

**An Exegetical Study of Eph Four Seven Through Sixteen**  
**Eph.4:7-16**  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The apostle Paul in both 1Cor.13:8-10 and Eph.4:7-16 definitely deals with the duration and purpose of spiritual gifts given by Jesus Christ (through the Holy Spirit) after he ascended on high.
2. Our present study centers upon Eph.4:7-16, wherein we offer an exegesis of them; an exposition of them designed to clear up many misconceptions relating to miraculous spiritual gifts and how we might attain to that unity depicted in this very section of Scripture.
3. Our study will be three-fold in nature: First, an analysis of the immediate background in Vv.1-6; Second, a close exegetical look at Vv.7-13; Thirdly, a consideration of the fruitful results of a permanent nature revealed in Vv.14-16.

**II. DISCUSSION**

**A. FIRST, AN ANALYSIS OF Vv.1-6 DESCRIBING GOD'S PLATFORM FOR THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS.**

1. The chapter opens with a dynamic depiction of the manner in which the Christian is to walk, Vv.1,2.
  - a. Walk, meaning to live, is intensely indicative of activity - not passivity.
  - b. It's to be a walk worthy of their calling, as saints, sanctified, set apart unto God – belonging to God, V.1.
  - c. The attributes of such a worthy walk are then set forth:
    - (1) “With all lowliness,” which is humility of mind, a feeling of small worth.
    - (2) “Meekness,” which is courage, gentleness and benevolent kindness. To the Greek mind meekness was the colt that had been broken and was now gentle.

- (3) “With longsuffering,” which is patience and fortitude among all problems and persecutions they faced.
  - (4) “Forbearing one another in love,”
    - (a) Manifest tolerance where lawfully allowed and where no compromise of truth and righteousness is demanded in the process.
    - (b) It all rests upon the loyalty of real Biblical brotherly love.
2. Such a walk has unity as its object which they are to endeavor to keep or attain, V.3.
  - a. This suggested unity is to be achieved through earnest endeavor.
  - b. Laboring to that end is imperative; sacrifices for it are essential – not optional.
  - c. It must be sought by effort to be attained and maintained; but the blessings of it make it worth the effort. Cf. Psa.133:1.
  - d. It is to be kept or maintained in the realm of peace with holiness. Cf. Heb.12:14; 1Cor.1:10-13; Jno.17:20,21.
    - (1) “Unity in diversity” will not produce it.
    - (2) Peace at any price will not attain nor maintain it.
    - (3) It is not akin to the statement some have made: “It is not doctrine that unites us but love.”
3. Then in Vv.4-6 the biblical platform for divinely prescribed unity is stated.
  - a. “There is one body,” V.4a, or unity of organization.
    - (1) Since “the body” is “the church” belonging to Christ of which he has only one, this refutes the claim of the “unity in diversity” advocates who say “it makes no difference, join the church, the religious body, of your choice.”
  - b. “And one spirit,” V.4b, which provides for unity of revelation and spiritual guidance.
  - c. “Even as you are called in one hope of your calling,” V.4c, which provides unity of expectation, or desire, of anticipation, and with patience waiting for it.
  - d. “One Lord,” V.5a, or unity of authority. Such is an essential in a world of Popes, priests, Rabbis, preachers, synods, conventions, human creeds, etc., that clamor for

positions of power and seek attainments to areas of authority within the realm of religion.

- e. "One faith," V.5b, or unity of doctrine or teaching and practice. If such were as God ordained it, man would no longer ask, "of what faith are you?" There would be but one recognized and one honored!
  - f. "One baptism," V.5c, unity of practice in entering Christ and his body where salvation is found.
    - (1) Such would eliminate present-day claims of Holy Spirit baptism and leave intact the water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ of the Great Commission.
    - (2) Sprinkling and pouring for baptism would go the way of the world and only the biblically based action of immersion or a burial in water would remain, Rom.6:3,4; Col.2:12.
  - g. "One God and Father of all..." V.6, or unity of worship would prevail.
    - (1) Gone then forever would be man-worship, Mary worship, angel-worship, devil-worship, relic-worship, inanimate object-worship, relative-worship, illicit-sex-worship, worship of Allah.
    - (2) Worship of God and God only would be the order of the day.
4. Not one essential for the unity of God's people is omitted in this divine platform.
- a. Strict faith in and observance of these six verses from Pentecost till now and the plagues of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Modernism, Judaism and all other so-called world religions would not have cursed humanity and divided mankind into hostile and warring camps of unbending and unending opposition toward the truth of God's written word.
5. Eph.4:4-6 is both a forgotten, ignored and a denied passage in our day.
- a. The ecumenical leaders know little about this passage and believe even less relative to it.
  - b. It does not fit their preconceived, prejudiced notions; it does not provide the kind of "unit in diversity" they crave

and demand at the cost of the unity for which our Lord prayed and for which he died!

