

Ephesians 4:1-11

Ephesians 4:1-11 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) endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) 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. (7) But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (8) 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.) (11) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Questions On The Text

What did Paul encourage the Ephesians to do?

Verse 1: He encouraged (a better translation of "beseech") them to walk worthy of God's calling on their lives.

How is walking worthy of the calling described?

Verses 2-3: The apostle uses a list of words and phrases to describe a worthy walk. Here they are: Lowliness, which is humility. Gentleness includes the idea of mildness, restraint, and self-sacrifice. Longsuffering or patience, is literally "long-temper", the opposite of a person who is quick to anger.

To bear with others is said to be motivated by love. We are to try to keep the unity of the Spirit. This is done by making peace the identifying characteristic of our relationships.

What is the basis of Christian unity?

Verses 4-6: Christian unity is based on the oneness characterising every aspect of our faith. The body is the body of Christ, the church (see Ephesians 1:22-23), which having many expressions is still one body. There is only one Holy Spirit. Our one hope is the hope that we will be glorified (see Colossians 1:27; Romans 8:30).

The one Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ. The one faith is our faith in what Christ has done on the cross to redeem us. The one baptism is our baptism into the body of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and symbolised by water baptism. (See 1 Corinthians 12:13.) And finally, although God is a Trinity, He is one God and Father, supreme over all.

How was grace given to us?

Verse 7: In the context, as in Ephesians 3:7-8, the grace referred to here is not saving grace, but the ability to serve God in a distinctive capacity according to God's call on our lives. This grace ability is a gift from Christ Himself and measured out by Him.

What did Jesus do at His ascension?

Verse 8: When Jesus ascended into heaven, He led captivity captive. This is a reference to an ancient custom where the victor in a battle leads a procession with his captives trailing behind for all to see. Christ did this when He disarmed the demonic spiritual rulers and authorities through the cross. (See Colossians 2:15.) In addition to that, Christ has given us gifts by which we may serve Him.

What was the purpose of Christ's ascension?

Verses 9-10: Paul points out that since Christ ascended into heaven, that implies that He first descended to earth. The phrase "lower parts of the earth" can be translated in a variety of ways, but there are two possibilities that make good sense.

First, that it is the equivalent of "the lower parts which are the earth." In this way, Paul contrasts the highness of heaven, from where Christ originally descended, with the lowness of earth. Second, it could refer to the humiliation of Christ's death. However, the point of these two verses is to say that the purpose of Christ's ascension was so that He might fill all things.

What gifts did Christ give to the church?

Verse 11: Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the church. Some things should be noted. First, that these are not the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring or teaching. The gifts referred to here are not abilities but people that Christ gave to the church for a specific purpose.

Second, the words "to be" are not in the original Greek. The Greek does not say that God gave some to be apostles. It says that He gave some apostles – there is a difference. Third, the word "pastors" is literally "shepherds" and that's how it is translated everywhere else in the New Testament.

Fourth, it is not clear in the Greek whether pastors and teachers refer to one person or two, but experience would tell us that, while it could be one and the same person, it is often two separate callings. These persons, given to the church by Christ, are sometimes referred to as Ascension Ministry Gifts or the Five-Fold Ministry Gifts.

Further Questions For Discussion:

How can you walk worthy of God's calling on your life?

How can you try to make peace the identifying characteristic of your relationships?

What is unity and what is its basis?

How is God's grace for service manifested in your life?

If the people called to be the Five-Fold Ministry Gifts are Christ's gift to the church, how should that affect your attitude towards them?