

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

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

## **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)

**grace was given** — ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις [edothē hē charis] — **MINISTRY, NOT SALVATION** — To understand Paul’s statement here requires us to remember that every time the word ‘grace’ is found does not necessarily mean it is in reference to our salvation. *‘Grace’ means ‘unmerited favor’ and describes all of God’s interaction with man.*

*“Once again ‘grace’ has an unexpected meaning. It does not designate saving grace here, but grace for ministry, if indeed the two can be separated. Paul could as easily have written, ‘To each of us ministry has been given.’ Just as in 3:8 he spoke of the grace given to him to preach to the Gentiles, here in virtually identical language he writes of the grace given to each person to do the work of one’s calling.”* [Snodgrass, 200]

*“Just as with 3:2, 7, and 8, the term χάρις [charis, ‘grace’] carries with it the connotation not only of an assignment given by God but also of the gift of ‘the powers and capabilities requisite to complete the assignment’. Just as in Paul’s own experience of God’s grace (3:7-8), then, Christ measures out to each believer the right amount of power necessary to accomplish the task that the gift requires.”* [Thielman, 264]

*“Within the unity of the body each member has a distinctive service to render for the effective functioning of the whole. The ability to perform this service is due to the ‘grace’ given by the ascended Christ to each one.”* [O’Brien, 287; see also Best, 377; Lincoln, 241; Bruce, 339f; Hoehner, 522; Hodge, 150; Barnes’ NT Notes]

**The combination of these terms (‘grace, give, gift’) was used by Paul in the previous chapter as he discussed his personal role in the purpose of God. He called his role ‘the grace that God gave him:**

*‘For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you’* (Eph 3:1,2 NKJV)

**Paul had received this grace given to him for a particular purpose:**

*‘of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ’* (Eph 3:7,8 NKJV)

**While Paul’s role may have been unique, we too are given gifts to be used for the glory of God:**

*‘Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them’* (Rom 12:6a NKJV)

**‘GIVEN’ A PASSIVE AORIST** — Hoehner calls the verb ‘given’ a ‘divine passive gnomic aorist.’ A. T. Robertson says a ‘gnomic aorist’ is timeless, differing from the present tense in that the present tense is durative. Hoehner says this emphasizes that the individual receives the gift of enablement from the Lord and is to use it to minister for his glory. [Hoehner, 522] While I do not think we could be over-dogmatic on this, I personally believe this means the gifts given were at the moment of salvation versus being given throughout our Christian lives.

**THE GIVER OF GRACE** — While the “Giver” of this grace is undefined, it is probably Christ Himself, emphasizing the position of Christ. Note how Paul continues in v. 8:

*‘Therefore He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’* (Eph 4:8 NKJV)

In other places the Giver is God:

*‘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.’* (Rom 12:3 NKJV)

*‘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.’* (1 Cor 12:28 NKJV)

Elsewhere it is the Holy Spirit that is the Giver:

*‘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.’* (1 Cor 12:4-11 NKJV)

**“Some would argue that the subject of the verb, the one who gives the grace, is God, but more likely it is Christ for in this context it is Christ who descends and ascends and has the right to give the gifts. With the resurrection, Christ has been given all authority and power in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18; Rom 1:4) and this is demonstrated in the present context by his bestowal of the gracious gifts for ministry.”** [Hoehner, 522f; see also Best, 377; Lincoln, 241; Salmond, 323; Bruce, 340]

**CHRIST’S SOVEREIGN GIVING OF GRACES IS FOR HIS GLORY, THE ASSEMBLY AND THEN FOR OURSELVES** — We are here reminded of the acronym we teach to our children: ‘**JOY**’ means

**J**esus first      **O**thers second and      **Y**ourself third.

As was mentioned in a previous class, it is not that we do not benefit personally from these graces but we are to maintain the proper perspective and order as ordained by the Lord.

*“Previously, grace is said to have been given to the apostle for his ministry to the Gentiles (cf. 3:2, 7, 8), but now it can be said to be given to each individual believer, not simply for his or her own sake but for the good of the whole, as the passage will go on to show.”* [Lincoln, 241]

*“It is not sufficient to say ... that God gives grace to each in accordance with the needs of his/her spiritual pilgrimage, for the grace is given not for the person but for the building up of the community.”* [Best, 377]

*“Believers’ gifts are not determined by their preferences, inclinations, natural abilities, merit, or any other personal consideration, but solely by God’s sovereign and gracious will. We are gifted according to His plan, His purpose, and His measure. We have no more to do with determining our gift than we did with determining what color of skin, hair, or eyes we would be born with.”* [MacArthur, 136]

*“This does not suggest Christ gives only a small amount of grace to some, for he has lavished his grace on us (1:8).... The concern is to recognize the God-intended and God-empowered diversity of functions within the body of Christ.”* [Snodgrass, 199f]

