

## Ephesians 4:1-16

**Ephesians 3:14-21 NKJV** For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) that He would grant you, according to the *riches of His glory*, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, (17) that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— (19) to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (20) Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (21) to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

This prayer, while not using the word, is all about GRACE. That God would grant us anything is grace; That any of this prayer come true, is dependent upon Grace. Not on how hard we work or by what we believe we deserve, but by Grace.

We have all been taught that grace is undeserved favor from God. While mercy is **not** getting what we DO deserve, grace goes one step further: we get what we don't deserve!

Now, most of us think of Grace as having to do with salvation. True. And very true! Without grace no person would be saved. But grace is so much more!

Please listen to the words of Francois Fenelon who lived the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. I've taken the liberty of editing a couple of passages to make them more readable to the non-KJV mind.

But alas! O my God! what a consolation is it to know that everything within as well as without me, is the work of *your* hand! *You are* ever with me. When I do wrong, *You* are within me, reproaching me with the evil which I do, raising within me regrets for the good which I abandon, **and opening to me *Your* arms of mercy**. When I do good, *You inspired* the desire, and *performed* it in me and with me; it is *You* who *loves* good and *hates* evil in my heart, who *suffers* and *prays*, who *does* good to the neighbor and *gives* alms: I do all these things but by *Your* means; *You cause* me to do them; it is *You* who *puts* them in me. These good works, which are *Your* gifts, become my works; but they do not cease to be *Your* gifts; and they cease to be good works if I look at them for a moment as emanating from myself, or if I forget that they are good only because they come from *You*.

O merciful Father! let me no longer reason about grace, but silently abandon myself to its operation. Grace performs everything in us, but does it with and through us; it is by it, therefore, that I act, that I forbear, that I suffer, that I wait, that I resist, that I believe, that I hope, and that I love, all in co-operation with grace. Following its guidance, it will do all things in me, and I shall do all things through it; it moves the heart, but the heart must move; there is no salvation without man's action. I must work, then, without losing a moment, that I may put no hinderance in the way of that *grace* which is incessantly working within me. All the good is of grace, all the evil is of self; when I do right, it is grace that does it; when I do wrong, it is

because I resist grace. I pray God that I may not seek to know more than this; all else will but serve to nourish a presumptuous curiosity. O my God! keep me ever in the number of those babes to whom *You reveal Your* mysteries, while *You conceal* them from the wise and prudent!

Grace causes a response when we truly understand His goodness and kindness towards us!

Here begins Paul take on that response.

**(Ephesians 4:1 NKJV)** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**, (2) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, (3) endeavoring to **keep** the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We've been called by grace, let us live by grace – and not just grace for us! No, Paul wants us to extend grace to others!

I want to look at some of the words Paul chose because they have a rich meaning.

**Lowliness:** humility implying that we are content even when we are not in control or when someone else (God) is doing the steering. Funny how if we're on a ship with 2-3 thousand people, we're ok with one guy driving the boat. But, sit in the passenger seat of a car, and suddenly, we cannot sit contently by when another is steering.

**Worthy** = appropriately (when in Rome...when a Christian...)

**Bearing** = put up with

**Endeavoring** = make an effort; diligence; coupled with the idea of 'speed'; do it quickly and diligently;

**Keep** = means to guard diligently; to keep a watchful eye on.

The goal is unity! It is a work of the Spirit not of our own creation, we are to “keep” it, “guard” it and “hold fast” to it! This is not the unity we speak of as abiding in Christ or the Spirit of Christ. **This is the unity is between believers.** The “bond” of peace is what's needed to keep things together, much like a ligament will keep bones or joints tied together. And truly the bonding agent is love.

What's amazing to me is how fragmented the “church” is. We are united together under one Head, Jesus our LORD, God and King.

**This must have been on Paul's mind when he wrote:**

**(Ephesians 4:4 NKJV)** *There is* **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called in **one** hope of your calling; (5) **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; (6) **one** God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

Believers are united in Christ: Look at this another way:

1. Our salvation has no degrees in it. It's the **same for all** who come to Christ.
2. His Love is the **same for all**
3. His covenant is with all and was bought **for all** with the same price: His perfect blood to all who believe.
4. Our justification is the **same for all** as well as our forgiveness.
5. We are all heirs of the **same** promises in heaven because we are all sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise

6. We are heirs because we all have equal standing as children of God.

**And our One God, who is far above all He created, works through us all and is in us all. Do not neglect this great truth! He is in us and therefore nothing is hidden, no thought, no act; this isn't just the fleshly stuff we think or do, but all those good things we do because of the **grace** within us!**

(Ephesians 4:7 NKJV) **But** to each one of us **grace** was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Grace is given to fulfill the working of the gift(s) given. Sometimes I think of grace as the godly power to obey. Sometimes I think of grace as an open door thru which He wants me to walk. His favor isn't just an attitude He possesses but perhaps best thought of as His will towards us!

