

## **Bible Studies begin February 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Women's – Monday, 12:00, Leg. Chapel  
"Praying with Power" by Christa Kinde  
Contact: Laura Sullivan at mcneilla@ncleg.net**

**Men's – Wednesday, 12:15, Leg. Chapel  
"Kingdom Man" by Tony Evans**

In King David's day, when warriors were victorious in war, the captured bounty was shared with each of the soldiers. Craig Keener explains, "once a conqueror had received tribute and plunder from the defeated (as in Ps 68:18), he distributed most of these spoils to his soldiers."<sup>1</sup>

In Ephesians 4, Paul presents the victorious warrior, his victory over death and his ascension back to heaven. There is only one savior who has defeated death. It is the "one Lord," of verse 5, Jesus Christ.

Paul draws on the imagery in Psalms 68:19 of triumphant shouts for this victorious warrior upon his return home, "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior".

God is love. No matter what, He loves you and in this passage, His love wins!

### **1. Love has won - specific equipping proves it!**

Notice that in Ephesians 4:1 (ESV), "the calling you have received..." there is a common call to all believers. But also notice this text affirms a specific calling with "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" in verse 7.

Grace is the Greek word "charis" and speaks of showing kindness to someone for no reason. Given is the Greek word "endothe" and when "given by a person in superior position to one in subordinate position it carries the idea of entrusting that person with a gift to

carry out a specific task."<sup>2</sup> This grace gift is given specifically by Christ. It is Christ's gift, "dor-e-an", a word speaking of a present to you. This third word for gift in the sentence is used in James 1:17, "every good gift and perfect gift comes down from the Father of Lights..." and in Acts 2:38, "you will receive [God's] gift of the Holy Spirit."

The other word in this verse to note is "measure." This descriptive word "metron" describes "how much there is or how many there are" and in this case Christ determines that amount.

In conclusion, this is a specific measure of spiritual gifts given specifically as a present to the believer to carry out what God has called them to do.

Ephesians 2:10 points out that believers are called to a "purpose beforehand." This gives the good news that what God has called you to, He has also equipped you for!

This is not a natural gift, but a supernatural gift given by God. It is not referring to natural abilities.

*Paul moves now from what all Christians have in common to how Christians differ from each other. He is discussing variety and individuality within the unity of the Spirit. God has given each believer at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:1-12), and this gift is to be used for the unifying and edifying (building up) of the body of Christ. We must make a distinction between "spiritual gifts" and natural abilities. When you were born into this world God gave you certain natural abilities, perhaps in mechanics, art, athletics, or music. In this regard, all men are not created equal, because some are smarter, or stronger, or more talented than others. But in the spiritual realm, each believer has at least one spiritual gift no matter what natural abilities he may or may not possess. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in*

<sup>1</sup> Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Eph 4:7-8). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 114). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

*such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.*<sup>3</sup>

This victory march happened because death has been defeated and Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. The proof is that spirit gifts have been given.

These gifts go to those who have made the decision described in Ephesians 2:8, 9. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

## 2. Love has won, Christ's ascension proves it!

'Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (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.) Ephesians 4:8-10'

I Corinthians Chapter 15 gives a historical account of Jesus Christ being on the earth after his resurrection. Jesus presented himself alive to individuals and to crowds: as many as five hundred. Acts Chapter 1 declares the time period to be for more than forty days, then Jesus ascended back into heaven.

What does it mean that "Jesus descended into the lower regions, the earth?" Many believe that this refers to Jesus coming to earth from heaven, but I believe it refers to the place where all the dead went until the ascension of Christ. Notice how Ezekiel 32:24 uses this same phrase:

"Elam is there and all her hordes around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised **to the lower parts of the earth**, who instilled their terror in the land of the living and bore their disgrace with those who went down to the pit"

The Bible speaks of Jesus entering Hades. In Acts 2:31, Peter states, "the Lord did not abandon him to hades" indicating he was there but not left there. Furthermore, I Peter 3:19 describes Jesus "visiting spirits imprisoned." These passages point to a descent to the realm of the

dead, which the Bible describes as in the lower regions of the earth for all until the ascension.

The gospel of Luke Chapter 16 quotes Christ speaking of this realm of the dead. It speaks of two places in Hades, a place of torment and across a great chasm a place referred to as "Abraham's side". If indeed, Abraham's side is paradise, which I believe it is, it explains very well Jesus statement to the thief on the cross, "this day you will be with me in paradise, Luke 23:43." It also explains "when he ascended he led a host of captives" in Ephesians 4:8. The captives led to heaven with Christ were those who were in Abraham's side/paradise.

What a dramatic change occurred after the crucifixion of God the Son. He provided payment for the sin of the world and provision of righteousness to enter God's heaven. The Old Testament saints before the cross sacrificed an innocent lamb every year covering their sin again and again. But Jesus, the Lamb of God, "offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, Hebrews 10:11." The ascension is the victory declaration of sin being paid for, and the way to peace with God being made for you.

The Bible speaks of believers who die after the ascension of Christ as being absent from the body and present with the Lord as in 2 Corinthians 5:8.

My friend, God has provided a wonderful gift of grace that is eternal life with Him in heaven. It is a gift to be received by faith alone in the work of Christ alone. It is a decision each person makes putting their trust not in themselves, or a religious act or a church membership but in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23 and 6:23 reveal our standing with God, sinners who are separated from Him. The Bible tells us to repent and receive. Literally, repentance is turning away from your sin and receiving God's gift of forgiveness and God's goodness. Romans 10:9-10 describes this as a decision of your heart by faith.

**God loves you this much!**

### Capitol Commission Bible Studies

Women - **Monday** (19th of February) @ 12 Noon, Chapel  
Men - **Wednesday** (21st of February) @ 12:15pm, Chapel

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, p. 37). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.