

Eph 4:7-11 The Ascended Lord's Victory Gifts

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Preacher: Dan Morley

[0 : 00] God has developed certain means to preserve and maintain unity. We've seen a theme of unity in Ephesians chapter 4.

God has developed certain means to preserve and maintain that unity. That's a pre-existing unity that is being preserved. Now, what is imperative to this unity, we see what has already been covered in the doctrine preceding chapter 4.

For example, the triune work of redemption. There's not the triune work of salvation in the Father purposing, the Son purchasing, and the Spirit applying the work of redemption to believers from the covenant of redemption or from the eternal perspective.

And then we see it from the creaturely perspective, from the covenant of grace in chapter 2. That is, and you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses of sins. So being made alive, or that is regenerated, or the Holy Spirit working faith in us, being regenerated by God.

Without that, there is no Christian unity. So that is crucial for an understanding to lead up to where we are now in chapter 4 with the theme of unity.

[1 : 20] And now we see with that unity that to be preserved and maintained, God has developed certain means to preserve and maintain it. Now there are erroneous facades of so-called unity when the pendulum swings too far either to one extreme or to the other.

One example of, one extreme would be when all Christians everywhere must be of the same denomination. They must be of the same conviction.

And what this does is it collapses liberty of conscience, which was a significant aspect of the Reformation and the Puritans. The other extreme, when the pendulum swings the other way, the other extreme is doctrinal indifference, where robust confessions of faith are labeled as bad because doctrine divides.

The problem with this extreme is that it collapses doctrinal stability and endangers the edification of the saints. So in terms of that saying, doctrine divides, and that being the grounds for doctrinal indifference, doctrine divides truth from error.

It doesn't divide Christian unity. What divides Christian unity is those who stray from the truth, those who stray from sound doctrine.

[2 : 46] So the correct middle ground, if there's the extremes on either side, where the pendulum swings too far to either side, the correct middle ground is when the church continues steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, preaching the whole counsel of God, being the pillar and ground of the truth, refuting error, and showing love and charity to gospel churches with different convictions on secondary matters of the faith.

Now, secondary matters of the faith doesn't mean that they're not important matters of the faith, but it means you can still be Christian and have different convictions on these things.

So still Christians, still gospel churches. So secondary doesn't mean it's not important and should not be taught, but that it's not what's required to be saved. So Ephesians chapter 4, if you'll turn in your copies of the Word of God, we will read all of the chapter of Ephesians 4.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

[4 : 17] But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

Now this, he ascended, what does it mean but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

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, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but excuse me, but speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk and the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to all uncleanness with greediness.

[6 : 09] But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

[7 : 32] Our Lord, we thank you for your word, and as we seek to sit under the ministry of the word, we pray that you would speak, that you would be speaking through the proclamation of your word and the message contained therein.

I pray that nothing but what is true and helpful would be said. I pray that you would guide our understandings and illuminate your word to us, that we might grow in truth and knowledge and understanding.

We pray that you would be glorified above all things, and as I seek to proclaim your word, I pray, Lord, that it is not I that would be heard, but that your word would be at work here, and that your spirit would attend your word.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So in chapter 4, the text for this morning will be verses 7 to 11. And in 7 to 11, what's going on here, what's being said, is that the risen Lord furnishes the church with gifts and graces for the unity and edification of the church.

So we will see the gift giver in this text, the giver's authority, and the gifts function. Now verse 7 starts a transition, or starts to transition from unity within the church to the teaching officers of the church for growth as a unified body.

[9 : 03] Now while the church is unified, that is, the church is one, the constituent members of the body are not identical. In a unified body, there is diversity of function.

There is diversity of the function of the gifts given by divine calling. Just as a body with two left feet, I'm sure we've all heard that saying before, somebody who has two left feet.

So just as a human body with two left feet is out of sync, also each member is not to function in an identical fashion, but according to the measure it was given.

Now the unity is those who have received the gift of salvation and the gifts of faith, hope, and love. The diversity is the function of gifts given by divine calling.

And in Ephesians 4.11, what we see here is it refers to the men Christ uses as the means in the teaching ministry of the church. Matthew Poole wrote that to some, one degree of grace, to some,

another, all have not the same, but need the help of those who have what they want.

