

Ephesians 4:7-10 "Christ The Victor Gives Grace"

Ephesians 4:7-10 ⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." ⁹ (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Paul's theme in this fourth chapter is to remind us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called. His desire for these Ephesian Christians, and Christ's desire for all subsequent Christians down through the ages, is to begin to have our eyes opened to the full scope of the salvation we possess and how we came to be God's children in Christ.

It's important to always keep in mind that this salvation is not simply some insurance policy we possess and redeem on the day we die. This salvation is Christ's gift to us that we may have the promise of eternal life and fellowship with Him which is meant to start today.

He desires our love and obedience today. He desires our fellowship and allegiance today. He desires our service unto Him today, as we walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which He's called us.

But our ability to walk with Christ is in direct proportion to our willingness to submit to the Spirit in obedience. And our willingness comes from an appreciation of so great a salvation. This is why we study to show ourselves approved. We don't study simply to gain knowledge, but to gain knowledge and wisdom about the Savior who brought us from darkness to light.

In our wisdom we begin to see the beauty of our salvation in Christ, and it's in this context that we begin to desire to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called because of our humble appreciation for so great a salvation that none of us deserved.

This is the point Paul made in EPH 3:16-19 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your

hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

This is where the rubber meets the road, and this is where we begin to understand how to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God as, by faith, we begin to care less and less for the attractions of this world and seek the more important things of God that will last for eternity.

It doesn't mean we move to the hills and live in a shack until Christ returns, it simply means that we begin to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ which changes our priorities in life to where His desires become ours as we reach out to the world with this love of Christ found in His message of hope.

And it is this hope that we touched on last week which is found in only one place. One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

And so, this unity in Christ produces one family in the earth of all true believers and yet as we continue in our study we see that the beauty of this unity can also be seen in the diversity of its members.

EPH 4:7-10 "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." (Psalm 68:18) 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.)"

Let's look at this 7th verse. "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Or as the NAS puts it, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

R.C. Sproul makes the comment that "every person who is in Christ is a charismatic." In today's world that usually translates to a person who speaks in tongues and can't help but lift his hands in the air to praise God. I can tell you that R.C. Sproul doesn't speak in tongues and belongs to a denomination which is less prone to

encourage anyone to lift their hands in praise to God, though they certainly lift their hearts to God in worship. I know because I used to belong to the same denomination he does.

But what he means by every person in Christ being a charismatic is that every person has been gifted with the grace of God to be used in the Body of Christ. You see the word grace in the Greek is *charis*, which is the root word to the word we know as charismatic.

Every believer in Christ has been given grace by the living God as a gift. We've been given the grace of faith to be able to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. We've been given the grace to walk with the Lord in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called. We've been given the grace to forsake the old nature and put on the new man to the glory of God.

But we've also been given the grace, or the *charis*, to be used by God with specific gifts in the Body. And this in accordance with the way in which Christ has apportioned these gifts to each of His people, or the way in which He has measured out these gifts to us.

There is a misnomer that suggests that if I ask for a particular gift from God, He is obliged to give me that gift. And though we are certainly encouraged to ask God for gifts it is ultimately up to Him in the way He gifts.

In 1Corinthians chapter 12 Paul describes many of the gifts the Spirit gives to His people but we then read in 1CO 12:11 "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

HEB 2:4 "God also testified to it [the Gospel] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

Remember, salvation is of the Lord, which includes the gifts He gives to promote the Gospel. And so we must keep in mind that though everyone of God's people in Christ receive grace, or gifts, not everyone receives all the same gifts. Christ is the One, through His Spirit, who distributes them according to His will.

This is why we have the picture of the Body of Christ being one, and yet seen as individual parts with individual gifts, making up this one body with one purpose of glorifying God. But since God does give gifts it's important for us to never lose sight of the fact that these are precisely gifts, not "the product of our own skill or ingenuity". (William Hendrickson)

God is the one who measures gifts out, not so we can use them as toys, but to be used in the Body for the edification and encouragement of others. This grace is given that we might minister one to another and fulfill the will of God in our lives in that service.

1CO 12:4-7 "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

And so part of the will of God is specifically to gift His people in their salvation. And so Paul continues in EPH 4:8 "This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (Psalm 68:18)

This is an interesting verse. It's actually taken from Psalm 68. But here Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit uses the psalm in a way to convey how Christ gives gifts, whereas in Psalm 68 He is the One receiving gifts.

And yet there is a sense in which Christ, who did receive the gift of His labor on the cross, now gives gifts to the people He has redeemed. But He is only able to give gifts because He is the victor and conqueror and has been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

In verse 8 of our text it says, "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

This ascension speaks of His resurrection from the dead as well as His ascending to the Father. The intent of the passage speaks of the victory Christ has achieved over His enemy, Satan. And along with this it speaks of His victory over the grave and death which is the penalty for sin. The grave could not hold Him and just as sure as He overcame the grave He gives us that same victory to where our hope is sure.

