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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**"GRACE ACCORDING TO THE**

**MEASURE OF THE GIFT OF CHRIST"**

**Ephesians 4:7-14**

***Ephesians 4:7 "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."***

To equip the church for unity and service, God graciously gives every believer a spiritual gift, a divine enablement to be used in ministry to God’s people for the expansion of his kingdom. Thank goodness, He measures with His measurement, and not with ours. It is not the amount of grace that we want that Christ gives us, but the amount that He feels is right for us. Within this unity each one performs service that is enabled by Christ’s grace. He gives grace, that is, grants spiritual giftedness just as He wills.

***1 Corinthians 12:11 “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”***

***Ephesians 4:8 "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."***

Paul quotes Psalms 68 because Jesus’ victory and exaltation is another example of God’s triumph, similar to the one in the psalm. The conquering King took the captives captive and gave gifts to people. Behind those words is the picture of a Roman general who defeats the enemy and leads his captives in a triumphal procession. Those people who were formerly captives of Satan’s kingdom are now captives of God’s kingdom, and the victorious King distributes gifts to them. The gifts given to “men” (males), not mankind (male and female) are gender specific. God is indiscriminate in giving ministry gifts. But everyone has to operate within their God appointed role. If Jesus had to do absolutely everything, He would have had much less time to fulfill His role. In the same way, if the apostles had to do everything, they would not have had as much time to fulfill their role (Acts 6:2). The men (Deacons) were chosen for a specific leadership role. Did this mean that their role was not important or inferior? No. Their roles were very important and vital to the success of the ministry. Even though the seven were not apostles, they helped the apostles accomplish their mission. The same it is with women and their ministry role to the body of Christ. The fulfilling of this role is so important to the success of the church, that if men allow women to neglect their responsibility, the church is destined for “great tribulation and death” (Revelation 2:18-29). In the Bible, all Priests, High Priests, Kings, Military leaders, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Bishops, Elders, and writers of the Bible (two books were appropriately named for women but written by men), are all men. In redemption, which manifestation of God is of greater importance? The Father, The Son or The Holy Ghost? Neither, all are equally essential, but they each have different roles. The same concept is with the church. When people speak of which is more important, or which is superior, men or women, they are exposing their ignorance. They are equal before God, but they have different roles to fulfill (Galatians 3:28).

***Ephesians 4:9-10***

***9 "(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" 10 "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"***

Paul explains that before Jesus ascended far above all the heavens, he descended to the lower parts of the earth. This is speaking of the time after Jesus had completed payment of the law on the cross. Victory was on the cross. There was nothing else to pay. When Jesus said, it is finished, it meant just that. The law had been completely fulfilled, there was no more suffering to do. The victory of the Lord Jesus was on the cross. He defeated sin and the devil on the cross. After defeating Satan on the cross, Jesus’s spirit descended and declared victory to the demons. He descended to preach to those in hell. His other reason for being in hell, was to take the keys of hell and death away from Satan.

***1 Peter 3:18-22***

***18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:***

***19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;***

***20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.***

***21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:***

***22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.***

***Revelation 1:18 "I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."***

This is still speaking of the victorious Jesus. We know in the 1st chapter of Acts, He ascended into heaven while the apostles gazed at Him.

***Acts 1:9 "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."***

Jesus must fill our life, or we are dead. He is life. He is the One who sent the Comforter. He is, also, the one who fills us with the Holy Spirit.

***Ephesians 4:11 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"***

These gifts include empowerment for the leaders: he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. This is spoken of by many as the five-fold ministry. A church is blessed to have all these gifts operating. Many people confuse the apostles and the disciples. All apostles are disciples but not all disciples are apostles. The original 12 apostles were chosen by Jesus from the larger group of disciples, after He prayed all night. Apostle means delegate or ambassador of the gospel. It indicates {with miraculous powers}. It, also, means a messenger, or he that is sent. An ambassador does not bring his own message but brings the message of the One who sent him. "Prophets" are foretellers or inspired speakers. Evangelist" is a preacher of the gospel. An evangelist usually has one message, and that is how to receive salvation. A pastor differs from the evangelist, in that after the person is saved, he watches over them to lead them into Christian growth. They may, also, lead the person to salvation. They are like a good shepherd which leads the flock. Teachers in the sense that we would understand would be like Sunday school teachers and Bible study teachers. They would keep the Word of God ever before the people.

