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# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON LXIX : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

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## PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

**v. 1 reminds us again that Paul is a prisoner and employs one of his favorite phrases for introducing ethical instruction:**

<sup>1</sup> I call upon you (or, I beseech you, I exhort you), I, the prisoner of Christ ("I" is emphatic),  
to live worthy of the calling with which you were called,

**vv. 2,3 set out in a general way how readers are to respond if the unity of the church is to be preserved:**

<sup>2</sup> with all humility (or, lowliness) and gentleness (or, meekness),

with patience (or, long-suffering),

bearing with (or, 'forbearing, showing tolerance') one another in love,

<sup>3</sup> working zealously (or, 'making every effort, giving diligence, endeavoring, being eager') to preserve (or, 'maintain, keep') the unity of the Spirit

by means of the peace that binds (or, by the bond of peace, in the bond of peace).

**vv. 4-6 pick up the theme of unity, providing a series of declarations in each of which unity is stressed through the use of the word 'one' and God's total government through the use of 'all':**

<sup>4</sup> One body and

one Spirit

just as you were also called in one hope of your calling (or, to the one hope of your calling),

<sup>5</sup> one Lord,

one faith,

one baptism,

<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all

who is over all (or, above all)

and through all

and in all.

**vv. 7-16 speaks to diversity within the unity; some of what makes us differ is our gifts as distributed by the sovereign hand of Jesus Christ Himself. In vv. 7-10 Paul begins with a proof-text showing Christ has the right to dispense gifts as He wills:**

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us the grace has been given

in the proportion allotted by Christ's giving;

<sup>8</sup> therefore it says:

Ascending on high he led captives captive (or, when he ascended on high he led captivity captive, he led a host of prisoners captive);

he gave gifts to men.

<sup>9</sup> And what significance has 'He ascended'

unless he also descended [first] into the lower regions,

that is, the earth? (or, into the lower regions of the earth)

<sup>10</sup> He who descended is himself also the one who ascended above all the heavens,

so that he might fill all things. (or, to fill everything, to fill the cosmos, to fill the universe)

**Having earned the right to dispense gifts as He pleases, Paul shows what Christ gave (v. 11) and why (vv. 12-16):**

<sup>11</sup> And he himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be shepherds and teachers,

**Although there are questions on the syntax of v. 12, it most likely describes three aspects of the purpose of these gifts:**

<sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints (or, for perfecting the saints, for bringing the saints to completion)  
for the work of the ministry,  
for the building up of the body of Christ,

**(Those disagreeing with the above syntax believes the verse should be written as follows:**

<sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry,  
for the building up of the body of Christ)

**A temporal clause ('until') further clarifies in terms of the goal, using again three prepositional phrases:**

<sup>13</sup> until we all attain (or, arrive at)

into the unity of faith and knowledge of the son of God,

into a mature male (literal; but the sense is 'to a mature person' in contrast with 'immature children' in the next verse),

into the measure (or, to the standard) of the stature (or, the age, the maturity) of fullness of Christ,

**This purpose is now described first negatively (v. 14) and then positively (v. 15). Negatively, there is a need to move away from the present immaturity:**

<sup>14</sup> in order that (hina) we may no longer (or, cease) be very young children (or, infants, babes),

tossed back and forth by the waves,

and blown here and there by every wind of teaching,

in the craftiness of men (or, in human cunning), in craftiness (or, by trickery) towards the scheming of error (or, in deceitful scheming, plotting),

**Positively we are to grow up into our Head, Jesus Christ:**

<sup>15</sup> rather speaking truth in love (or, by 'truthing'; the sense may not be limited to verbal use only)

let us grow in every respect unto him,

who is the head, Christ,

**Paul concludes by summarizing the already mentioned purposes of the growth and building up of the body, while underlining the fact that these processes have their source in Christ and require the activity of each part of the body:**

<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body,

fitted and held together (or, joined and brought together)

through every ligament of supply (or, gives supply),

makes bodily growth

according to the activity in proportion of each individual part,

achieves bodily growth

into its own building up in love (or, for the purpose of building itself up in love).