*“They are distributed, according to the measure of the gift of Christ; that is, as he sees fit to give. The rule is not our merit, or our previous capacity, nor our asking, but his own good pleasure. Paul was made an apostle, who before was a blasphemer and injurious. The duty, as the apostle teaches, which arises from all this is, that every one should be contented with the position assigned him; neither envying those above, nor despising those below him. To refuse to occupy the position assigned us in the church, is to refuse to belong to it at all. If the foot refuses to be the foot, it does not become the hand, but is cut off and perishes. Sympathy is the law of every body having a common life. If one member suffers, all suffer; and if one rejoices, all rejoice. We can tell, therefore, whether we belong to the body of Christ, by ascertaining whether we have this contentment with our lot, and this sympathy with our fellow members.”* [Hodge, 150f]

**according to the measure** — *κατὰ τὸ μέτρον* [kata to metron] — **‘AS CHRIST APPORTIONED IT’** — Others expand on what Paul means like this:

*‘according to what Christ has given’* [Abbott, 110; Lincoln, 241f]

*‘according to the due measure, proportion, or limit’* [Thielman, 264]

*‘the amount of the measure’* [Alford, 115]

*‘in proportion to Christ’s allotted giving’* [O’Brien, 287]

Paul repeats this same thought in other passages:

*'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.' (Rom 12:3 NKJV)*

Note how Paul used this to address pride in that passage. **Thinking back to v. 2 where Paul speaks of humility: Christian humility is not to deny the gifts given to us by the Lord but recognizing them for what they are: gifts from the Lord! No reason for pride of our own abilities, nor should we look down on others.**

*'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...' (Rom 12:6 NKJV)*

*'But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.' (1 Cor 12:11 NKJV)*

Further comments:

**Each gets the grace which Christ has to give, and each gets it in the proportion in which the Giver is pleased to bestow it; one having it in larger measure and another in smaller, but each getting it from the same Hand and with the same purpose.** [Salmond, 323]

**"The same grace is not given to all, but to all is given enough to enable them to live as they ought to live."** [Barnes]

**measure** — μέτρον [metron] — The grace is given according to the 'metron':

"Here μέτρον [metron] means a 'measure as the result of measuring'; cf. vv. 13, 16 (so BAGD, 515)." [O'Brien, 287]

"The word 'measure' (v. 7; NIV, 'apportioned') reappears in 4:13 ('the whole measure of the fullness of Christ') and in 4:16 ('according to the working in measure of each part', NIV, 'as each part does its work'). **What is measured to each one is needed to make the full measure of the body of Christ.**" [Snodgrass, 199f]

"The word appears twice more in our passage (vv. 13, 16) but only twice elsewhere in Paul (Rom 12.3; 2 Cor 10.13), and has probably the sense 'full measure'. **The giving is not random but in accordance with Christ's plan; he apportions gifts to believers. Graces are not given because of an existing degree of faith in believers; they are gifts, not the result of works.... [T]he fact that they are given according to measure should preserve believers from envying the gifts bestowed on others.**" [Best, 377f]

**"The preposition κατά [kata] with the accusative denotes standard.** The person is a recipient of the gracious gift according to the measure of the gift of Christ. **It conveys that Christ not only gives each believer a gift but he also determines the amount of the gift.... Since the gift is measured out by Christ, there should not be any jealousy within the body. The difference of the gift does not determine the value. The difference of value is determined only by the individual's use of it within the body.**" [Hoehner, 523]

**ARE THESE 'GIFTS' NATURAL ABILITIES?** — "Are [the gifts] however given to supplement the natural talents which believers already possess? [Paul] does not enter into such questions, but **the stress he lays on the givenness of the gifts suggests he would have had no place for any idea of inborn talent or educational achievement as predetermining who should have each particular gift. Graces however never destroy individuality...**" [Best, 377]

**'CHARIS' AND 'CHARISMA'** — Just about all the commentators I used in this study commented on Paul's unusual choice of verbiage in this text. The word Paul uses is χάρις [charis] and is used throughout the NT for 'grace' including Eph 2:5, 7, 8. In the other passages we have noted as being parallel to our Ephesian passage, the word Paul uses is χάρισμα [charisma] which is translated 'gifts' (note: this is not the word Paul uses in the latter part of 4:7). Peter O'Brien states the differences like this:

**"Grace is viewed in terms of its outworking in a variety of ways in the lives of individuals, and thus comes to signify much the same as charisma does in the parallel passages in Paul (1 Cor. 12:4; Rom. 12:6). Perhaps the use of charis here, rather than charisma, is to stress the source of divine grace in providing the gifts."** [O'Brien, 287; see also Salmond, 323; Lincoln, 241; Thielman, 263; MacArthur, 135; Best, 377]

