

# Ephesians 4:7-14 - Gifts of Grace and Glory

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

We are going to continue in Ephesians chapter 4. We'll be in verses 7 through 14 this morning, but I'd like for us to start over in chapter 4, not because I want to clarify all the confusion that Will caused last week or anything like that, but so we can remember the context of what Paul is teaching us in chapter 4. If you'll open to Ephesians chapter 4, remember last week we discussed, Will discussed for us, this directional shift that's occurring in the book of Ephesians.

For the first three chapters, Paul's been telling us all about the blessings of God, the blessings of God in Christ and our salvation and our unity to Him, how God saved us by grace, how God has revealed to us His love, His grace in Christ. And now Paul says, go therefore and walk as people who have been called by God. Therefore, Jesus changes everything.

Walk as God's people is what Paul told us earlier in chapter 4. We are unified in the gospel. We will consider this morning how we are also diverse in the gospel, how we have diverse gifts and abilities which God has given us. So let's look together at Ephesians chapter 4. We will focus on 7 through 14, but I will start for us in verse 1. Ephesians 1 chapter 4 verse 1, I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, when He ascended on high, He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men. In saying He ascended, what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth. He who descended is the one who also ascended far above the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and the teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Will you pray with me?

[ 3 : 08 ] Father, the grass withers, the flowers fade, but You tell us that Your Word stands forever. So might we respond now, believing that truth, that You have offered us Your Word to change us, to alter our understanding and our perspective. Father, might You do that even now by giving us Your Spirit and teaching us these amazing truths of the diversity that You have given us in this one unified body. Father, we thank You for Ephesians, for the ministry, the work that it has done in our hearts thus far. Might You continue to work even now. We pray these things in Your heavenly Son's name. Amen.

The summer of 2006, I broke the unfortunate news to my parents that my allegiance had changed. My allegiance had changed from being a lifelong, die-hard Atlanta Braves fan to becoming a die-hard, lifelong St. Louis Cardinals fan. In order to understand this transformation, I know the question, it comes from a lot of people. My parents asked the same question, why? Why have you chosen the Cardinals? Why have you abandoned this team that you were raised in?

This is my testimony, and I use that term like loosely but intentionally. This is my testimony of becoming a St. Louis Cardinals fan. In the summer of 2005, Annalise and I moved to St. Louis, and that was the final year in the old Bush Stadium. It was actually Bush Stadium 2. There's been three versions of Bush Stadium, and it was the final season in Bush Stadium 2. We went to a

handful of games that summer that we moved to St. Louis, particularly at the end of the summer. And I remember the final few games that we went to, there was this fan base that was really attached to their stadium. They were despairing of the situation. They were sad that this stadium was going away.

It didn't matter what their background was, young, old, women, children, various socioeconomic backgrounds. They were all despairing over the fact that this stadium was going away. And I remember leaving the stadium one time and telling Annalise, I don't understand. Like, these people are weird.

[ 5 : 23 ] They're so attached to this place. They would go on in the fall and the winter after the stadium was being demolished and spend thousands of dollars buying old seats from the stadium. And they would buy signs and even the bricks that held the stadium up. It didn't make sense to me. I had grown up a Braves fan going to games at Fulton County Stadium, Turner Field, and it just didn't compute. It didn't match the culture that I was raised in as a Braves fan. Well, in 2006, Annalise and I were given tickets to the third game in the new Bush Stadium. And I remember having a perspective change.

