“Ephesians – God’s Plan For Every Believer”

Chapter 4:4-12

Paul explains what unifies believers in verses 4 to 6

These verses are trinitarian in nature

Verse 4 – God the Holy Spirit

Pentecost – inception of New Testament church

Sealing guarantees our future hope

Verse 5 – God the Son

Jesus is Lord over all creation

It’s only through faith in Him one can receive eternal life

Once we trust Him, we become baptized to acknowledge we’re committed to following His ways

Verse 6 – God the Father

He is the cause and source of everything which exists

He is omnipresent throughout this entire universe

He gives life to all living things

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These truths never change universally, culturally or generationally

We must graciously but tenaciously upheld them without compromise no matter what opposition may come our way

Paul transitions next to the topic of spiritual gifts

How he introduces this subject isn’t what one would naturally expect

I have to admit I was truly mystified by these verses when I was a young Christian

They seemed to be out of place, not fitting logically within this chapter’s context

However, this could not be true since all Scripture is inspired through the Holy Spirit and therefore is precisely what God wanted written

Why does Paul reference Psalm 68 in verses 8 to 10?

He is emphasizing how there’s to be unity in doctrine but diversity in giftedness within the church

Everyone must believe the same essential doctrines but every believer does not have the same role in Christian ministry

But why use these verses to explain this?

These verses picture Jesus as the conquering hero

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He descended to earth, was born of a virgin, died on the cross, but rose victorious and then ascended back into heaven

His victory gave Him the right and privilege to disperse gifts to those under His divine reign as the conquering King

Paul centres his focus upon the most significant gifts Christ gave to His church

These foundational gifts will ensure His eternal kingdom becomes established in the world, while continuing to strengthen and grow and flourish according to God’s plan

These gifts actually come in the form, not of specific characteristics but specific individuals themselves

Yet, at the same time, He gives these people special abilities to function within their roles

Let’s take a closer look at each of these designations

We will notice how there’s a clear methodical progression in God’s establishment of the church from its inception up to this present time

The apostles were the foundation of the early N.T. church, which was initially built around Christ as the chief cornerstone

Some of these apostles were instrument in writing inspired Scripture, such as John, Paul, Peter and Jude

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We do not believe apostolic succession exists today

One of the qualifications to become an apostle was having seen and interacted with the risen Christ

John was the last apostle who was alive in the first century

After apostles come those gifted as prophets

We commonly think of prophets as giving incredible predictions regarding future events

This certainly was true throughout the O.T.

However, there was another emphasis to prophecy when Paul penned these words

The prophets provided hope for the early N.T. church

We must continually remember how believers from Paul’s era were experiencing great persecution

Prophecy was tailored toward helping these believers remain committed to living for Christ and serving others while going through these trials

Apostles such as Peter and John functioned within a prophetic role, e.g. the book of Revelation and predictions regarding Christ’s second coming, creation of a new heaven and earth

We do not believe inspired prophecy exists today

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Next come the proclaimers of the good news

The evangelists guaranteed both the expansion and preservation of the early New Testament church and still have an instrumental role in currently spreading the gospel

Every Christian is to practice evangelism but not every believer is gifted as an evangelist

The last category is those who are gifted as pastors and teachers

Grammatically, this refers to only one person

The pastor/teachers provide continual biblical instruction, guidance, comfort and exhortation

They help the church to remain committed to its mission, true to its doctrine, and steadfast in its service

So the church is like a living temple, its foundation built upon Christ, the apostles and prophets and built up through evangelists, pastors and teachers

The Bible is complete – there’s no new necessary God-ordained information we need to know

This is what Paul was emphasizing in verses 4 to 6

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Therefore, what we need right now is for the gospel to be proclaimed and believers to be strengthened in their faith

Gifted leadership is to have a primary equipping ministry

The church is not to rely upon paid professionals to do everything within its various ministries

Every single member within the body of Christ is to actively, consistently, willingly practice Christian service

How has God spoken to us through these Scripture verses from Ephesians today?