

Palmetto Baptist Church: September 20, 2020

The Motivation behind Unity in the Church: Ephesians 4:7-11 (Part 2)

Let me invite you to take your Bible and turn to Ephesians 4:7-16. We are working our way through the book of Ephesians together (line by line, word by word), unpacking the amazing truth of God's Word. To get us all on the same page, let me do a quick recap of chapter 4:

- **The exhortation for unity (vs. 1-3)** – Paul URGED the church to walk in unity
- **The illustration of unity (vs. 4-6)** – the Trinity (equal but different in economy)
- **The motivation behind unity. (vs. 7-14)** – the Person and Work of Jesus
- **The manifestation of unity (vs. 15-16)** – submission to one another and love for one another

Due to the brevity of time we have together each Sunday, we will focus on the first half of "the motivation behind unity" as seen in verses 7-11. We will call this part 1 of a two-part mini-series. 😊

Motivation behind unity

- **The generosity of Christ (7)** – Thesis: Jesus is unbelievably generous to the church!
- **The supremacy of Christ (8-11)** – Commentary (vs. 8: Psalm 68; vs. 9-11: commentary on verse 8a and 8b.)
- **The simplicity of Christ (12-14)** – Application (Common ministry; Common message; Common measure [protection])

The generosity of Christ (7)

JESUS IS UNBELIEVABLY GENEROUS TO THE CHURCH!

- Jesus understands our deficiencies.
- Jesus cares about us individually.
- Jesus distributes gifts to encourage our unity.

The supremacy of Christ (8-11) – Commentary (vs. 8: Psalm 68; vs. 9-11: commentary on verse 8a and 8b.)

- Jesus is our Victor.
- Jesus is our Benefactor.

I. Jesus is our Victor. (8a; 9-10)

- a person who has overcome or defeated an adversary, conqueror.

Biblical illustrations:

Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14)

Walls of Jericho falling (Joshua 6)

Samson killing 1,000 men with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15)

King Nebuchadnezzar taking the entire nation of Judah captive (Psalm 137)

I. *Jesus is our Victor. (8a; 9-10)*

A. **He is pictured in the Old Testament. (Psalm 68)**

- **Psalm 68:18**

You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in **your** train and **receiving gifts among men**, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.

- **Ephesians 4:8**

Therefore it says, "When **he** ascended on high **he** led a host of captives, and he **gave gifts to men**."

- *Two major changes:* (1) change from second (Psalm) to the third person (Eph.) (2) change of direction from having received gifts from men (Psalm) to giving gifts to men (Eph.)
- Psalm 68:18 – Surrender?
- Ephesians 4:8 – Supply?
- It is better to think that Paul was not quoting one particular verse of the psalm but rather that he was summarizing all of Psalm 68, which has many words similar to those in Psalm 68:18.
- The essence of the psalm is that a military victor has the right to give gifts to those who are identified with him.
- **The NT doesn't reinterpret the OT.**
- **The OT illustrates NT concepts.**

Outline of Psalm 68: In this messianic psalm David praises God as a mighty victor over his enemies and calls others to praise him.¹

I. Behold the Works of the Lord (68:1-2,4-17,21-23): David recounts the Lord's mighty acts.

A. The Lord's punishment (68:1-2, 21-23)

1. He scatters his enemies (68:1-2): Those who hate God run for their lives.
2. He slays his enemies (68:21-23): God smashes the heads of his enemies.

B. The Lord's power (68:4-14)

1. Over the world (68:4, 7-9)
2. Over his enemies (68:11-14)
3. Over his people (68:5-6, 10)
 - a. He defends orphans and widow (68:5).
 - b. He places the lonely in families and frees prisoners (68:6).
 - c. He provides for his people (68:10): The people have a bountiful harvest in the Promised land.

C. The Lord's place (68:15-17): God reigns from Mount Zion.

¹ *The Outline Bible* by Harold L. Willmington.

II. Pay homage to the Conquering King (68:3, 18-20, 24-25)

A. The praise to God (68:3, 19-20, 32-35): The psalmist calls people to praise God for his power and his salvation.

B. The procession of God (68:24-28): This passage describes a procession marching toward the sanctuary.

C. The presentation to God (68:18, 29-31): Many people give gifts to God.

- **The same Lord, who conquered His enemies, led a host of captives in His train, and received gifts among men (Psalm 68:18)...**

Jesus has every right to receive gifts from us.

- **Is the same Christ, who conquered sin, captivated sinful people by redeeming them, and gave them as gifts to the church. (Ephesians 4:8).**

Jesus chose to give gifts to us!

The issue is more a focus on the ability of the Victor than whether or not He receives gifts from His captives or gives gifts to His captives.

- Psalm 68 is an illustration of the power Jesus possesses!
- His power makes unity in the church possible.

- Christ, having captivated sinful people by redeeming them, is Victor and gives them as gifts to the church.

B. He conquered sin, death, and hell. (9)

Ephesians 4:9–10 (BKC): Verses 9–11 serve as a commentary on two words of the quotation in verse 8, namely, ascended (vv. 9–10) and “gave” (v. 11). In verses 9–10 Paul commented on the words He ascended. These two verses are parenthetical in thought because the issue of the passage is the giving of gifts. Before Christ could ascend He had to descend. What is meant by the lower, earthly regions, literally, “into the lower parts of earth”?

The genitive “of” can be taken in three ways:

(1) “Into the lower parts, namely, the earth” (a genitive of apposition). This would refer to Christ’s incarnation, His “descent” to the earth.

(2) “Into the parts lower than the earth” (a genitive of comparison). This would mean that Christ descended into hades between His death and resurrection.

(3) “Into the lower parts which belong to the earth” (a genitive of possession). This would refer to Christ’s death and His burial in the grave. The third view best fits the context because in His death Christ had victory over sin and redeemed those who would be given as “gifts” to the church.

C. He purchased the right to distribute gifts to the church according to His good pleasure. (10)

Ephesians 4:9–10 (BKC): Christ's ascent above the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe probably refers to His regal relationship with the whole world, from which position He bestows gifts as He wills because of His work on the Cross. This fits well with 1:23, which speaks of Christ imparting all the fullness of His blessings to the church and to the universe. Christ, who embodies the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9), fills the universe and is Head over it (cf. Col. 1:18).

I. Jesus is our Victor. (8a; 9-10)

II. Jesus is our Benefactor. (11)

- ***a person who makes a bequest or endowment, as to an institution.***

A. His gifts are personal. (Eph. 4:11a)

B. His gifts are foundational. (Eph. 2:20; 3:5)

- Apostles
- Prophets

C. His gifts are missional. (Acts 6:8; 8:4-8; 26-40; 21:8-9)

- Evangelists

D. His gifts are organizational. (Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-3; I Timothy 3:1-7; Hebrews 13:17)

- Shepherd/Teacher

More to come on the explanation and continuation of the gifts next week!

APPLICATION:

- **Jesus is our Victor.**
 - Rejoice that you are free from sins penalty and power! (Rom. 6:18)
 - Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5)
 - Trust Jesus to bring about the unity He desires in our church. (John 17:20-21)
- **Jesus is our Benefactor.**
 - He is faithful to provide *exactly* what we need... *precisely* when we need it.
 - Trust Him to provide the shepherd/teachers needed to care for and instruct the church.
 - Follow the leadership of the pastors given by Him to the church.