Something supernatural happened that day. And all of a sudden, it clicked. I understood. It's like the reset button was hit because that stadium was just as new to me as it was to the fans who had been going to the old Bush for 30 years. And I got it. I said, Annalise, this is 45,000 family members. It's 45,000 family members who are gathering around this one common cause, and it was the Cardinals. They came from various backgrounds, young, old, rich, poor, white, black. It didn't matter. They all came together for this common cause of the Cardinals. Baseball holds a special place in the hearts of St. Louisans. They understand baseball's fundamental principles. They understand its beauty, its simplicity, but also its complexity. And for someone like me who loves and appreciates those same things, it made sense. It fit. They came together as a diverse group of people all gathering around, striving, hoping for victory for their team. And they wanted to pass this tradition on to the next generation. They came together as diverse people but were bonded around this one unifying principle, and it was this baseball team. The church, particularly the Ephesian church, was meant to look a lot like Bush Stadium did to me that year. That day, I saw a group of people who were united over this cause but who did so as very different people. Paul has just emphasized for us the importance of understanding the unity that we have in the gospel, but he does not want us to lose sight of this unique calling that we have to display diverse gifts and abilities. God's expression of grace, Paul told us, united us together in the gospel, but also God expressed his grace so that we might still be unique, diverse individuals. God's grace, Paul tells us, was given to us in specific ways, individual, unique ways so that we might each help to build God's kingdom. But I think for us, this idea of diversity is uncomfortable. We don't like the idea of being around people who don't act, look, seem the same as us.

Diversity in the fall of man, I think, became cumbersome. I think it became burdensome. In the fall, we now struggle to embrace the differences that God created in each one of us. After the fall, it's our tendency to only want to surround ourselves with people who look and act like us. After the fall, it's our assumption that we are God's one and only gift to the world, that the world only needs us. Ephesians 4 will explain to us the beauty of diversity, the beauty of the gifts and the abilities that God has given his people. Paul's call is to embrace unity, but to also not forget the differences that we have as God's beautiful, colorful group of people. God's gift, Paul tells us, are gifts of glory and gifts of grace. Gifts of glory and gifts are of grace. We are told that these are gifts of glory and gifts of grace in three particular ways. So if you're taking notes, start here. These are gifts of glory and grace first in that they are an expression of God's character and his kindness. One of the fundamental principles that we're taught in Genesis chapter 1 is that God created man unlike the rest of creation. How did he create them differently? He created them in his own image, right? They were his image bearers in the world. He made unique individuals. When he sewed all of us together in our mother's womb, we were created unique and individual. In the same way, Paul's telling us that in chapter 4, our giftings reflect that same image of God. As we bear the image of God, though, what limits us is our own human capacity.

[ 10 : 00 ] Paul knows that we cannot bear the image of everything that God is, and so what God chose to do is he chose to give some of us certain gifts and other people other gifts so that we might display together what is the width, the spectrum, the beauty, this expression of his character.

We're not going to spend a lot of time discussing some of these specific gifts this morning, but consider in verse 11 where Paul talks about apostleship, about prophesying, evangelizing, shepherding, and teaching. Each of these gifts are perfectly reflected and performed by God, right? He is the great apostle in that he sent out the good news of who he was in his general and his specific revelation. He's the great prophet as he speaks his will and calls out sin in small doses through the biblical writers. He's the great evangelizer as he sent his very son to tell the world of the amazing news of his love. And he's this great, amazing, perfect teacher and shepherd as he gives us the Holy Spirit to guide and change our hearts. And so contained in God is all of these gifts and all of these abilities, but what he did is as he created us, he gave each of us unique expressions of his character. In his wisdom, God chose to use his people to show the world the variety of his kindness, his riches, his love, his mercy, and his grace. Diversity in our gifts and abilities then, according to this passage, should be an inherent quality of who we are as a church. As God has extended salvation to us, this is how he chose to express it, by giving us diverse, varied gifts and abilities.

So it's an expression of God's character, but it's also an expression of God's kindness that we have these gifts. Verse 7 begins our passage by telling us that grace was given to each of us. Paul goes from describing a grace to all of us, so all together united, to now describing a grace that was given to each of us. This word that's used for grace that's given to all of us is the Greek word charis. Charis is the use of the word grace to describe saving faith. It's by charis that you have been saved. It's by and in charis that you are united in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. But now he uses a different form of the word grace. It's charismata. Charismata is the grace of service, a grace of response. And so these gifts that we are given are the charismata. They're the response of what God has done in our hearts and in our lives. But why is that important, you may wonder. You're not here just to listen to me talk about Greek words, right? There has been a charismatic movement historically in the church, right? We know of the charismatic denomination. That's a group of people that we take these gifts. They're really good at these gifts. So we're going to pass those gifts on to them. The charismatic movement, the charismata movement. But what Paul's teaching us is that actually the church, the whole church, including you here at 1000 Carl T. Jones Drive, you are the charismatic movement because you are the church of Christ. The response of God's grace. This serving grace lived and worked out in your life. The example of a nuclear family fits well as an illustration. To be a Townsley means a lot of different things. My sister and my brother and I all have a lot of things in common. We resemble each other. We share the same genetic code. We were raised in the same fashion. There are core values that my parents taught each of us. We walk in their physical image, their emotional, and their social image. I have my father's face. I have his eyes. I have his mouth. I have his jawline. My brother has my mother's face, though. He has her smile. He has her eyes.