***Ephesians 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"***

Their purpose is for equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. Christianity is a growing experience in Jesus. It is a way of life. The more we are taught, the more we grow in the Lord. The object, of course, is the perfecting of our faith. We either go forward or backwards with the Lord, we never stand still. The ministry cannot really function properly, until these ministry positions are filled. When there is no one taking care of one of the ministries, it puts an extra load on the pastor. All of this is to build up the body of Christ. All of this is to help the Christian in his walk with God. Some people attend church only for their own benefit. But that’s not what being a church member looks like; that’s called being a leech. God saved and equipped you for the work of ministry, the work of service. Why? To build up the body. To understand the church, all you have to do is understand your body. It’s a living organism composed of many parts working in harmony to contribute to the whole. Paul says the church is Christ’s body. And the church will only grow and mature when all the parts operate in harmony, in unity. If you have a Lone Ranger personality, you will be a feeble saint—and the body will suffer for it. Our relationship to the corporate body is crucial to our own spiritual development and the development of the church.

***Ephesians 4:13 "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"***

The call to the ministry is a lifetime call. We should never stop working, trying to bring unity of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowledge is accumulated learning, as we have said before. We must learn all we can about the Word of God. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the meaning of the Scriptures. The goal that we set for ourselves should be to be perfect in Jesus. We will never be perfect on this earth, but it should be the desire of our heart to be perfect. With our example being Jesus, we should try to be more and more like Him every day.

***Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."***

As individuals, we should desire to become more like Jesus every day. The entire body of Christ {all believers} should be working toward being like Jesus.

***Ephesians 4:14 "That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"***

When we are brand new Christians, we have to be fed on milk and honey. When we get stronger in our walk with Christ, we feed on the meat of the Word. The five-fold ministry is supposed to help the Christian grow stronger in his or her walk with the Lord. When you are a new Christian, you are easily persuaded, and might fall for false doctrines. The strong Christian, grounded in the Word of God, is like a big oak tree that cannot be blown over with every wind of doctrine. We are told, that in the end time nearly everyone will be deceived.

***Mark 13:22 "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if [it were] possible, even the elect."***

***Matthew 24:24 "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect."***

The only way to keep from being deceived, is to be fully grounded in the Word of God. Study to show thyself approved of God. Only by growing into maturity will we no longer be little children. Children are unstable in their thinking, easily tossed to and fro. Christians need the right theological and spiritual foundation to keep from being blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning. We need to be stabilized by maturity, and maturity only comes when we’re connected to each other. To mature, to grow in every way, we must be in an environment of speaking the truth in love. Truth is what God says about a matter. Truth must reign, and sometimes it isn’t pretty when the truth confronts our sin. That’s why the truth can’t be used like a destructive hammer. It must be spoken with love, which involves compassionately, righteously, and responsibly seeking the well-being of its recipient.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Unto every one of us is given grace according to what?
2. When He ascended up on high, he led \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Where was the victory of Jesus won?
4. Who has the keys of hell and death in Revelation chapter 1 verse 18.
5. What is verse 9 speaking of?
6. Name the 5 ministries in verse 11.
7. What is the difference in an "evangelist" and a pastor?
8. What is a "prophet"?
9. What is the object of studying the Word of God?
10. In verse 13, we see that the ultimate goal of the Christian is to measure up to what?
11. What are young Christians called in verse 14?
12. What can you compare the strong Christian to?
13. What is the only way to keep from being deceived?