Grace cannot be plumbed because our sin nature. We can't seem to allow ourselves to accept anything good from God because we're so undeserving – this has been programmed into us since we were born. We operate on works and rewards or works and punishment. And that's easily understood. **But God** works from an entirely different perspective... With God, it's not a matter of doing but a matter of being. Being what? One who believes His Son and has declared Him as savior.

Verse 7 sounded familiar so I went to 1 Corinthians 12 to refresh my memory:

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. (6) And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. (7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: (8) for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (11) **But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**

(Ephesians 4:8 NKJV) Therefore He says: "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, **AND GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.**" (9) (Now this, "HE ASCENDED"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

(Psalms 68:18 NKJV)

This mysterious verse seems difficult to understand. I could find no real satisfactory explanation for it. But, in the context of verse 7 and then verse 11, I think Paul is trying to say, "our LORD Jesus ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of God. From this position, He is now able to fill to overflowing each member of His Body with spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit; This "being able" implies that He has the authority and the power and the wisdom and knowledge to do all this and exceedingly abundantly more than we can imagine – **AND** to do it perfectly and completely **for us**, the Body of Messiah.

(Ephesians 4:11 NKJV) And He Himself **gave** some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,  
(Ephesians 4:12 NKJV) for the equipping of the saints **for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:13 NKJV) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;**

### First, the who:

**Some apostles** – commissioner of Christ (dictionary also adds “with miraculous powers”); most see this as one who had direct experience with Jesus but given the context, that can’t be the case. “Sent one” is often used to define an apostle. Also, an apostle is one to whom much authority has been given.

**some prophets** – can be related to fore-telling but is often one who speaks for God, using His words. Prophets can edify and deliver hard messages from God to the church. But always in love!

**some evangelists** - are those gifted with boldness to proclaim the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Paul was certainly an evangelist! While we are all called to be a living witness for Him, an evangelist takes this to a whole new level!

**some pastors and teachers** – those gifted to teach the Word and to shepherd the local church.

### Next, the why:

For equipping the saints for the work of ministry AND for the edifying of the body of Christ! The word “equipping” in the Greek means “complete furnishing” and “perfecting”. Remember, edifying means to “build up”.

### Finally, the Goal:

That’s the means, the end is 4-fold:

1. **all come to the unity of the faith**
2. **to the FULL knowledge of the Son of God**
3. **to a complete person**
4. **to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that is, to maturity in our Christian walks**

For the Body of Christ, I’m not convinced that this unity, faith, knowledge and perfection will be achieved on this side of heaven – however, verse 13 says “**we continue until** we reach our goal”. That means we all work together until we are taken home or raptured. However, I wouldn’t just sit around until the rapture...I can guarantee that this would not please God!

(Ephesians 4:14 NKJV) that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the **trickery** of men, in the **cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,** (Ephesians 4:15 NKJV) but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things **into Him** who is the head—Christ—(Ephesians 4:16 NKJV) from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes

growth of the body for **the edifying of itself in love.**

Paul continues with his previous thoughts on Christian maturity by giving a negative example: acting childish, that is, immature. How does he describe this immaturity?

Tossed to and fro and carried about by every new fad of doctrine; having a unsettled mind, perhaps like James said, being double-minded and undiscerning of the truth. This can happen by men (or women) who “throw loaded dice”, that is, heresies and the like knowing them to be false but don’t care as long as you join them. They will deceive you without blinking an eye (remember the Serpent, who’s **cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting caused Eve to sin?**). They may be sincere, but they are also be sincerely wrong! (throwing loaded dice comes from the ideas behind the Greek word “trickery”).

ALL the above (verses 11-13) are really directed at those **responsible for the Body**. That’s why he shifts slightly back a bit from the body to the leaders who are to speak truth in love so that you will grow up into Christ in all aspects of Christian living because He is the Head and we are to yield to Him and those who prove their trust as His under-shepherds.

Much responsibility is laid upon church leadership. The Apostle James said:

**James 3:1** My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

For tonight, I want you to see that the Christian life isn’t easy! But, then again, it can be made easier through grace extended to us. We can’t work for it; we can only recognize that all good things are from Him. That doesn’t mean you can pray for it, but we must all accept His will in all matters under the sun.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8** To everything *there is* a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:  
(2) A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck *what is* planted;  
(3) A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; (4) A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; (5) A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;  
(6) A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; (7) A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; (8) A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.

We don’t always like God’s will; Life can be messy; life can be hard. Life is not always fair (actually, it seldom is). But there’s something to be learned in everything, good or bad. And sometimes, the lesson isn’t just for us, but for those around us who can’t understand how we can praise and worship God who is in control. I too am learning that there is comfort and assurance in that declaration of Him being in control – for I pondered the opposite and it scared me to death. And, truth be told, most unbelievers are scared stiff! I know this because of what they chase after; it never satisfies; it never loves; Only Jesus can satisfy and truly love!

## PSALM 148