## **Ephesians 4:7 —**

Vnto every one of vs is geuen grace acordinge to the measure of the gyft of christ. (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

But vnto euery one of vs is giuen grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (King James Version, 1769)

and to each one of you was given the grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Revised Version, 1885)

But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (American Standard Version, 1901)

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. (New King James Version, 1982)

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.* (New American Standard Version, 1995)

*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.* (New International Version, 2011)

*But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.* (English Standard Version, 2011)

Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. (NA28 Greek New Testament)

**vv. 7-16 IS A DISTINCT UNIT** — The reasons for considering vv. 7~16 as a single unit are as follows:

- **CHANGE FROM SECOND PERSON ('YOU') TO FIRST PERSON ('US, WE')** — In vv. 1~6 Paul has been using the second person ('you');

*'beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called'*, v. 1

*'just as you were called'*, v. 4

*'and in you all'*, v. 6

This changes here in v. 7 to first person ('we, us'):

*'But to each one of us'*, v. 7

*'till we all come to the unity of the faith'*, v. 13

*'that we should no longer be children'*, v. 14

After this portion of Scripture, Paul returns to the second person:

*'This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk,'*  
v.17

More will be said about Paul's use of the word 'us' below. (Best, 374; Lincoln, 224)

- **AN 'INCLUSIO' IN vv. 7, 16** — Note this portion of Scripture is also set apart by the use of εἷς ἑκάστος [heis hekastos] in both v. 7 and v. 16 like bookends (an *inclusio*; see the text block for the definition).

*'to each one...'* v. 7 (ἐνὶ ἑκάστῳ, heni hekastō)

*'each single...'* v. 16 (ἐνὸς ἐκάστου, henos hekastou; *'according to the working in the measure of each single part, ... YLT)*

**Inclusio** — Repetition of same language at beginning and end of a section of literature forming bookends, telling the reader that what is in the middle of the two bookends is support or an explanation of what the words making up the bookends. Example: *'The Lord was with Joseph and he was successful'* (Gen 39:2,3) ... *'The Lord was with him and made him succeed.'* (Gen 39:21-23) The Abrahamic covenant extended to Joseph. This chapter fleshes out two critical examples of it showing the Lord's faithfulness to His covenant people.

**OVERALL 'INCLUSIO' OF 'IN LOVE' (vv. 2, 16)** — While

we can see the *'inclusio'* in our present verses (vv. 7~10), vv. 7~16 is also framed (another *'inclusio'*) of *'in love'*. "As long as there is mutual forbearance, this differentiation can be a factor that promotes rather than hinders unity. As [Paul] stresses, both at the beginning (v 2) and at the end (vv 15, 16) of the passage, the essential ingredient for the achievement of the harmony of unity in diversity is love. Love is the energizing power behind the community's drive to maintain unity, at the heart of its proclamation of truth and all the way through its process of corporate growth." [Lincoln, 267]

**PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE** — This is the basic structure of what follows and how it relates with what we have already studied:

vv. 1~6 emphasis on living in loving unity within the church

vv. 7~10 diversity within the unity of the church

vv. 11~16 return to the prevailing theme of unity

Vv. 7~10 may be broken down even further as follows:

v. 7 transitional verse from unity to diversity within the body of Christ by the giving of gifts

v. 8 Scriptural support for Christ as the gift-Giver

vv. 9,10 Midrashic commentary on the Scriptural support

*"A true unity will not be monolithic but will contain variety within itself, as Paul had already stressed in 1 Cor 12.12-31; Rom 12.3-8. The unity in question is of course that of the church, though strangely the word church is not itself used in this paragraph. Underlying it is the image of the body of Christ, though this concept is not made explicit until v. 12.... 4.4-6 shows unity as already existing and perfect, and 4.7-16 shows how it is to be continued and matured."* [Best, 356, 375]