**B. NOW TO OUR ANALYSIS OF Vv 7-13 REVEALING THE MIRACULOUS PROVISIONS FOR THE UNITY OF THE FAITH TO BE REALIZED.**

1. Without a doubt this section of Scripture is to be understood and explained within a miraculous framework for the following reasons.
  - a. The Greek term “*dorea*” translated “*gift*” is used in V.7 at the very beginning of this section, which Vine, II, 146,7, says “is always used in the N.T. of a spiritual or supernatural gift,” Jno.4:10; Ac.2:38;8:20; 10:45; 11:17; Rom.5:15,17; 2Cor.9:15; Eph.3:7; 4:7; Heb.6:4.
  - b. The gifts were conferred by Christ (through the Holy Spirit) at the time of his ascension on high or shortly subsequent thereunto.
  - c. They were given because miraculously endowed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were absolutely essential prior to the full revelation of God’s will in the establishment of Christianity, or the faith, and the completion of the N.T.
  - d. Their expressed function within this miraculous framework was for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.
  - e. There was a duration placed upon these gifts which V.13 makes crystal clear.
2. Evidently this section (Vv.7-13) is somewhat, if not all together, parallel to that of 1Cor.13:8-10, because:
  - a. Both passages are Pauline in authorship.
  - b. Both were written to churches that had received spiritual gifts.
  - c. Both churches needed additional information and instruction in regard to and wise regulations relative to spiritual gifts.
  - d. Both passages speak of a giver, reception and use of spiritual gifts.
  - e. Both passage impose well defined goals to be accomplished by these supernatural gifts.

- f. Both passages speak of a duration of the gifts.
  - g. Both passages speak of a childhood period first.
  - h. Both passages then speak of a mature period that was to come subsequently.
3. In V.7 Paul speaks of the extent of these needed miraculous provisions by stating, “But unto every (each) one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”
- a. Given to both individual Jews and individual Gentiles.
  - b. All could walk in worthy fashion; all could aid in keeping the unity of the Spirit; all could be part and parcel of the blessings afforded by the seven unique unities of Vv.4-6.
  - c. Now they also could share in, receive and use the spiritual gifts of Christ (through the Holy Spirit).
  - d. This “grace” (given) according to the measure of the gift of Christ, refers to the grace of their being given miraculous gifts, not to the grace that brings salvation to everyone.
  - e. Not given to all alike (see 1Cor.12:4-11), nor were they to be continuous in perpetuity throughout the entire Christian dispensation (see V.13); 1Cor.13:8-13).
4. V.8 tells us of Jesus as the conquering king and when these miraculous gifts were given unto men, which are identified in V.11.
- a. This is a quotation Paul lifted from Psa.68:18: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men..”
  - b. Embedded eloquently in the Messiah’s ascension here is reference to the victory that was in his conquering hands and the gracious benefits he would bestow subsequent to his arrival back in the place of the universe, heaven itself.
  - c. He is viewed both in the prophecy and its fulfillment as a Conquering General with captives in multitude and gifts in abundance which he could and did confer on his subjects.
  - d. “He led captivity captive,” or the margin is, a multitude of captives.
    - (1) Captivity refers to death, as death had held dominion over every living being on earth.

- (2) He went down into death's inner prison, to hades itself, and struggled with the powers of death and hell.
  - (3) He burst asunder the bars of death, and rose a triumphant victor over the powers of death and hell and of Satan who held the power of such in his hand prior to Christ's victory.
  - (4) In his triumph he secured man's resurrection, and won his own crown as King of kings and Lord of lords.
  - (5) In his glorious ascension, convoyed by an angelic host, he led death a captive, a conquered captive, in his train.
  - (6) Since that day, death reigns not as an unconquered and independent sovereign, but by the permission and subject to the will of its conqueror and captor - Christ the Lord, which shall be finalized at his 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.
  - (7) Thus it refers to what he accomplished as a result of his coming to this earth as the God-man, as the Redeemer, offering himself as a sin-offering, being raised from the dead, ascending back to God, and his victory over the enemies of God, man, his Kingdom, Satan, death and sin.
  - (8) He triumphed over his foes; the conqueror not only subdues his enemy, but he leads his captives in triumphal process.
  - (9) When Christ ascended to heaven he triumphed over all his foes. It was a complete victory over the malice of the great enemy of God, Satan himself, and all he represented and brought about by his rebellion. See 1Cor.15:21-27,56,7; Eph.1:19-23; Col.2:15; Ac.2:24-36; 2Tim.1:9,10; Heb.2:14,15; 1Pet.3:21,22; Rev.1:17,18.
- e. "Wherefore he saith..."
- (1) This is the strongest inferential conjunction, on which account.
  - (2) "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended..." that is, when he ascended he did this!

