

The Fullness of Christ: Studies in Ephesians (8-18-19)

THE 5-FOLD GRACE OF JESUS THROUGH HIS CHURCH

(Ephesians 4:1-16)

JESUS IS BUILDING HIS CHURCH

- God is doing a great work. Jesus died, rose again from the dead and He is now building His church (Matt. 16:18). God's goal for us is nothing less than the fullness of Christ. Without the church, there will be no full expression of Jesus on the earth as God intended.
- Jesus releases 5 different expressions of His grace to us and through us. His goal is a complete, mature (and in that sense, a perfect) man, the fullness of Christ (vs. 13).
- Jesus gives these to people who themselves are gifts to the church. These 5 aspects of Jesus' grace is also in operation to some extent in every believer in the Body of Christ (Vs. 7 - to each one of us)

Eph. 4:11-13¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

APOSTOLIC

"...As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (John 20:21b)

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... (Matt. 28:19)

As The Apostle sent from the Father, Jesus release His grace through His church.

- The apostolic church will be focused on God's mission, be catalytic for the Gospel movement, mobilize believers into the harvest and see new believers/churches planted. We are part of something bigger, a world-wide movement.
- Without the apostolic grace of Jesus, the church will lack an entrepreneurial-spirit, can become stagnate, lose its sense of mission from God and be hindered in expanding to the ends of the world until Jesus' return (Matt. 24:14).

Apostles in the New Testament:

- There are 25+ apostles named in the New Testament including the Twelve. Jesus (Heb. 3:1), the Twelve (Rev. 21:14), Matthias, James, Paul, Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Silvanus, Timothy, Apollos, Andronicus, Junias, and others.
- False apostles are discussed in 2 Cor. 10-12.

Potential Pitfalls:

If the apostolic is taken out of the context of the other 4 graces that Jesus releases to the church:

- Putting the mission above people (People couldn't keep up with Paul). Losing focus on the purpose of serving people.

- Pursuing authority without accountability (5-fold is primarily about Jesus' grace, not about position authority)
- Forming networks without new churches being planted

You're on a mission. The Great Commission (to go and make disciples of all nations) is a personal mandate from heaven to you. For such a time as this, God has placed you where you are!

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14)

PROPHETIC

...God is truly among you. (1 Cor. 14:25b)

As the Prophet, the Living Word of God, Jesus release His Grace through His church.

- The prophetic church emphasizes the awareness of the presence of God, urges the church to press into greater intimacy and knowledge of God, calls the church to faithfulness as a house of prayer, calls attention to the heart of God for social justice, and blows the trumpet to the urgency of the times in which we live.
- Without the prophetic, the church may not hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, lose a sense of the vibrancy of walking with God daily, and focus on the mundane things of the world rather than keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and understanding the heart and mind of God.

Prophets in the New Testament:

- Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:8-14), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32),
- False prophets: Matt. 7:15-20, 1 John 4:1; Rev. 19:20; Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6)

Potential Pitfalls:

If the prophetic is taken out of the context of the other 4 graces that Jesus releases to the church:

- Distraction from the testimony of Jesus.
 - **Old Testament (Covenant) Prophets** called people back to the covenant God made with Moses.
 - **New Testament (Covenant) Prophets** call people back to the covenant God made through Jesus (Acts 3:22-23).
- Seeking more prophetic rather at the expense of long-term spiritual growth
 - Pursuing prophecy at the expense of discipleship, evangelism, building character (1 Cor. 14:27, 29 gives the principle of purposely limiting tongues and prophecy to make space for other expressions of God's grace.) Prophecy must not be despised, but tested so that true prophetic ministry that bears witness to Jesus will mature (1 Thes. 5:20-21)
 - Over-emphasis on the positive. Personal prophetic words that puff people up with hope without a call to daily following Jesus. People need to be pointed to a long-term growth in God's Word and joy-filled obedience.
 - Over-emphasis on the negative. (The main point of prophecy is to point people to Jesus and His leadership now and in the End Times. The call is active obedience, not passivity or fear).
 - Over-emphasis on spontaneity as the main form of prophetic expression.

Live with faith and expectation. God is speaking. Will we listen? Without the prophetic, the church misses out on the vibrancy that comes with Jesus edification, exhortation, and comfort today (1 Cor. 14:3).

1 Cor. 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

EVANGELISTIC

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God..." (Luke 4:43a)

As the Evangelist who proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom, Jesus Release His Grace through the church.

- The evangelistic church has a pulse on the heart-beat of God for people living in lostness and brokenness. ***Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:4-5).***
- The evangelist is marked with the goodness of God and realizes that there's work to be done so that everyone will hear the Gospel. ***I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)***
- Evangelists are the recruiters in the Body of Christ. Apostles penetrate new regions and people-groups with the full message of the Kingdom of God. Evangelists are the workers who saturate the existing and surrounding regions with the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- Without the Evangelist, the Church will lack the awareness that our ministry is the people in our lives. Your mission field is where you live. (2 Cor. 5:20)

Evangelists in the New Testament:

- Philip (Acts 21:8). Possibly Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5)

Potential Pitfalls

- Not preaching the entire Gospel (Acts 20:27).
 - The call of the Gospel is repentance and faith which involves full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. It's not just to escape hell in the future, but to live fully and joyfully submitted to God today. If our message is different from the message that Jesus preached, then we may see premature babies who will be stunted in their growth.
 - Evangelism must be connected with long-term discipleship. The goal is true/sound conversion. It's not just to "get people saved" but to set them up to succeed and grow spiritually. To "sign people up," but not help them continue in the faith is incomplete. We cannot leave baby Christians to fend for themselves.
- Not based in prayer (Matt. 9:38). Pray, then go. we need evangelists who pray and we need intercessor who go into the harvest. We need more of both.
- Evangelism based more on modern methods than the method of Jesus and His disciples. E.g. over-emphasis on earning the right to be heard vs. Luke 10 - leading with the Gospel and investing where there is fruitfulness.