**But to each one of us** — ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν [heni de hekastō hēmōn] — **PAUL IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH HIS READERS** — As Paul intends to show the variety of gifts within the churches, he does not wish to leave himself in a superior position as though not possessing or needing any of the gifts. [Best, 374; O'Brien, 286; Lincoln, 241]

**IS 'US, WE' A REFERENCE TO PASTORS / LEADERS ONLY?** — A few scholars limit Paul's use of the word 'us, we' to Christian leaders only. The main reason for believing this is the direct move from v. 7 to v. 11 with nothing intervening to suggest a change in respect to those in mind. While there are other minor arguments to suggest such an understanding, none that I studied agreed with that limitation. Reasons for believing Paul is referring to all believers are as follows: [Best, 376f; Hoehner, 521f; O'Brien, 287; Thielman, 264]

- throughout Ephesians the use of 'us, we' has referred to Paul with his readers
- in other passages speaking of the spiritual gifts, they are given to all believers and not office-bearers alone
- v. 7 differs strikingly from v. 11; v. 7 speaks of gifts being given to people while in v. 11 the gifts are the people
- this exhortation part of the letter is addressed to all believers unless it is made clear that limited groups are in mind (e.g., 5:22–6:9)
- v. 13 speaks of 'we all ...' meaning all believers, not just the leaders
- Paul's adding of the word 'one' in v. 7 suggests no one is excluded from those who receive gifts

**'ONE' IS EMPHATIC** — There is unique usage of words in v. 7 which is not altogether obvious in our English translations. Paul says 'to each one of us...' as he starts to describe how diverse the unified churches are in reality. To make that statement, all Paul would have had to say was 'to each of us...' (ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν, hekastō hēmōn) and his change in emphasis would have been clear. However Paul adds another word, 'to each one of us...' (ἐνὶ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν, heni hekastō hēmōn) to tie what follows with what has preceded.

*"In vv. 4–6 the word 'one' has been used in relation to a sevenfold unity; now it refers to the individuals (each one of us) who make up this unity in the body. The appeal to individual believers is thus made a little more emphatic."* [O'Brien, 287; see also Thielman, 263; MacArthur, 134; Salmond, 323]

*"The beginning of the second part of the passage (vv 7-16) and of a distinct train of thought is marked by 'to each one of us, however...'. This introduces the note of diversity in the distribution of grace by Christ to each individual member of the Church. As becomes clear, this new note does not mean the abandonment of the earlier motif of unity. Instead, diversity is seen to contribute to unity, as [Paul] goes on to show that the purpose of the diverse gifts of Christ to the Church, particularly the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, is to build up the whole body, to enable it to attain maturity and unity (v 13), a unity in which there is still an integral role for the individual."* [Lincoln, 225, 241]

*"Though 'one' in our common connection with 'one Lord, one faith, &c., one God,' yet 'each one of us' has assigned to him his own particular gift, to be used for the good of the whole: none is overlooked; none therefore can be dispensed with for the edifying of the Church. A motive to unity."* [JFB, Commentary on Whole Bible]

*"And the connexion is — as a motive to keep the unity of the Spirit — 'none is overlooked: — each has his part in the distribution of the gifts of the One Spirit, which part he is bound to use for the well-being of the whole.'" [Alford, 115]*

ἐνὶ [heni, 'one'] picks up the use of 'one' in vv. 4–6, perhaps making the appeal to individual believers a little more emphatic, since ἐκάστῳ [hekastō, 'each'] by itself would have conveyed what is needed." [Best, 376]

"In the addition of ἐνὶ [heni, 'one'] to ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν [hekastō hēmōn, 'each of us'], the idea of distribution is expressed more distinctly than by the simple term." [Hoehner, 522]

**'UNITY DOES NOT MEAN UNIFORMITY BUT HARMONY' — QUOTES RELATING TO DIVERSITY WITHIN UNITY** — I was just so blessed to read these quotes that I felt obligated to pass them along:

**Andrew T. Lincoln**, *Word Biblical Commentary Series: Ephesians*: "The Church is not a chance collection of individuals.... [T]his unity is not a monochrome uniformity; the variety in Christ's distribution of grace to all ensures its rich diversity." [Lincoln, 267]

