

## EPHESIANS 4:8-16

Grace. Unmerited favor. A gift we do not deserve. Remember grace?

The gift of grace is a sweet gift indeed. It is the cause of our salvation, it is the way by which God blesses us. Grace, properly defined, is receiving a blessing that we do not deserve. Mercy, in contrast, is not receiving a punishment that we do deserve. When God gives us grace, He is choosing to bless us when we do not deserve to be blessed. All of humanity is born in sin, and constantly breaks God's laws, over and over again, sometimes willingly, sometimes unknowingly. And because of that, each of us is disqualified.

That's what we bring to the table. Our sin. Our disobedience. Our rebellion. We don't deserve grace. We deserve death. We deserve eternal punishment.

But God...

In the verse immediately preceding this passage, Paul writes:

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

What was Christ's gift? How vast is Christ's gift?

How much grace did we receive?

In this passage, Paul introduces the idea that God's grace gives us more than just salvation. While salvation is the greatest gift we could ever possibly receive, God gives us even more – He gives us gifts to build up His church.

As you read this passage, as you think about the gift of grace that you have been given, think about the way that gift is being made manifest in your life – think about the other gifts you have, and think about how you can use them for building up the body and to glorify God.

1. Verse 8, you guessed it, another therefore! First, let's unpack the verse.
  - a. Paul writes "therefore 'it' says". What's the "it"? (Read Psalm 68:15-18)
  - b. Who ascended? (Read Acts 1:4-14)
    - i. Write down a few things that stand out to you about this ascension.
  - c. Who are the captives?
    - i. First, write down your first thought.
    - ii. Next, read Judges 5:12 and write down who the captives are when a nation is defeated.
    - iii. What "nation" was defeated (Read Colossians 2:15)?
    - iv. Who are the captives?
    - v. What do conquering nations do with the riches of the nations they conquer?
  - d. Who are the "men" to whom God is giving gifts?
  - e. Paul quotes Psalm 68 in order to point out truths about God. What are some things you learn about God from how Paul uses this psalm?
  - f. Psalm 68 talks about God "receiving" gifts from men (as a plunder from a defeated foe). What does God do with His riches?
    - i. When Paul switches the word "received" to "gave", is Paul contradicting the Psalmist?
    - ii. Does it make sense that Paul would switch the word "received" to "gave"?
2. So, now that we have broken down the verse, why is the *therefore* there?

3. In verses 9-10, Paul explains why he quoted Psalm 68. He mentions Jesus' ascending and His descending which implies where He came from and where He went.
  - a. Read John 3:9-15
  - b. Where did Jesus "descend from"?
  - c. To where did Jesus ascend?
  - d. What was the purpose of His ascending? (Recall Ephesians 1:15-23)
  - e. Why is it so important for us that Jesus descended and then ascended?
    - i. Read Hebrews 4:14; 7:26; 9:24
  - f. What may not be obvious is that this may be referring to two things – Jesus' incarnation and/or Jesus death and resurrection. Think about both and why both may be in view here.
4. In verse 11, Paul talks about other things Jesus gave
  - a. What did He give?
    - i. Define each of those terms and/or give an example of what each does
    - ii. Read 1 Corinthians 12:5-6, 28; 2 Timothy 4:5; Jeremiah 3:15; Acts 20:28
  - b. What do these gifts mean for us given the truth that Jesus is sufficient?
5. From verse 12, what is the purpose of those gifts?
  - a. Who is to be equipped?
  - b. Does Paul single out certain kinds of these people?
  - c. What does this passage mean for you as a follower of Jesus?
6. In verses 13 and 14 Paul describes the goal of these gifts.
  - a. What are these goals?
  - b. How does Paul define *mature manhood*? (Read Hebrews 5:14)
  - c. How might this definition of *manhood* go against the culture?
  - d. Paul again uses the word *measure*, why do you suppose he keeps using this word?
    - i. What is the *measure* used here?
7. In verse 14, Paul tells us why this maturity is important
  - a. What happens to the immature?
  - b. What leads them astray?
  - c. How can you avoid that trap?
  - d. Read James 1:5-8; Jude 10-13
8. In verses 15 and 16, Paul gets practical about this.
  - a. When speaking to others, what are we to speak and how are we to speak it?
  - b. Are we to ignore or shy away from hard things?
  - c. How can you speak the truth in love?
  - d. What is the point of speaking the truth in love?
  - e. Read Romans 8:28-29
9. Finally, in verse 16, Paul once again talks about the body.
  - a. What is the body?
  - b. Read Colossians 2:19
  - c. Paul says that the body is *equipped* with joints. What do you think these joints are?
  - d. What makes the body grow?
  - e. How is the body built up?

There is a reason Paul has spent so much time talking about unity and how we are one body. In fact, this is not the only letter in which he does that. It seems that everyone needs to know that the Christian life is not one of loneliness or individualism, but it is a life intertwined with many other lives.

We are one body.

We are one people.

We are one family.

Joined by one faith, one Lord, one baptism.

We have one Father.

We have one Savior.

We have one Spirit.

We do not exist in a vacuum, rather, we exist as a very real family with one mind and one goal.

When God finds a lost sheep and brings him or her back into the fold, that sheep becomes part of a flock. The church is a flock, a group of people relying on their one God to *sanctify* them (to make them more and more like Jesus, more holy, more concerned with truth and love.)

And yet, we are all still sinners, prone to wander, prone to sin. Prone to forget that all Christians are part of the same family. We fight like family, sometimes even like enemies. But that just shows us how broken this world really is. Family is love. Family is unity.

There is a common passage read during weddings that I think is appropriate here, and it is also written by Paul. So remember, the same person who wrote this ...

***Ephesians 4:15–16 (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 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. (ESV)*

... also wrote this ...

***1 Corinthians 13:1–8 (1)*** *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (2) And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (3) If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (4) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (ESV)*

We are to build up the body with a love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A love that never ends.