Harold Hoehner gives this possible explanation as to why Paul did this:

"[Charis, 'grace'] is very closely connected with χάρισμα [charisma], 'grace-gift,' which is used in the parallel passage on gifts (1 Cor 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31). Furthermore, Paul places the two terms side by side in two passages (1 Cor 1:4, 7; Rom 12:6). Thus, it can be deduced that χάρισμα [charisma] is a particular manifestation of God's enabling χάρις [charis] for various types of ministry." [Hoehner, 522]

**of Christ's gift** — τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ [tēs dōreas tou Christou] — **'THE GIFT OF CHRIST'** — 'Of Christ' is a 'genitive of source or agent', thus Christ is the Source, *'the gift bestowed by Christ.'* **"It comes through him. It is what he has purchased; what he has obtained by his merits. All have enough for the purposes for which God has called them into his kingdom; but there are not the same endowments conferred on all. Some have grace given them to qualify them for the ministry; some to be apostles; some to be martyrs; some to make them eminent as public benefactors. All this has been obtained by Christ; and one should not complain that another has more distinguished endowments than he has."** [Barnes' NT Notes]

**gift** — τῆς δωρεᾶς [tēs dōreas] — this word carries the idea of ‘a gift graciously given by God, the freeness of the gift’. The other words have different focuses; e.g.,

‘*charismata*’ focuses on the ‘undeservedness of the gift’ (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4; 1 Pet 4:10)

‘*pneumatikon*’ (‘spiritual gifts’; lit. ‘spiritual things’; 1 Cor 12:1) focuses on the spiritual source of the gift

***“In light of the truth just stated it is clear that since they are sovereignly given, no gifts should be sought; that since they are essential elements in God’s plan, no gifts should be unused; and that since they come from the Lord, no gifts should be exalted.”*** [MacArthur, 136]

**EACH BELIEVER’S GIFTS ARE UNIQUE** — “The lists of specific gifts in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and Ephesians 4:11 are not narrow and strict delineations of the spiritual gifts. There is not, for instance, a single kind of prophetic gift, teaching gift, or serving gift. A hundred believers with the gift of teaching will not all have the same degrees or areas of teaching ability or emphasis. One may excel in public teaching in the classroom or church. Another’s teaching gift will be for instructing children, another’s for teaching one-on-one, and so on. Each believer is given the measure of grace and faith to operate his gift according to God’s plan. Add individual personality, background, education, influences in life, and needs in the area of service and it becomes obvious that each believer is unique.

“Nor is it that a believer’s single gift will be restricted to only one category of giftedness. An individual gift may include a number of specific areas of giftedness, in a limitless variety of combinations. Someone with a major gift of administration may also have something of the gifts of helps and of teaching. **Believers’ gifts are like snowflakes and fingerprints — each one is completely distinct from all others. Some teachers may emphasize knowledge, some instruction, some mercy, and others exhortation. From the palette of gift colors the Holy Spirit uses the brush of His sovereign design to paint the mixture of each believer so that no two are like.**

***“Christians are not assembly-line productions, with every unit being exactly like every other unit. Consequently, no Christian can replace another in God’s plan. He has His own individualized plan for each of us and has individually gifted us accordingly.*** We are not interchangeable parts in Christ’s Body, but ‘individually members one of another’ (Rom. 12:5). ‘One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills’ (1 Cor. 12:11). ***When a believer does not minister his gift properly as God’s steward (1 Pet. 4:10), God’s work suffers to that degree — because God has not called or gifted another Christian in exactly the same way or for exactly the same work. That is why no Christian is to be a spectator. Every believer is on the team and is strategic in God’s plan, with his own unique skills, position, and responsibilities.***

“At weddings, birthdays, Christmas, and other such occasions, we often get gifts for which we have no use. We put them in a drawer, store them in the garage, or later give them to someone else. But God never gives such gifts. **Each of His gifts is exactly what we need to fulfill our work for Him. We never get the wrong gift, or too much or too little of it.** When the Holy Spirit gave us our gift, He presented us with precisely the right blend of abilities and enablement we need to serve God. Not only does our unique giftedness make us an irreplaceable member of Christ’s Body but it is a mark of God’s great love to single each of us out for unique blessing and ministry.

***“Not to use our gift is an affront to God’s wisdom, a rebuff of His love and grace, and a loss to His church. We did not determine our gift, deserve it, or earn it. But we all have a gift from the Lord, and if we do not use it, His work is weakened and His heart is grieved. The intent of the text before us is to reveal the balanced relationship between the oneness of believers and their individuality which contributes to that oneness.”*** [MacArthur, 136f]