- (3) The Greek says, “after ascending on high.” “That is, the things mentioned in V.8 that he did occurred after he ascended.
- (4) This point has far reaching implications. See Ac.2
- f. “And gave gifts unto men” (plural), as per V.11.
  - (1) According to Psa.68:18, of which V.8 is a quote, he first received gifts (“thou hast received gifts for men”).
    - (a) The Hebrew word translated “received” in Psa.68:18 has the idea of receiving for the purpose of giving to another.
    - (b) Jesus first received gifts from the Father, then he imparted them to mankind. See Ac.2:33: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”
    - (c) This imparting of the gifts is what he is referring to in Jno.7:37-39, which was to be done at his glorification.
    - (d) He was glorified after he ascended (Jno.12:16-23; 17:1-5; Phil.2:5-11), then he imparted the gifts.
  - (2) “Unto men” (plural)
    - (a) It is used “universally with reference to the genus (class order or kind) or nature, without distinction of sex, a human being, whether male or female.” Thayer, 46.
    - (b) He gave gifts to human beings (including both men and women, Cf. Mk.16:17,18; Ac.2:16-18) after he ascended on high (to heaven with the Father). See also Ac.2:33.
    - (c) This is pointing to the events that began to occur at Pentecost, Ac.1:1-8; 2:1-4,16-21,36-39.
- 5. In Vv.9,10 we have a parenthetical statement explaining the correctness of the application of the preceding verse.

- a. That is, it is affirmed in Psa.68:18, quoted in V.8, that he ascended. This implies that there must have been a previous descent.
  - b. Or, as applicable to the Messiah, “it is a truth that he previously descended..”
  - c. V.10: “He that descended is the same also that ascended.” The same Redeemer came down from God, and returned to him. It was not a different being, but the same!
  - d. What he came to do, he succeeded in doing. He fulfilled all things and returned to God. Vv.8-10 necessarily infer a death, burial, and a bodily resurrection from the dead.
  - e. “He...ascended up far above all heavens....”
    - (1) This and Jno.3:13 are explained by understanding that the Scriptures teach that there are at least four heavens.
    - (2) Thayer, 491: “all (“all, every”) the heavens” (from a root meaning ‘to cover’ ‘en compass’...heaven...
      - 1. the vaulted expanse of the sky with all the things visible in it...
      - 2. the regions above the sidereal (starry) heavens, the seat of an order of things eternal and consummately perfect, where God dwells and the order of heavenly beings.” (Thayer, 46-465)
    - (3) Note also Paul’s statement in 2Cor.12:2-4 about a man being “caught up to the third heaven.”
    - (4) See also Gen.1:8; Lk.23:43; Ac.2:27-33; Lk.16.
6. As pertaining to these gifts Paul passes from the general to the specific in V.11 by designating those who were the recipients of the gifts.
- a. “And he gave some, apostles.”
    - (1) “A delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders”; “ambassadors.”
    - (2) See Mt.19:28. They judge, legislate, reveal.
    - (3) Apostleship was linked with witnessing, Lk.24:48,49; Ac.1:1-8; 10:39-43; Ac.1:21,22; 22:14,15; 26:26; 1Cor.15:5-8.
    - (4) Their full apostleship came after he ascended and is equal to being baptized with the Holy Spirit, Lk.24:49; Ac.1:4,5,8; 2:1-4; or had a special

inspiration and power, Jno.14:16,25,26; 16:7,8,13-15; 2Cor.12:12; Ac.8:14-19; Gal.1:8-12; Eph.3:1-5

- b. “And some, prophets”
  - (1) “to speak forth; prop. one who speaks forth ...hence an interpreter or (miraculously endowed) spokesman for God; one through whom God speaks.” – Thayer, 553.
  - (2) There are N.T. prophets who received their gifts by the laying on of the hands of an apostle, Ac.18:14-19; 19:5,6; 1Tim.4:14; 2Tim.1:6.
  - (3) Thus inspired to make known the will of God after it had been revealed to them through the apostles. Cf. 2Tim.2:1,2.
- c. “And some, evangelists”
  - (1) Those who propagate, broadcast.
  - (2) “A bringer of good tidings, an evangelist,” Thayer, 257.
  - (3) Timothy was an evangelist, 2Tim.4:5.
  - (4) Being an evangelist in the infant church (before the Scriptures were complete) was a miraculous office. There is nothing inherent in evangelizing that requires that one possess a miraculous gift today; but without a complete N.T., it required gifts. Cf. 2Tim.1:6; 1Tim.4:14.
- d. “And some, pastors...”
  - (1) “(a herdsman, esp. a shepherd” Thayer, 527) “and teachers;” “a teacher...of one who is fitted to teach,” Thayer, 144.
  - (2) The pastors (shepherds) are a subset of the teachers. That is, all pastors are teacher, but not all teachers are pastors.
  - (3) Pastors or elders are instructed to tend, guide, feed or shepherd the church, which is the flock of the Lord (Ac.20:28; 1Pet.5:1-3).
  - (4) Other passages refer to God’s children as sheep, as a flock, or God as a Shepherd.
- e. “And teachers”
  - (1) To instruct; teach God’s will”
  - (2) Until a completed Bible was in their possession, it was essential that they also function within a