[ 13 : 59 ] My sister resembles both my mother and my father. My brother's a critical thinker, a sharp analyzer. He chose the right profession by becoming an attorney. I have different gifts and abilities. I think I chose the right profession. But these differences in my physical appearances and personalities and giftings, they don't make me and my brother and my sister any less of siblings, right? We still carry the same last name. We still have the same parents. There's this beautiful diversity that exists between us, but yet we are still unified by the love of our father and our mother. As children, my parents saw the same things that many of you have seen as you've raised your children, and that is different gifts and abilities.

But you know that your goal, what you're supposed to do as a parent, is teach your children two things. One, and that is that you will never, ever, ever stop loving them. Because they belong to you, because they are your son or your daughter, you will never stop loving them. But you also want them to embrace who God's called them to be, right? You don't want to create three children that all look the same. Because you know, God creates unique individuals. That's what God has done in His church. You are still His son and His daughter. Nothing will ever change that, but He wants you to be a unique individual to express these diverse gifts and abilities that He's given you. So the expression of God's grace and His kindness and His character is shown in our gifts and abilities. How else are we supposed to celebrate diversity then? How else do we celebrate the gifting that God has given us? Well, secondly, we celebrate this gifting as we see that God allows us to participate in His plan of salvation.

Through these gifts, we're allowed to participate in God's plan of salvation. We're told at the end of our passage, we'll get to it in just a second, some of the specific purposes of our gifting. But first, we need to understand how this passage begins. Verses 8 and 9 contain this Old Testament quote that may seem a little bit obscure to us. There's even a parenthetical statement. Let me tell you, in seminary, parenthetical statements scare you because you don't know where they came from. You're really worried. Was that like an afterthought of Paul's? Where did it come from? Don't let that scare you. I try not to let it scare me. There's this strange group of verses right at the beginning. But I don't want us to miss the essence of what Paul's communicating. What he's doing is he's communicating Psalm 68. He's quoting it here by telling us that Christ is figured as the one who defeated the enemies of God. He says he led a host of captives when he ascended to heaven. We're told that Jesus went up to heaven. He ascended into heaven to dwell with his father, and behind him was the captives that he took. That was the powers, the principalities of the air, that Jesus defeated sin. He defeated all of our enemies, and they stood in submission to him as he ascended into heaven. Likewise, verse 9 reminds us that Jesus's ministry was one of dissension. Jesus's ministry was one where he went from a heavenly dwelling to earth, right? He came to earth to live the life that we couldn't live, to die and pay the penalty for our sins that we couldn't pay. He came to be our Savior.

[ 17 : 19 ] That same Jesus has established dominion, who's established dominion over heaven and earth is the one who, the passage tells us, gave us gifts. So what does that mean? That means we have the perfect gift giver, and that he allows us now to participate in this work of salvation that's already been accomplished. We now get behind him. His captors have already been taken. We now get behind him and participate with him as we express our gifts and our abilities. Our gifts are given to us by one who has completed all that is necessary for God's victory over sin. Our role then is simply to participate in the work of salvation that God is doing. Jesus has already done all that is necessary so that man would be saved. We get to just be a part of it. We get to participate in what God is doing.