His victory has allowed Him to take the spoils of war. And this in part is what we see in Psalm 68 which is alluded to here in our text.

PSA 68:18 "When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious - that you, O LORD God, might dwell there."

God has ascended on high and led captives in His train. You and I in Christ are the captives being spoken of who were once rebellious, but now been brought under subjection. It is in this sense you and I in Christ were the captives of this world and have been brought under the captivity of our new Lord and master.

The point Paul is making here in verse 8 is really that since Christ has ascended from the earth, via His resurrection, He has the authority to give gifts to men. There is not a believer on the face of this earth who has not been given gifts by Christ. This is an awesome thing to consider. Just as we have been individually called to follow Christ by faith, He personally leads us out of captivity and then gives us the gifts He wants us to have.

Again, this is not some shotgun approach. God is very purposeful in all that He does and just as He chose you before the foundations of the earth, He also chose what gifts He would give you before the foundations of the earth. Now, what will we do with these gifts?

But more important what will we do with the Gift-giver? Jesus says, who do you say that I am? In other words, what do we understand of our great God and Savior, and how should that effect our lives?

Paul doesn't want to let this go quite yet. He goes on to make a very important point about Christ's role in our salvation and why He is the God who gifts men.

EPH 4:9-10 "(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.)"

Now to understand this we must see the contrast Paul makes here. To lose sight of this can lead to all sorts of strange teachings. He's comparing two things: 1) descending and 2) ascending.

You'll also notice that Paul puts this descending and ascending into context: **1)** descending into the lower parts of the earth and **2)** ascending far above all the heavens.

The first deals with the humiliation of Christ the second deals with His glorification. There have been those who teach that Jesus Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth to mean that He literally descended into hell to make payment for our sin. This could not be further from the truth.

It takes a masterful twisting of Scripture to arrive at such heresy. One of the proponents of this teaching is Benny Hinn who made this statement. And I'm quoting from Hank Hannegraff's book, "Christianity in Crisis." This statement is taken from the transcripts of one of Benny Hinn's sermons who claimed that the Holy Ghost personally told him this.

"[Jesus] became death, so sinners can be righteous in Him. He became one with the nature of Satan, so all those who had the nature of Satan can partake of the nature of God."

Now this may sound inviting, but what Hinn essentially says here is that Jesus assumed the very nature of Satan. And he's not alone. Many others, including Kenneth Copeland make the same assertion.

Copeland says that Jesus became a sign of Satan when He was hanging on the cross: "The righteousness of God was made to be sin. He accepted the sin nature of Satan in His own spirit. And at the moment that He did so, He cried, "My God, My God, what hast thou forsaken Me?" Why do you think Moses, upon instruction of God, raised the serpent upon the pole instead of a lamb?.....

..... That used to bug me. I said, "Why in the world would you want to put a snake up there -- the sign of Satan? Why didn't you put a lamb on that pole?" And the Lord said, "Because it was a sign of Satan that was hanging on the cross." He said, "I accepted, in My own spirit, the spiritual death; and the light was turned off." (From Hank Hannegraff's book, Christianity in Crisis)

Hank Hannegraff however, makes a very important comment in response to this teaching that Jesus took on the very nature of Satan to pay our debt. "In the O.T. days, whenever anyone committed an offense or sin, a sacrifice called a "sin offering" was required in order to cover the transgression. We learn that the offering had to be without defect (Lev.4:3,28; 9:3) Furthermore, animals having any type of serious flaw were deemed unacceptable for sacrifice (Deu.15:21).

..... Since these sacrifices foreshadowed Christ's ultimate sacrifice on the cross, we know that Christ was offered without spot or blemish, and that in no way could He have become one in nature with Satan. In fact, both Hebrews 9:14 and 1Pet.1:19 make it explicit that Jesus on the cross was without blemish or defect.....

..... Not only that, but according to Lev. 6:25-29, the sin offering was "most holy" to God both before and after its death. In the same way, Jesus as the sin offering remained holy even after His death on the cross. He was truly the fulfillment of the O.T. type of the sin offering."

Jesus did not assume the nature of Satan to have to pay the debt we owed to God. Nor did He descend into hell for three days as many of these teachers promote.

Again, Kenneth Copeland says, "When Jesus cried, "It is finished!" He was not speaking of the plan of redemption. There were still three days and nights to go through before He went to the throne ... Jesus' death on the cross was only the beginning of the complete work of redemption." (Christianity in Crisis)

"And then seizing the moment, He spoke His faith-filled words into the bowels of the earth and suddenly --- "that Word of the living God went down into that pit of destruction and charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection and power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life.

..... He began to look like something the devil had never seen before. He was literally being reborn before the devil's eyes. He began to flex His spiritual muscles Jesus was born again ----- the firstborn from the dead." (Christianity in Crisis)

Charles Capps explains that this is where the church got its start. "Jesus was born again in the pit of hell. He was the firstborn, the firstbegotten, from the dead. He started the Church of the firstborn in the gates of hell ... He went down to the gates and started His church there The church started when Jesus was born again in the gates of hell." (Christianity in Crisis)

The problem with this teaching is, first and foremost, that it places our redemption in the hands of Satan himself. Without Satan's involvement of making sure that he tortures and punishes Jesus we could not be saved.