miraculous frame work, which is precisely what the inspired writer of this verse envisioned.

7. Then in V.12 he specifies the purpose the gifts were to serve.
  - a. “For the perfecting of the “saints”
    - (1) “For” from “*pros*”
    - (2) This introduces the first of three purposes of the miraculous gifts that were given to various individuals in the church.
    - (3) “The perfecting” – equipping for something; a perfectly adjusted adaption; complete qualification for a specific purpose. Lit. letting a broken bone; assembling the parts of a machine together; refitting a ship.
    - (4) Properly refers to the restoring of anything to its place; then putting in order, making it complete.
    - (5) The “saints” are perfected to be prepared to do the work God gave them to do.
    - (6) This is *the first purpose* of the miraculous gifts given by Jesus (through the Holy Spirit, by the laying on of the hands of an apostle) after he ascended.
  - b. “Unto (*eis, cf. above, pros*) the work of ministering (diakonia – dee-ak-on-ee-ah).
    - (1) This is why the parts are to be assembled together, or perfected or prepared. For “service, ministering” esp. of those who execute the commands of others. (Thayer, 137)
    - (2) Any and all work or service to be rendered as a part of the work of the church all the saints are to be perfected to do.
    - (3) This is *the second purpose* of the miraculous gifts given by Jesus.
    - (4) This alludes to their sphere of serving; not to the preacher as “The Minister,” which is the prominent idea of present-day ministering among so many believers.
  - c. “Unto (*eis” cf. above*) the” or “for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
    - (1) The act of building, building up...in the N.T. metaph. edifing, edification, i.e., the act of one

who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness... (Thayer, 440)

- (2) The body is the church.
  - (3) This is *the third purpose* of the miraculous gifts given by Jesus .
  - (4) This embraces the work or the teaching necessary to bring people into the church, convert sinners, to perfect, and direct their work after having entered it.
- d. V.12 has specific reference to bringing the early church from its infancy to a period of spiritual manhood – not how each local congregation would grow and develop down the long line of Christianity across the ceaseless centuries.
- (1) Paul, to the contrary, is teaching here as he did in 1Cor.13:11,12, i.e., the church's development from infancy to spiritual manhood.
  - (2) A period when these spiritual gifts were necessary in order to accomplish that end.
  - (3) The permanent gifts of faith, hope and love guided by the completely revealed and confirmed word of God belong to the full grown church when the scaffold of miraculous gifts has faded from the scene as prophesied.
8. V.13 declares that this miraculous working of the Holy Spirit was to continue till the “unity of the faith” came, i.e., when “the faith” (the N.T.) was fully revealed, confirmed, and disseminated.
- a. This does not refer to a time when all so-called Christians will believe the same thing.

**C. FINALLY, THE FRUITFUL RESULTS OF A PERMANENT NATURE REVEALED IN Vv. 14-16.**

1. It will result in a scriptural shield against all error according to V.14.

2. It will led to an motivate the proper speaking of truth for spiritual growth and development in all things according to V.15. Cf. 2Tim.3:16,17.
3. It will result in a completely equipped and thoroughly proficient body of united and activated believers with each one enabled and required to cooperate fully to the edification of the body in love according to V.16.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

1. This is a great passage of Scripture about:
  - a. Unity and its obviously great strength and benefit.
  - b. Spiritual gifts, their giver, their recipients, their purpose, and their duration.
2. Power presides in divinely prescribed unity; weakness inheres in division, as much in the spiritual realm as elsewhere.
3. Sand held firmly in the hand and thrown against a window pain does little or no harm. Because when the sand leaves the hand the grains are no longer united. Thus they harmlessly strike the target.
4. But cement those same grains of sand together and lightly pitch it against the same window pain and it easily breaks.
5. Likewise, when God's people are united, standing for the truth of God's word on all subjects unequivocally opposed to every form of vice, every false doctrine, and every practice of sin, they carry a powerful force for God's system of righteousness.
6. This is what this text teaches; it is what a completed confirmed Bible demands from every Christian who professes to believe it.