

Ephesians 4:11-16

Growing up into Christ

Today we will begin a **2-part series** looking at the text of **Ephesians 4:11-16**. In order to gain some **context** for Paul's address to the church here, let us consider the **literary, historical, and biblical context**.

Literary – In the **preceding** context... In **4:7-10** Paul has described the ascension and condescension of Christ and his giving of gifts to the church. The gifts are according to the **“measure of his grace,”** to each one of us who are in the one unified body. These gifts also include the 4-fold gifting of apostles, prophets, evangelist, and pastors and teachers.

In the **proceeding** context... In **4:17–24** Paul will call the church to put off their former life, with all of its corrupted thinking and desires, and therefore every practice of it. He then calls us to put on the new man who has been created and righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Emphasis - This literary context reveals **Christ has gifted the church to be equipped to grow up into his likeness...** verse 13, 15, and 24!

Historical – Ephesian believers were saved out of gross immorality and idolatry, with its immoral cultural and religious practices. Consider **Ephesians 4:17-24** describing the Ephesians former manner of life. **ESV Study Bible** - Ancient Ephesus forms an appropriate background to the book of Ephesians because of this city's fascination with magic and the occult (see Acts 19:19, and below). Paul emphasizes the power of God over all heavenly authorities (3:10-11) and on Christ's triumphant ascension as head over the church and over all things in this age and the next (1:19-21).

Biblical context – In this section of Ephesians **God's eternal purpose to build up the body of Christ** (4:13,15-16) so that they become **conformed to His image** and manifest His wisdom (Eph 3:10-11) is highlighted and explained. The central thought or **main idea** of this section is that **Christ has gifted the body of Christ to equip and build it up until, as each part does its work, it grows up into the maturity of the fullness of Christ.** Its **structure** can be seen in **2 parts**.

- **4:11-13 - Equipping and building up the body**
- **4:14-16 - Growing up into Christ**

Ephesians 4:11-13 - 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. NASB

A. 11 He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers – Here Paul elaborates on the gifts given to the “each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” (v-7-8) Specifically, that “*some*” have received these **specific gifts** for a specific purpose of “**equipping**” the rest for the “**work of service,**” which he further elaborates on in v-12-13. Each one of us Christians have received the **grace of gifts** (v-7), but only “*some*” have received the grace of these specific “**equipping**” gifts. Paul does not elaborate on each of these **offices**, but simply mentions each one and the *general purpose* of them all, **working together to equip the saints**. This is by no means an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts, but simply a **list** of those **offices** within the church given for the **equipping** of the **saints** for their individual work of service (ministry). **apostles and prophets** – These have formerly done the work of “**laying the foundation**” of the “**dwelling where God lives by His Spirit**” (Eph 2:20) to **equip the saints**. This was accomplished by the **revelatory Word of Holy Scripture** which they brought forth **by the Spirit**, which laid the foundation of the church in word and practice. They gave us the **written Word** and an **example** of the **Christian life** lived out through the **local churches** which they **established**.

Ephesians 2:19-22 - 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom **the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord**; 22 in whom **you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit**. NASB

The “**prophets**” Moses, David and Solomon (and other Psalm writers), and the Major and Minor Prophets have given us the **Old Testament** books, and the “**Apostles**” have given us the **New Testament** books, completing the canon. Thus, see here one main role the Apostles and Prophets played was a **revelatory work**, bringing us the written Word of God establishing the foundation of all Christian Life and practice. (2 Corinthians 12:12, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Hebrews 2:2-4)

Hebrews 2:3-4 - 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?
After it was **at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit**

according to His own will. NASB

evangelists – Do the ongoing work in the body of **preaching the gospel** and disciple-making to **equip the saints**, but with the specific emphasis on calling the church out of darkness of sin and the world and into the **Kingdom of God**. One **key role evangelists** play is not only preaching the Gospel, but **training** the rest of the **church** to preach the Gospel. Evangelists are vital in the **instruction** and **encouragement** to the rest of the church in regard to our evangelical duty.

pastors and teachers – Do the ongoing work of disciple-making in the church specifically through the ministry of preaching and teaching to **equip the saints**. The word **“pastors”** (poimen, poy-mane'—shepherd) is the word for **shepherds**, which is used elsewhere in the NT to refer to Christ (Heb 13:20, 1 Pet 2:25). Here coupled together with the word for **teachers** to **emphasize** the **work** of a **pastor** as a **teacher**. The ministry of a **“pastor-teacher”** is outlined in the books of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, where Paul gives practical instruction to pastors Timothy and Titus. Consider how the ministry of a pastor is described as a **“shepherd”** with the emphasis placed on his **work** in **teaching** the **Word**, shepherding the people by the teaching of the Word. Thus, Paul closely ties the words together as **“shepherd-teachers.”** **Pastor teachers** equip the **saints** for the **work** of the **ministry**, verse 12, who in turn do the **proper working** of each **individual part**, and this **“16 causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”**

See here then how this **four-fold gifting** of Christ to His Church, **“apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers”** are given to establish the **foundation** of the church (apostles and prophets), and to **equip it** (evangelists and pastor-teachers) for the proper **work of ministry** to one another(v-12), focused on the **end goal** of Christian maturity into the **fulness of Christ**(v-13). It is vital therefore for Christians to **realize** their **own gifting** and work (calling) in order to fulfil God's purpose in **building up** the body of Christ, **“16 according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”**

B. for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ - Each one of these unique giftings, (apostles, prophets, evangelists,