**Thomas K. Abbott**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*: "He passes from the relation to the whole to the relation to the individual. In the oneness of the body, etc., there is room for diversity, and no one is overlooked; each has his own position." [Abbott, 110]

**Peter O'Brien**, *Pillar New Testament Commentary Series: The Letter to the Ephesians*: "This diversity is not at variance with the overarching unity, nor is it at the cost of unity. The purpose of the ascended Christ's giving various gifts to the church, particularly the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, is to build the whole body so as to enable it to attain maturity and unity (v. 13), a unity in which there is an integral role for the individual (v. 16). The various ministries are intended to equip the whole body for 'ministry', so that it might 'grow up' into a healthy (mature)

body, with Christ at the head and the whole of it drawing its life from him as it grows into his likeness (vv. 12–16).” [O’Brien, 273]

**Klyne Snodgrass**, *The NIV Application Commentary Series: Ephesians*: “Paul’s concern for unity is balanced by an emphasis on diversity and the responsibility of each person. While not as explicit in Ephesians 4 as in other texts, this is clearly Paul’s intent.... That is, unity does not mean that individuality and individual responsibility are lost. Unity reigns, but Christ does not work merely at the universal level. He works in the individual and gives grace to each person.... Unity does not exist in the sameness of person or responsibility, but in origin from God, dependence on the one gospel, and destination with God. Within the unity grace is given to everyone so that each person has a different responsibility.” [Snodgrass, 200]

**Charles Hodge**, *Geneva Series of Commentaries: Ephesians*: “This unity of the church, although it involves the essential equality of all believers, is still consistent with great diversity as to gifts, influence, and honour. According to the apostle’s favourite illustration, it is like the human body, which is composed of many members with different functions. It is not all eye nor all ear. **This diversity of gifts is not only consistent with unity, but is essential to it.** The body is not one member but many. In every organism a diversity of parts is necessary to the unity of the whole. If all were one member, asks the apostle, where were the body? ... **The position, moreover, of each member in the body, is not determined by itself, but by God. The eye does not make itself the eye, nor the ear, the ear. It is thus in the church. The different positions, gifts, and functions of its members, are determined not by themselves but by Christ.** All this is taught by the apostle when he says, ‘But (i. e. notwithstanding the unity of the church) unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.’ There is this diversity of gifts, and the distribution of these gifts is in the hand of Christ.” [Hodge, 149f]

**John Calvin**, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*: “**He now describes the manner in which God establishes and preserves among us a mutual relation. No member of the body of Christ is endowed with such perfection as to be able, without the assistance of others, to supply his own necessities. A certain proportion is allotted to each; and it is only by communicating with each other, that all enjoy what is sufficient for maintaining their respective places in the body. The diversity of gifts is discussed in another Epistle, and very nearly with the same object. ‘There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit’ (1 Cor. xii 4). Such a diversity, we are there taught, is so far from injuring, that it tends to promote and strengthen, the harmony of believers. The meaning of this verse may be thus summed up. ‘On no one has God bestowed all things. Each has received a certain measure. Being thus dependent on each other, they find it necessary to throw their individual gifts into the common stock, and thus to render mutual aid.’ The words ‘grace’ and ‘gift’ remind us that, whatever may be our attainments, we ought not to be proud of them, because they lay us under deeper obligations to God. These blessings are said to be the gift of Christ; for, as the apostle, first of all, mentioned the Father, so his aim, as we shall see, is to represent all that we are, and all that we have, as gathered together in Christ.**” [Calvin, 271]

**PARALLEL PASSAGES** — There are a couple similar passages that coincides with vv. 7~16. We will reference these throughout our studies in these verses.

**1 Pet 4:10,11 NKJV** — ‘As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.’

**Rom 12:3~8 NKJV** — ‘For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.’

**1 Cor 12:4~31 NKJV** — ‘There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.*

*If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye,*

*where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?*

*But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

*Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.'*