack of a better term, as the tenses of Truth. It deals with the past, as it makes history the vehicle through which eternal principles have been revealed. It deals with the present, as it measures the things of today by eternal standards. It deals with the future, as it declares things to come, in order that the unveilings may produce an immediate effect upon the conceptions and conduct of men."**

--The Holy Spirit has gifted the church with a prophetic gift in individuals such as: Athanasius (testimony of Jesus Christ); J.N. Darby (mysteries and knowledge); Tozer/Fenelon (insight); etc. as well as many others on smaller and personal levels.

3) **Evangelists:** Surprisingly, the Greek word for evangelists is used much less than apostles or prophets or pastors! In fact, it is only used two other times in the Scripture. Once in **Acts 21:8** speaking of **Philip the evangelist**, and once more in **2 Timothy 4:5** where Paul exhorts Timothy to **do the work of an evangelist**.

--The word simply means *a bringer of good tidings*. In this context, the message is the good tidings of the Gospel. So the evangelist comes with a joyful heart, filled with the joyful message of the cross—what God has done in giving His Son for lost and broken sinners. *Don't get caught up in lesser issues (Think Jesus with the woman at the well).*

--The Evangelist gathers the sheep. The Pastor feeds and tends the sheep. The Evangelist declares what God has done for us. The Pastor teaches what God strengthens us to do for Him. The Evangelist weeps at the thought of his listeners suffering in hell. The Pastor weeps at the thought of his listeners rewarded in heaven. The Evangelist points to where new life can be found. The Pastor points to what new life should mature into. The Evangelist declares Christ crucified and sin redeemed. The Pastor declares Christ risen and a kingdom coming.

4) **Pastor-Teacher:** You will notice that the repeated word **some** is not placed between **pastors** and **teachers** making them the same thing in the language.

--God has no intention of giving men a heart to pastor without the ability to feed. Though either gift can be more evident in one man or another, both must be present as Paul makes clear in **1 Tim. 3:2: a bishop must then be. . . able to teach** (See also **Titus 1:9** refute bad doctrine).

--A pastor-teacher is a pastor-teacher. Biblically speaking, there is no spiritual gift of an executive, worship, youth, or family pastor. It's fine to have a focus, but the truth is that there is only one gift of pastor-teacher (opposites are a hireling, wolf, false teacher).

--To be a pastor-teacher is to have received a gift from the risen Christ. We cannot make one or simply choose to be one. *Nor should we call or ordain someone as one who is not gifted to be so!*

1 Timothy 5:22: Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

*Spurgeon (Lectures to My Students)—2 Quotes:

1) "When our Lord ascended on high he gave gifts unto men, and it is noteworthy that these gifts were men set apart for various works: 'He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers' (Ephesians 4:11); from which it is evident that certain individuals are, as the result of the Lord's ascension, bestowed upon the churches as pastors; they are given of God, and consequently not self-elevated to their position."

2) "Certain of our charitable neighbors accuse us of having 'a parson manufactory' here, but the charge is not true at all. We never tried to make a minister, and should fail if we did; we receive none into the College but those who profess to be ministers already. It would be nearer the truth if they called me a parson killer, for a goodly number of beginners have received their quietus from me; and I have the fullest ease of conscience in reflecting upon what I have so done."*

--Pastoring gives the idea of shepherding. *Think of how we have been shepherded in the past 40 years! Pastor Joe isn't the only guy, but he is our guy.*

--The teaching part relates to God and the things of God. *Think of what you would know of God if you spent your life under someone's teaching.*

Verse 12:

--Here we see Paul's aim in mentioning these specific gifts. They have a unique way of helping to equip saints for the work of the ministry—or service to and for God. Equipped saints, in turn, make for a healthy body—which is made up of individual, mature, godly men and women outfitted for what God has for them to do.

--The word for **equipping** in the Greek is *katartismos* which could also be translated: *complete furnishing* or *perfecting*. The word is used only here in the NT. So the apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher help to "equip" those they minister to, to begin serving God themselves.

--**For the work of the ministry:** Work is work. Employment. Labor. Doing something in relation to the whole! Every part of the body has a role.

--**For the edifying of the body of Christ:** The word for **edifying** has the idea of *building up* and is a regular exhortation from Paul (**Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:3-5; 26; 2 Cor. 10:8; 12:19; Eph. 4:29**).

Acts 9:31: Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

1 Corinthians 14:12: Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

2 Corinthians 13:10: Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

Verse 13:

--**Till we all.** . . There are no spectators or non-participants in the Church! Spiritual gifts used in the proper way don't divide but put us into right relationship with one another.

--Till we all come where?

1) To **the unity of the faith**—the full experience of all our faith is.

2) To **the knowledge of the Son of God**—the full experience of right thoughts about Christ.

3) To **a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**—The language here is a bit strange but has the idea of *coming of age* or *reaching full maturity*. I believe, the fullness of Christ that Paul has in mind is the whole Body of Christ truly being and doing all that Christ Himself would do in us—individually and collectively. ***Heavenly harmony!***

--That is what a healthy Body of Christ is always working toward. That is what **we all** will ultimately come to one day—the Body of Christ complete! What unity and glory we will share in Him! What else will really matter in that day?

--But what if that is not our future? What if Christ's Body is complete without you? What fear and horror is left to those outside of Him! Accept His offer of salvation today!

Verses 14-16:

--**(14)** This is our fate if we are not being equipped and edified as the Body of Christ. Sin and immaturity come with ill spiritual health—people are of weak spiritual constitution—and then so easily believe deceitful lies contrary to the truth of God and their own wellbeing. ***Even the world understands why children cannot vote or drive.***

--This has been a battle in every church age! Even the early church needed these exhortations.

Hebrews 13:9: Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

--There are so many winds of bad doctrine. Notice Paul's stacking of terms to express this storm of lies: **trickery, cunning craftiness, deceitful plotting**. All these lies start with some pressure on the truth of the Bible from outside of the Bible: Politics; Psychology; Experience; Science; etc. But how does it work?

-Science tells us through evolution the Bible is wrong about creation. What now—Alien's brought life?

-Science tells us that a baby is just a fetus. What now—We don't care what science tells us about life abortion is really about a woman's choice.

-Science tells us there is a "gay gene". What now—We don't care about genetics because you don't understand the psychology, or worse, God made us that way.

-Science tells us we must drug, cut, and physically alter those with gender issues to save them. What now—We don't care what science says about men and women (Cass Report) because gender doesn't have anything to do with your biology. *A woman who receives a hysterectomy because of cancer or health issues does not turn into a man.*

--You see, Satan will use "science" to attack God's truth and then dump "science" the moment it doesn't work to trick, or con, or deceive. Beware of anyone challenging clear Biblical truth with science, psychology, "scholarship," experience, tradition, etc.

--Believe your Bible over all the lies of the world!

--**(15)** Here, Paul gives us another path. Speak the truth in love and grow up into Him.

--One of the main things that immaturity does is surrender either truth or love to lies—maturity holds both at all times. True Christianity—the unity found in the Spirit—never has to choose between the two. *Modern pressure to not speak the truth to "sexual minorities" because it will cause them "harm" or literally "kill them." Same with the shame attached to the message of the cross.*

--If some new wind of doctrine or thought is pushing me away from Christ, or His body, it obviously isn't from Him. I need to stay connected to **the head—Christ**.

Colossians 2:19: And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

--**(16)** I also need to stay connected to His body—the church.

--I want to be a healthy and supplying ligament.

--Those living in error are like a piece of the body that is out of joint. It will often require a firm wrench and a hearty groan to pop them back into place—but it will feel so much better for everyone when they do!