What this means is this takes the pressure off of our gifting. You don't have to be anybody's Savior. You don't have to perfectly hone and craft this gift and ability. Just go and do it. God saved the whole world already. He saved his people. He's conquered it all. Just go and get behind him. Participate in what he's doing. He's not looking for you to be a perfect teacher, a perfect leader who can get your skill just right in order to cause some change. The result of the work of your gifting is not up to you, Paul tells us. It's up to Jesus who's already defeated death, who came to earth and lived and died for you. For my daughter's third birthday, she had a strange request. She asked for a rake. And so my aunt and uncle granted this request and showed up on her third birthday with, I didn't even know they sold these. It was a little gardening set for little kids. And it had a little plastic rake. It had a plastic shovel and a little gardening hoe. And this past fall, when I was raking leaves for the first time, a cute little three-year-old girl came out with her plastic rake ready to help her daddy. She joined me out in the front yard. We captured the moment because it was really cute. And she raked a small little pile and said, Daddy, I'm tired now. I want to go rest. And so she went inside. I think she got some lemonade and sat on the porch and watched me for a while. And it was, of course, adorable. But I watched my daughter do that, and I realized, you know what?

She's trusting. She actually understands the gospel. For her age, she was a really gifted little raker, but she was trusting. She knew that her dad was going to start and finish the job.

[ 19 : 55 ] She knew that I was going to complete the whole thing. She jumped in and gave what she could. It wasn't perfect. It wasn't awesome. But she created a little pile, and I moved it under the bag.

And what I did afterwards is I told her to come back outside when she was done resting. And when I had all the bags lined up, and I said, Baby, look at what we did. Look at all of these leaves that we raked. Look at this good work. It was her father who started the work, who completed the work, but she got to participate. That's what Paul is telling us. You have a father who has defeated death. You have a father who sent a son to die for you so that your gifts might actually mean something, so that they now have power, but yet you are participating in my plan of salvation.

I'm the one moving it forward. I'm the one who has conquered the world. The job has been finished, and we are now given gifts, gifts to participate in this work of helping others grow in grace. God allows us through our diverse abilities to work with Him. So we've seen how our gifts are an

expression of God's character and His kindness. Our gifts are an opportunity to participate in the work of salvation, which God has done. But there's a final way that we see from our passage that our gifts and abilities are beautiful. There's another reason why we should embrace them, and that is because God uses them, uses us to help others grow in maturity. He uses our gifts and abilities to help others grow in maturity. Look again at verses 11 through 13. They say this, And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and the teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We're told that there's this two-fold purpose then, this two-fold purpose to our gifts. The first is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, and the second is to unite the church in Christ. This whole diverse, wide-spanning gifts and abilities, the spectrum of gifts and abilities that God has given us, they boil down to two purposes, and that is to equip the saints for ministry and to unite the church to Christ. As we participate in the work of God's salvation, we're doing so to equip God's saints for the work of kingdom advancement. The use of your gifts, God will take them, and He will apply them to what He's doing in the hearts and lives of others. Paul's presenting this principle that we cannot forget. It's actually an encouragement, a motivation, and he's saying that whatever service you do for others, whether it's teaching, shepherding, evangelism, hospitality, leadership, sacrificing, giving, supporting, caring, all of it goes towards the work that God is doing to pursue people. It goes towards all the work that God's doing to redeem and rescue people. Because of this, Southwood, we cannot let our gifts lie dormant and unused. God says, I have grand purposes for it. I'm going to equip the saints, and then what does He come back to? And I'm going to use them to unify you. So there's this broad span of gifts that all work towards the purpose of unity. He comes back to unity again.

Our gifting, the diversity of those gifts, the conquering of all the world's powers and principalities, this plan of salvation is all working towards God uniting Himself to His people again. The purpose of our gifts is to unite this fractured and scattered world back to God again, to connect God and His people together again. The end goal of these gifts is our full unity and our maturation as sons and daughters of Jesus. As it turns out, the diversity which God uses is all for the purpose of unifying us again. The ministry of God's Word, the use of our gifts enables us to be united to Christ and to grow in grace. Regular exposure of our gifts in each other's lives leads us, pushes us towards the gospel. As we're exposed to each other's gifts, our minds, our wills, our desires slowly begin to change because God promises to use them. They're used to recalibrate the way that we see the world, to recalibrate our understanding of our relationship with the Father so that we might understand His beautiful and glorious will and love expressed in Jesus. God ultimately is going to use these gifts, He says, to bring about kingdom growth, to bring about kingdom glory so that you might come to know Jesus more. Look at what Brian