Start with the one in front of you. Your mission field is where you live. Your ministry is the people in your life. The harvest is plentiful. This is our watch. We must not "be okay" with people passing away without knowing the saving knowledge of God's love in Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God (Rom. 16:1)!

Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35)

PASTOR/SHEPHERD

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt. 11:28)

As the Great Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, Jesus releases His grace to His church.

- The shepherding role in the church carries the heart of Jesus to feed, protect, and nurture the people of God.
- Pastors (along with Teachers) bring stability to the Church through long-term care and spiritual growth through servant-leadership and the ministry of teaching the Word. Pastors are the glue that brings definition to the church's identity as the people of God, the flock of Jesus, the Great Shepherd.

Shepherds/Pastors in the New Testament:

- There are no direct references to particular people as pastors, but the general role of local church leaders (elders or overseers, fills this role.

1 Pet. 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, servicing as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

- Elder (Greek: presbuteros), Overseer/Bishop (Greek: episkopos). These servant-leaders over saw either regional gatherings in homes or individual homes themselves.

Potential Pitfalls

- If disconnected from the other 5 graces of Jesus to the church, the church may become in-grown and self-absorbed with its own needs rather than being a force of God's Kingdom on the earth. Over-emphasis on the needs of the people without a mindset of God's mission to the world.
- Over emphasis on encouragement without having the courage to bring correction when it's needed.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. (1 Thes. 5:14)

- Raising up only other pastor/shepherds rather than raising up other 5-fold grace of Jesus in the Body.

Open to the love of Jesus, the Shepherd. Build people up. Care for the weak. Have courage to speak the truth in love. Encourage the timid. The fruit of God's Holy Spirit will grow in His people until Jesus returns for His Bride!

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

TEACHING

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Jesus, the Teacher come from God (John 3:2; 7:16), release His grace to the church to receive God's Word.

- Teachers (along with pastor/shepherds) bring stability and long-term spiritual growth unto maturity in the church through the systematic teaching of God's Word and applying it to daily living.
- Teachers delve into the deep riches of God's Word and connect it to people's daily lives. (Col. 3:16)
- Without teachers, there can be excitement without stability and depth in our faith in God and His Word. Instruction and vision is only as powerful as it is based ultimately on God's eternal Word, the Scriptures. Without godly teachers, the church is susceptible to every wind of false teaching and imbalance.

Teachers in the New Testament

- Paul (2 Tim. 1:11 - a teacher to the Gentiles)
- Apollos (Acts 18:25)
I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6)
- Teachers in Antioch (Acts 13:1)
- False teachers who bring in destructive heresies (2 Pet. 2:1)

Potential Pitfalls

- Relying more on communication skills rather than the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).
And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:4-5)
For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matt. 7:29)
- Overemphasis on knowledge without corresponding fruit of the Spirit of love. Allowing our knowledge to grow bigger than our love.
...Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. (1 Cor. 8:1b)
- Overemphasis on the intellect without opening to the actual person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1)
You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)
- Entertaining the deception that an abundance of teaching (without application) is sufficient.
But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)
- Taking lightly the fact that teachers will be held to a stricter judgment by God. (James 3:1; c.f. 1 Tim. 4:16)
My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Meditate on God's Word day and night. Apply it to your life. Receive the truth of God that sets you free. Understand God's will for your life. Let it bring lasting fruitfulness and a renewed mind so that you will go from glory to glory!

...It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4)

CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

Eph. 3:10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

- Acknowledge that because we are one and we are all uniquely graced by Jesus, there will be tension (Eph. 4:1-7).
 - We need all lowliness and gentleness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love (Eph. 4:2) because we are one (Eph. 4:4-6). We are not one because of our plan, strategy, or wisdom. We are one by God's design.
... be filled with the Spirit... submitting to one another in the fear of God. (Eph. 5:18-21)
- How we live and respond to the tension as we live out our lives in unity under Jesus as the head determine whether we become fragmented into our own niche or grow into fullness of maturity in Christ. (Eph. 4:15-16)
 - Maturity comes in the context of others who are different from us.
 - All we need is sitting right here in this room. (Eph. 4:7). If each part does its share, we will grow in quality and quantity. We will mature spiritually and more new believers will join us.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift (Eph. 4:7)

Questions for Person Reflection

(Or Discussion Starters with Others)

1. Which of the 5-fold excites you the most? Which of the 5 do people say you are?
2. How can you grow that aspect of Jesus' grace? How do your spiritual gifts align with that?
3. How can you open more to the other 5-fold aspects of Jesus' grace? How can you get around more people who are not like you?