

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes January 9, 2008

Ephesians 4:7-16 (Continued)

4: *There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call,
5: one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6: one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

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

8: *Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men."*

9: *(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that
he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?*

10: *He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens,
that he might fill all things.)*

**11: And his gifts were that some should be apostles,
some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,**

**12: to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ,**

13: *until we all attain to the unity
of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
to mature manhood,
to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;*

14: *so that we may no longer be children,
tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,
by the cunning of men,
by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.*

15: *Rather, speaking the truth in love,
we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

16: *from whom the whole body,
joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied,
when each part is working properly,
makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.*

Introduction: When we proclaim our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed, formulated by the bishops gathered at the Council of Nicea in AD 325, we confess that we believe in the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church. In the passage we're studying today, St. Paul proclaims that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given for building up the body of Christ, which St. Paul identifies as the Church. When we look around us today, however, at adjacent street corners in almost any city, in the pages of listings in any phone book, and in the news when we hear of Christians acting anyway but holy or united, what has gone wrong? There are lots of answers to this, but we'll discuss a few of them today on Deep in Scripture.

Discussion:

- Website, phone nos, book special:
- Today's passage really brings home the significance of being Deep in Scripture: we must be aware of how blind we might be to what we are bringing to the table...
- REVIEW: In Ephesians 1-3, St. Paul explains the three changes that happen in our lives by grace

once we have heard, believed, and then been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism:

- Through baptism believers are changed by grace in three ways: “up, beside, and within”...
- These changes have already happened, whether they are felt or not, BUT this is only the beginning! Though these changes are given freely by grace, the baptized must now live in them, also by grace.
- Through Baptism, we are not merely united to Jesus as individuals, saved by grace through faith, but we become united as members of the one body of Christ, the Church:

*1:22-23, “...and he has put all things under his feet and has **made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.**”*

*2:19-22, “So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**”*

*3: 9-10, “...and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.**”*

*4: 1-6, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to **lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.**”*

- In verses 7-16, St. Paul explains how this unity depends upon grace filled, gifted diversity: not in what Christians are to believe, but in how they are to serve within and for the Church.

What does St. Paul state about this important diversity of callings within unity?

(1) Each baptised believer is given a grace gift: (vs. 7a)

“But grace was given to each of us ...”

(2) This gift of grace is given freely from Christ according to His will: (vs 7b-10)

- Not because we deserve it or have earned it or inherited it or according to our abilities;
 - But rather “**...according to the measure of Christ’s gift.**”

(3) Some are given these gifts for the purpose of leadership (11):

*11: And his gifts were that some should be apostles,
some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,*

(4) These leaders were called for a purpose (12a):

12: to equip the saints for the work of ministry,

- Two exaggerated misapplications of this:
 - **Clericalism:** “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ... for the work of ministry.”
 - **Anti-clericalism:** “And his gifts were [for] the saints for the work of ministry.”

(5) What is the goal of this diversity of gifts?

- Here is where our presuppositions can skew our interpretation of Scripture:
 - Far too often Christians think of their callings in individualistic terms...
 - Therefore, “these gifts & grace & even the Church are for my salvation.”
 - But this is NOT St. Pauls’ emphasis!

○ **The goal of this diversity of gifts is growth, maturity, and unity (12b-13):**

12b: *for building up the body of Christ,*

13: *until we all attain to the unity of the faith*

and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

to mature manhood,

to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;

- Notice first: NOT for building us each up individually, but “building up the body of Christ”?

- *Eph 2:14-16,*

*“For he is our peace, who **has made us both one**, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, **that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.**”*

- **What is meant by “building up:?”** *This is exounded in the next verses, but essentially it means carrying out the “Great Commission” of Matthew 28:*

*“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.**”*

- “until we **all** attain to the unity...”

(Note that the goal is not individual salvation but corporate unity)

- “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God”

(Earlier he said there is only one faith, one baptism: what’s the problem?

- *ignorance, imaturity, pride, disobedience, schism.)*

- “to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;”

- *What does he mean here, practically?*

- 1 John 2:28-3:3 (possibly written to same group of Christians years later!)

*“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that every one who does right is born of him. **See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.** The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”*

- *Misinterpretation of this passage has led to heresies...*

- *But what does this mean? That we will no longer be “children”? YES! We will always be “children of God”*

(tho we can lose our inheritance: Rom 8:17)

but we are grow from childhood into “mature manhood.”

- *From babes in the faith to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” which involves abiding in Him ... purifying oneself as He is pure.*

- Many Christians miss this because they are focusing on salvation & minimalism...

(6) This is necessary to avoid confusion and schism (vs. 14):

14: *so that we may no longer be children,
 tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,
 by the cunning of men,
 by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.*

- *In other words, we are not to remain immature babes in the faith, jumping from one inspiring opinion to the next, yet concerned primarily about whether we ourselves have “done enough” to be saved.*
- *Sola scriptura, clericalism, and anti-clericalism have all led to this kind of confusion and schism.*

(7) These gifts are to lead us to true unity with Jesus Christ (15b-16):

15b. *Rather ...we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*
16: *from whom the whole body,
 joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied,
 when each part is working properly,
 makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.*

- Essentially, another way of saying vs. 13, using the imagery of the body (cf 1 Cor 12);
- Note: emphasis is not on individual growth but corporate growth...
- Important: “*when each part is working properly*”

(8) This requires working together in charitable honesty (vs 15a):

15a: *Rather, speaking the truth in love,...*

- *Living out the Sermon on the Mount & the Great Commandment, not for ourselves but for the good of the Church: for others!*
- The parable of the sheep & the goats, Matthew 25:31-46:
“And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’”
- 1 Jn 2: 7-11
“Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”
- *Note the similarity to what St. Paul will say later in Ephesians 5: 7,
“Therefore do not associate with them, for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ...”*