

(7) But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, "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 regions, the earth. He who descended is the One who also ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.)

(11) And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, the building up the Body of Christ --- 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 fullness of Christ ---

(14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head --- into Christ --- from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Think on these things:

- 1) To understand the value of grace, we must understand "Christ's gift" (v. 7). What is the gift of Jesus to all humanity? See Romans 3:21-25 and 6:20-23 with John 3:16. What is the "value" of the gift of grace you have received?

Salvation for mankind -> by faith, deliverance from sin and death to receive eternal life. The "value" of this to your class members will be expressed as a personal opinion. Knowing the depth of my own sin and depravity, this gift is "immeasurable."

- 2) V. 8 quotes Psalm 68:18, where God the triumphant conqueror receives gifts from vanquished men. "Receive" is from the use of "receive in order to give." Like conquerors of that day, the treasures captured are then distributed as gifts to those in the victor's army. What did Jesus conquer that put Him into the position of "giving" to His followers (see 1 Corinthians 15:50-57)?

Jesus conquered sin and death.

- 3) Jesus "descended" from His heavenly glory to the earth to become a man (see Luke 1:30-33 and John 17:5). He then "ascended" back into heaven (see Acts 1:9-11) after His resurrection. From v. 10, what does Paul say is the reason Jesus first descended and then ascended? This has to do with manifesting (revealing, disclosing) His glory and power.

"That He might fill all things."

- 4) Next follows a discussion of specific callings to Church leadership. Let's see if we can distinguish between the 5 types of leadership mentioned; what does each office do?

Apostles – **Eye-witnesses to Jesus' life and death; some think, later, it could be church-planters.**

Prophets – **Proclaimers of God’s truth who sometimes disclose future events in their messages.**

Evangelists – **Preachers of the Good News (Gospel) to the unsaved.**

*Shepherds – **Care-takers of a local body of believers, pastor preachers, both compassionate to individual believer situations and challenging (confrontational) actions (misdeeds).**

*Teachers – **Explaining and helping apply God’s Word for individuals.**

***Note that while shepherds and teachers can be two separate functions in a church, this passage actually joins them together, as in one singular position.**

5) Paul explains that these church leaders exist for specific purposes. Let’s define them:

v. 12 - #1 **to equip the saints for ministry.**

v. 12 - #2 **for building up the Body of Christ.**

v. 13 - #1 **helping us to attain unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus.**

v. 13 - #2 **growing us up in faith into mature believers.**

v. 13 - #3 **preparing us to measure up to the fullness of Jesus.**

v. 14a and 15 **getting us off of the roller coaster of acting like unstable children easily tricked by competing, deceitful, and worldly teachings taught by others, but rather remaining firmly committed to Jesus Christ and steadily growing up in every godly way according to His Word.**

6) Go back to v. 13. Repeating a theme from previous lessons, with whom do we measure ourselves in terms of Christian faith, love, obedience, and godly living?

We are told to measure ourselves only against the perfect life of Jesus Christ, not that of other believers.

7) In v. 14, it says one of the characteristics of “behaving like children” is that we can’t make up our minds about “doctrine.” What is doctrine in the Church sense? (An example is shared in 1 Corinthians 15: 1-8.) Why are some confused? What does Paul say is going on around us?

Doctrine = statements of faith in how we understand and accept the Bible. Some are confused because people can be cunning, crafty and deceitful in sharing their opinions or the “cultural” norms of the country, which may not agree with God’s Word. For example, often the concept of a ‘scale’ is conveyed: I’ve done more good than bad in my life, so I’ll be okay and go to heaven for sure! God’s Word says, “Wrong. Your righteousness is as filthy rags.”

8) We are to “grow up” in Christ, learning to speak truth --- in love! We don’t need to be flip-flopping from one new view to another. Learn the truth, and then be settled. Christ is the head; He is supreme. From v. 16, what is the key phrase that says, “this makes the body grow”?

Each part (i.e., individual believer) works properly (makes his/her gift contribution) to the church.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: