

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes November 28, 2007

Ephesians 4:7-14

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:

- In Ephesians 4, St. Paul describes the unity that we have by grace, "one body, one Spirit, ... one hope..., one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all." This is a unity that indeed exists in His Church, yet we don't have to look very far to see that today Christians are far from united. What is wrong? And is this possibly why, as St. Paul begins to describe how baptized believers must actively live out this unity, that he immediately takes off in a different direction. He states, "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift ... for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith..." This is part of what we will discuss today on Deep In Scripture.

Discussion: Welcome....website ... Phone numbers ... special: "The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People" (Christifideles Laici), An apostolic Exhortation by Pope John Paul II

REVIEW:

We're essentially half way through our discussion of Ephesians.

- As we discussed previously, in chapters 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.
- In Chapters 4-6, St. Paul gives instructions on how the newly baptized are now to live.
- I discovered something interesting, at least to me, this morning during my preparation. Seventeen years ago, when I was a Presbyterian minister, senior pastor of a 800-member church, I was preaching a long series of sermons through Ephesians.
 - I divided Ephesians up in essentially the same way, as all commentators do, however, I described this division slightly different than I do now:
 - Ch 1-3 describe DOCTRINE, what we believe to be true about ourselves as Christians and about the Church (and what I meant by “the Church” was our local congregation);
 - Ch 4-6 describe PRAXIS, what we THEREFORE must do in response (i.e, “It’s not as strange for us to believe these outlandish things ... as it is for us to believe them without our lives changing accordingly.”)
 - What I missed was that chapters 1-3 do not merely describe what we *believe* to be true, but what is *actually* true—what has changed—as result of our sacramental baptism.
 - As a Protestant I did not believe that baptism actually accomplished anything; I believed that it was only a sign or outward expression of our commitment of faith.
 - I placed my emphasis on Eph 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God,” and essentially only part of Eph. 1:13, “In him you also, who heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him...;”
 - I essentially ignored the significance of what St. Paul surely meant by the rest of verse 1:13, that these believers were then “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”
 - Too often verses like John 3:3 (“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”) or even 2 Cor 5:17 (“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”) are taken out of their immediate context and out of the context of the wider NT.
 - Being “born anew” and being “in Christ,” both in context, are the results of, as St. Paul says in Eph 1:13, having heard, believed, and been sealed with the Holy Spirit, which means baptism.
 - In Gal 3: 26-28, St. Paul emphasizes this: “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek...”
 - St. Peter emphasized this in his first letter:
 - 1: 3-4, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! **By his great mercy we have been born anew** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...*” (note how similar to Eph 1:13-14!).
 - 3:18-22, “*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. **Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.***”

- Baptism does not magically save us... but rather baptism is the normative means given by God, through His Church, by which we receive the graces to be born anew, from above, by water and the Spirit, by which we are saved.
- As St. Peter responded to his first potential converts, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
- So back to our text, the entire book of Ephesians is about the graces we receive from God through His Church and specifically through having heard, believed, and then been sealed in baptism;
 - Ch 1-3 describe what is true about us / what has changed in us by grace through baptism;
 - Ch 4-6, how we must now live this out in unity, by this grace we have received.
- This second half of Ephesians begins with a term of transition: "Therefore."
 - In other words, given what comes before (ch 1-3), we are now (4:1-3) *"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."*
 - Once St. Paul mentions their / our need to eagerly "maintain the unity of the Spirit," he goes on to enumerate in detail the key aspects of this unity (4:4-6): *"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 discusses how this unity will be maintained, but he does this by beginning in a strange way: with yet another important transitional word: "But."

- The Greek term, "de," which means "but, to the contrary, rather."
- In other words, having just emphasized the importance of unity, he now sees the need to make a contrary or alternate emphasis. Why?
- He states in 4:7, **"But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."**
 - Why does he need to make this clarification?
 - Actually he makes this same clarification elsewhere (1 Cor 12 and Rom 12:4-8) as did St. Peter in his first letter (4:10-11). What problem(s) is Sts. Paul and Peter fighting against? Two:
 - That unity means uniformity or conformity; and
 - That ministry is for the privileged few: clericalism!
 - These have always been problems amongst both Jews and pagan Gentiles...
 - Jesus addressed this:
Mt 20:25 "But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them."
 - Mt 23:2-5, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men..." (And even his disciples yearned for this position!)*
- What is St. Paul saying in verses 7-16 and following, as well as elsewhere?
 - That unity does mean uniformity or conformity, but includes diversity.
 - Not diversity in faith, hope, and love (cf., 4:14)
Phil 2:1-2, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."
 - But, each person in the Body of Christ is unique and is a uniquely important part of the Body.

What does St. Paul state about this important diversity within unity? (actually the rest of Ephesians):

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

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

- *He makes this same emphasis in his other letters:*
 - 1 Cor 12: 4-7, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
 - Rom 12:4-6, "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them..."
- Usually we think of grace in terms of the divine help we are given that saves us, as in Eph 2:8, in relation to our eternal destiny. But here, as elsewhere, this grace is a gift for now, for changing us now.
 - In Eph 3:7-10, St. Paul describes his own experience of this: *"Of this gospel I was made a minister according to **the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power.** To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..."*

- This gift or gifts are received in baptism and confirmation: (Catechism)

1288 *"From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church."*⁹⁹

1289 *Very early, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (chrism) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian," which means "anointed" and derives from that of Christ himself whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit."*¹⁰⁰ *This rite of anointing has continued ever since, in both East and West. For this reason the Eastern Churches call this sacrament Chrismation, anointing with chrism, or myron which means "chrism." In the West, the term Confirmation suggests that this sacrament both confirms and strengthens baptismal grace.*

1830 *The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.*

1831 *The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David.*¹⁰⁹ *They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.*

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

- 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."*
 - Rom 12:6, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us..."
 - Jesus' "Parable of the Talents" ...
- Verses 8-10 are essentially a side track: Why did St. Paul add this?
 - *"Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)*
 - Possibly because there had been discussion / debate on the meaning of this old testament text in relationship to Christ's descension, resurrection & ascension.
 - A quote from Psalm 68: Who would they know this? Liturgy!

- Not proof texting, but referencing an entire Psalm which describes the journey of Israel from Egypt to Jerusalem and the Temple by God's mercy; this is now a type of the new Israel, the Church, and their journey of faith. (read Ps 68:1-20)
 - Note: St. Paul's quote is very different than how it is stated in Psalm 68! Why?
 - Because he was quoting from the Septuagint Greek Version of OT!
- (Below: first quote from Ephesians 4:7-8; 2nd from Psalm 67:19 [LXX])

7 Ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ὡς ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον
τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. 8 διὸ λέγει·
ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν,
τῷ ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

19 ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος, ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν,
ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ,
καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνώσαι.
κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός,

Reflection:

- Far too many Christians do not realize or believe that they have anything to give or do in the Body of Christ. They go to Church on Sundays and then too often little else, rather than recognize that every single baptized believer has received an essential gift, given to them freely and apportioned according to the will of Christ, for the good of the Body.
- Or they think that work in the Body of Christ means only work in the church, rather than see all of life as the arena for serving the Body.

Next week

- (3) Some are given these gifts for the purpose of equipping others: (vs 11)
- (4) These gifts are given to equip baptised believers for the work of ministry: (vs 12)
- (5) The goal of this diversity of gifts is unity: (vs 13-14)