Without Jesus assuming the nature of Satan, and in Copeland's words, becoming this "emaciated, poured out, little wormy spirit" without legal right (Christianity in Crisis) we could not have a true Savior.

And yet we know that God's word teaches us that Satan played no part in our redemption other than being a pawn in the hands of our

Almighty God who used him to encourage men to place Jesus on that cross where our debt was paid.

I'd like to show you a variety of verses which speak of our redemption found in Christ at the cross, not in assuming the nature of Satan. And you'll notice that none of them even allude to Jesus descending into hell to pay our debt.

1CO 1:17-18 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

GAL 6:14 "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

EPH 2:15-16 " ...by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility."

COL 1:19-20 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Our peace with the Father doesn't come through Jesus being tortured in hell by demons, but by shedding His blood on the cross where our redemption is secured. Nowhere in the O.T. types do we see anything other than the blood being "the" sin offering. A perfect unblemished lamb was to become a substitute for the people as its blood was shed.

Nowhere do we have any hint that the lamb had to descend somewhere to complete the covering of man's sin.

COL 2:14-15 "having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Jesus didn't disarm the powers and authorities and make a public spectacle of them by having enough faith to speak forth the word

and bring life to His "emaciated, poured out, little wormy spirit" and climb out of hell the victor. When Christ died on the cross the work for our redemption was over. He didn't need to humble Himself any further to secure our salvation.

JOH 19:30 "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

It is finished? What is finished? His life? Is this all Jesus was referring to? No, what is finished is the work He came into this world to accomplish; the work Daniel prophesied in DAN 9:24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."

When praying to the Father, just before He was to go to the cross, Jesus prayed in JOH 17:4 "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."

It would not be completed in hell. In fact, Jesus would not descend into hell, He would go immediately to be with the Father. This He assured the thief on the cross who looked to Christ in his final hour for his salvation. And Jesus told him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (LUK 23:43)

And three verses later "Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last." (LUK 23:46)

Not into the hands of Satan, that serpent and devil who was the one who tempted Eve to partake of death. Jesus didn't need to assume the nature of Satan. He simply needed to assume our penalty which is death and which was fully accomplished on the cross.

This is why the writer of Hebrews says in HEB 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

His work was finished on the cross and the reward was to approach the Father in that victory over the grave and He now sits as Conqueror and Victor and Ruler at the right hand of the throne of God. This is a far cry from the weak and anemic Jesus that Copeland and Capps and Hinn and a host of others claim secured our salvation and who also claim we could have done the same thing.

Quoting Kenneth Copeland: "The Spirit of God spoke to me and He said, "Son realize this. Now follow me in this and don't let your tradition trip you up." He said, "Think this way -- a twice-born man whipped Satan in his own domain." And I threw my Bible down.... I said, "What?" He said, "A born-again man defeated Satan, the firstborn of many brethren defeated him."

..... He said, "You are the very image, the very copy of that one." I said, "Goodness gracious sakes alive!" And I began to see what had gone on in there, and I said, "Well now you don't mean, you couldn't mean, that I could have done the same thing?" He said, "Oh yeah, if you'd had the knowledge of the Word of God that He did, you could've done the same thing, 'cause you're a reborn man too."

This is not the Jesus of the Bible. And we are not copies of Jesus as born again people who could have gone into the pit of hell to redeem anyone.

Jesus Christ is not just a man, He is God, and as such He is the Mighty One who binds the strong man. He is not subject to Satan in any way shape or form. He descended to the earth in His burial to accomplish our salvation. He ascended in victory to secure our salvation as He beat death and the grave and made a public spectacle of Satan, not in hell, but through the cross.

We must be discerning to not only expose false teaching and teachers but we must also be discerning to fully appreciate the salvation we possess and the Almighty God we serve who has loved us with an everlasting love.

"He has ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe." There is no one who can ascend higher than Christ and this is the Savior who has sent His Spirit to indwell us that we might use the gifts He's given to serve Him and one another and to live the kind of life that realizes that the gates of hell cannot prevail against Christ and His kingdom.

Christ fills the whole universe because in His death, resurrection and ascension He has redeemed the whole universe. You and I are the first fruits of Christ's resurrection which guarantees our bodily resurrection.

But a bodily resurrection makes no sense if we're not going to live in a physical universe and a physical place called the new earth. The new earth and the new heavens, along with all redeemed

people who have trusted Christ, await that day when Christ returns on the last day to restore His entire creation unto Himself that we may share this inheritance given to us by the Father through His Son, making us co-heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:19-23 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Are we longing for that day of restoration? May we live in that reality, and as Paul prays, may we consider this great salvation everyday of our lives.

EPH 3:16-21 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."