ARE WE THERE, YET?

Ephesians 4:7-13

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: *"When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." 9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. NIV

CONTEXT: Previous verses speak of ONE Faith, ONE Spirit, ONE Body coming into agreement

Verse 7: Grace has been given as CHRIST apportioned it.

“Grace” is the supernatural empowering to do that which you could not do before. It is GIVEN by Christ – not something we earn. The Five-Fold Office Gifts carry a GRACE to fulfill their purpose.

Verse 8: Led captives in his train – led CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE (from Psalm 68:18-21)

These verses tell us HOW this GRACE WAS BOUGHT

Christ ascended into heaven as Victor forevermore. The picture here is of a military conqueror leading his captives and sharing the spoil with His followers. Only in this case, the "captives" are not His enemies, but His own. Sinners who once were held captives by sin and Satan have now been taken captive by Christ.

During World War I there was a tradition in the towns, particularly in France. During the war, many times the cities defended themselves. Therefore, their little army was the army of that particular city. They had a tradition. They had walled cities with huge gates and walkways over the gates. When the group of men who had left the town to represent them in battle came back, the people would get on top of that gate. They would have a choir who would chant. The men would come back, wounded and broken and bleeding from battle, but they came back waving their flag, which meant they had won the victory! The people on top of the wall would shout at them, "What right do you have to enter through these gates?" They would hold up the hands of the wounded. They would hold up the hands of the bleeding. Then they would raise that flag and say, "We have been to battle, and we have won the victory!" The gates would swing open, and they would walk through. The streets would be lined with people. They would shower them with hallelujahs for the
victory that had been won.

Can you imagine the Lord Jesus' return back into heaven? Without His ascension, we would have no gifts. He had to ascend and go back to the Father so that the Spirit could come and give gifts to the body. As He walked up to the gates of heaven, the choir of heaven on that gate would say, "What right do you have to enter these gates?" The Lord Jesus Christ would hold up His hands with the nail prints in His wrists. He would show them the nail prints in His feet and the spear mark in His side. Then He would say, "I've been to Calvary, and I have won the victory!" Then the gates would open up in heaven, and the Lord Jesus would march triumphantly to the Father and sit at His right hand, the name above every name, the One who is going to send His gift to His body who will dispense the gifts unto all men.

“Gave gifts to man”... Review of 3 lists of Gifts

**Romans 12:6-8 (Gifts of the Father – Given to ALL)**
We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is **prophesying**, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is **serving**, then serve; if it is **teaching**, then teach; if it is to **encourage**, then give encouragement; if it is **giving**, then give generously; if it is to **lead**, do it diligently; if it is to show **mercy**, do it cheerfully.
Prophet, Servant, Giver, Ruler, Exhorter, Teacher, Mercy

**1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (Gifts of the Spirit – Given to All Believers)**
Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of **wisdom**, to another a message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another speaking in different kinds of **tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation** of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

**Ephesians 4:11-13 (Gifts of Jesus – Given to Some)**
So Christ himself gave the **apostles**, the **prophets**, the **evangelists**, the **pastors** and **teachers**, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

> These gifts are not what we DO, but WHO we ARE.

Verses 9, 10: He has WON THE RIGHT to RULE – has given it to us

Verse 11: It was HE who gave SOME
APOSTLES Govern: (2 Cor 12:12) The things that mark an apostle — signs, wonders and miracles — were done among you with great perseverance.

- “One who is SENT”
- PRIORITY is ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM
- Networkers with large vision – planting churches
- Their grace is to govern and put things in order
- Focused on FOUNDATION of DOCTRINE and DISCIPLINE
- Enjoys building things, creating things
- Strong leadership and governing, but may lack consistent oversight (being gone)

Ephesians 2:21 – (The Church is to be) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

PROPHETS Guide (John 1:50-51) Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (Functioned in both Old and New Covenants)

- Priority is EQUIP THE SAINTS WITH EYES TO SEE AND EARS TO HEAR
- Passion is God’s Presence, being in tune with spiritual realm
- Foretells (Reports) and Forthtells (Causes) the Word of the Lord
- Restores families, relationships (Elijah – restore hearts of the fathers...)
- Watchman duties (intercession) roots out anything that hinders growth or health
- Church will operate in spiritual gifts but may be weak in meeting the practical needs of the people

EVANGELISTS Gather (Luke 19:10) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost ."

- Priority is SALVATION, Bringing in the Harvest
- People-centered, anointing (grace) draws people to them
- Good salesman, exhorters
- Church is larger (catching fish) but may not go as deep (cleaning fish)

PASTORS Guard (Matt 2:6) "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel." (Shepherds is biblical term – found in OT)

- Priority is CARING FOR THE FLOCK
- Homesteader
- Enjoys being with people – hospitality (LaVerne)
- Church will feel like family, but probably be smaller
TEACHERS

Ground (Luke 20:21) - So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.

- Priority is UPHOLDING THE WRITTEN WORD
- Is able to explain Scriptural concepts in easy-to-understand ways
- Enjoys studying, research, writing, gaining knowledge
- Focused on the WORD (more than the Spirit)
- Church will appeal to broad range of people but maybe lack in spiritual gifts

Tension between pastor/evangelist and prophet/teacher
Love holds us together

Verse 12: To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Office Holders are EQUIPPERS – not necessarily the DOERS
EQUIP, Empower, Mentor and raise up sons and daughters

This is the only way to be BUILT UP

Verse 13: Until we all...

Reach UNITY (Oneness) IN THE FAITH:
“persuasion, creed; moral conviction, especially reliance upon Christ for salvation”
- Are we in UNITY of Faith?

Knowledge in the Son of God:
Recognition, Full Discernment
- Do we recognize Christ in one another?

Become Mature:
“Complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character)”
“Of full age, man, perfect”

Hebrews 5:12-14 - In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. NIV
- To be MATURE is to walk in righteousness (holiness) and rightly discern the spirit
- Do we walk in complete righteousness?

Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ:
- Are we complete? Fully-grown?
- Do we model the FULLNESS of Christ to our community?

Ephesians 4:16 says “until the Body BUILDS ITSELF UP IN LOVE”
Just like raising your children to prepare them for their own homes

“The reason that the church is inconsistent is because it is built on a man and instead of THE Man.” (Prophet Bob Jones)

We are to be spiritual FATHERS AND MOTHERS
The only way for us to GROW UP is through the FIVE-FOLD OFFICE gifts

Everyone needs them in order for you to learn how to use your own gift and serve
The only way to determine if you are an office-holder is to start using your gift where you are.

One of the biggest HINDRANCES to growth is spiritual BONDAGE

Questions for Reflection and Prayer:
Do you know your own gifts and are you using them to serve the Body?
Do you recognize and affirm the gifts in others?
Are you ready to be equipped? (You’re not a failure if you’re learning)