[ 24 : 54 ] Chappell says about our gifting. He says, our gifts are not merely material objects or personality traits, but rather they are Christ's sharing of Himself. The gifts given to you and me, we who are the body of Christ, are the extension of Christ's very heart and being to His people. He is offering Himself in all manifold riches of His glory in the various ways that He is gifting the church. Southwood, your gifting, my gifting, should never be diminished because Christ died for them. Christ died so that our gifts could mean something. Go and use them. Be encouraged that when you use your gifts, you are displaying the manifold wisdom, the beauty, the love of God the Father. And as we share these gifts, we are sharing in the glory of Christ, the beauty of God and the riches of God's kingdom. Just a few final reminders then, final points of application for us as we close. The value of our gifts means that we must use them. Because of what

Christ did, because of what Paul promises, we must use our gifts. An implied truth from this passage is that the use of our gifts is a necessary part of being a follower of Jesus. So that means you've got to use the people who God has placed you around to help figure out what those gifts are. Figure out where to use them. Find places to serve and advance God's kingdom. Also, we must not despise our gifts.

Jesus, as you recall, is the perfect gift giver. So that means the gift that you have been given is the perfect gift. You don't need someone else's gift. Use what God has given you. In His sovereignty, that is what He has decided. Jesus is the perfect gift giver. And also, we must not despise the gifts of others. Discontentment with what God has chosen to give us can often lead to jealousy.

You may want the gifts and the abilities of the person next to you, but remember, Jesus is the perfect gift giver. He gave that person exactly what He intended to give that person. So do not despise the gifts of others. And then a big gospel reminder for us this morning, okay? Take a deep gospel breath for a second because this is a lot. We just graduated a ton of students this past week from different high schools, and listening to speeches, hearing about these students, you're reminded again and again of all the accolades and achievements that these students have, their gifts and abilities in the academic world. And as they go off to college, I think about my experience. Maybe it was like yours, where you realize really quickly that you're not the only gifted one. You're surrounded by a bunch of really gifted people. My first year especially, I remember one girl who was the salutatorian or something. She's a lot smarter than I was. Had all kinds of gifts and abilities. She'd even like earned awards already in the first semester at Samford. I remember she sat in front of me in one of my classes.

And I'll never forget the button that was on her backpack because I looked at it every day, and it said these words, you are more than your gift. You are more than your gift. I want you, if you're taking notes, write that really big at the bottom of your bulletin. You are more than your gift. Southwood, you need to remember that your gifts and your giftedness do not define who you are. [ 28 : 23 ] They do not define how the Father feels about you. The way that you express them and your successes and failures in expressing them, they do not change how God feels about you. You are more than your gift.

Your identity as a son or a daughter in Christ is based only on what Jesus has done for you. You are more. You mean more. You have more value and worth than you could ever imagine or dream of because of something that you didn't even do. You mean everything to God the Father because of what Jesus did to save you. You are more than your gift, Southwood. Do not get hung up on yourself.

Get hung up on the gospel. Remember, as you use your gifts in the world, there is something greater that defines who you are. There's something greater that gives you value, and there's someone who has conquered it all. His name is Jesus. Jesus paid it all. Our relationship with the Father is sealed in Jesus's blood so that we might go and be his people freely in the world. We are defined not by our success, but by what Jesus did for us. Let's pray. Father, this is not easy for us to wrap our minds around. We live in a world where we are defined by what we can do, by what we can offer, and you take that paradigm of the world and you turn it upside down with the gospel. You've told us that you've actually chosen to pursue and love sinful and broken people, that we have nothing to offer you, but yet you offer us salvation. So, Father, might that change our hearts? Might that change our perspective so that we could go and use these gifts which you have now given us, which you have given to your redeemed and saved people? Would you give these your people clarity as they consider where their gifts may lie? Will you help them to never forget the gospel and all of it, that you have defeated death, you have conquered our greatest enemy, and you now offer us life and hope so that we might go and serve you? Thank you for these truths. Thank you for these, your people. Pray these things in your heavenly son's name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host).