[10:24] This grace is not given to every member uniformly, but according to the measure of Christ's giving. To one, he gave five talents, to another, to another one.

some churches try to create a ministry for everything, to plug everyone in as a minister of such and such.

Some churches try to make a ministry for everybody. Everybody's got a ministry. There's the create ministry so that somebody might be the minister of interior decorating, or perhaps somebody has the ministry of creative and innovative progression of worship, or perhaps they might have the ministry of prophetic interpretive dance.

There's, they try to find whatever a person's interests and desires are. They try to create this ministry as though that is an aspect of a biblical ministry. So some churches try to create a ministry for everyone to plug everyone in as a minister of something.

They confuse personality with spiritual gifts and seek a business approach to the household of God instead of a biblical approach. Perhaps you've seen churches where it's all, somebody's a CEO of an organization so they'd be good in leadership in the church and then there's directors of certain aspects of the church and it's more of a business approach than a biblical approach.

[11:57] According to personality personality or as such, this places burdens on people as though there is some divine intention for them that they have not yet themselves unlocked with the latest spiritual gift survey.

As though that's how gifts are given. Where there's a creation of ministries for everybody and everybody's a minister of something and have you discovered what your spiritual gift is through this latest spiritual gift survey and it's as though people are burdened because they think that there's this thing, this gift that they haven't yet discovered or unlocked so they're neglecting this gift.

But what has God given you right now? What do you do that faithfully to the glory of God seeking to grow in all godliness and delight in attending the means of grace.

For example, if God has blessed you with a family, if he's blessed you with children, then don't be consumed with trying to figure out some unknown other gift that's being neglected, some other gift that the latest spiritual gift assessment tool suggests you are potentially neglecting.

Rather, be faithful in the biblical application of godly parenting. Grow in holiness and in the process be faithful to the means of grace. Be faithful in what God has given you now.

[13:25] spiritual gifts are not self-generated. This is important. Spiritual gifts are not self-generated or based on personality or what you think the church needs to do for you.

It is grace given by the ascended Lord who is the gift giver. So I'll say that again. It is grace given by the ascended Lord who is the gift giver.

So in our text we see the gift giver. If you notice in 4 verse 7 it says but to each of you grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore he says when he ascended on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. Verse 8 Now ancient Roman custom was that after a victory the custom was to ascend to the capital by chariot leading prisoners or leading their captives in chains and bonds.

So as they ascend to the capital leading the captives behind them they would also throw coins as gifts to the common people as spectators of their triumphant victory.

[14:46] So also Christ in inaugurating his kingdom triumphed over Satan sin death and hell and gave gifts to men. Here in our text Paul focuses in on the one who has ascended on high and is able to give gifts.

You'll probably see here that he is quoting Psalm 68 18 Now he descended in order that he might ascend that is ascending in the human nature or bodily seated in heaven.

To ascend in the flesh God must first assume our nature and take on flesh. The word must become flesh.

It is he who descended and when we think of Christ descending we should think of Christ's humiliation. And this points us to the necessity of the incarnation.

So in order for Christ to ascend by the human nature he must first descend to assume our nature and take on flesh. The necessity of the incarnation and also in what is accomplished in order to correct what has been wronged that is sin correct the sin problem and also to accomplish that which has not been accomplished that is a positive righteousness with the reward of eternal life.

[16:28] So the Son of God came down to earth and when we consider that phrase that the Son of God came down to earth what does that mean? And a lot of times good intending people who do! what is! right Son of God came down to earth not by leaving his divine essence but by assuming our nature.

The second person of the Trinity did not give up divine attributes. This is something that's important that we must remember in the incarnation in the descent and ascent of Christ.

when the Son of God came down to earth he did not give up divine attributes. Hang on to that that'll make sense when we come back to it further. But by assuming our nature now the second person of the Trinity the Son or the Word when the Son assumed human nature it is not subtraction or addition or conversion.

So the Son of God did not subtract divine! himself the Son of God was not lacking and added to the essence of the perfection of the divine essence nor was there a conversion from divine nature to human nature.

[18:19] These three things are very important for us to understand in the incarnation there are many heresies which teach those things which are damnable heresies.

So not subtraction not addition not conversion but two natures united in the one person of Jesus Christ.

This points us to the incarnation and this time of year we typically hear a lot of analogies about the incarnation but what what is the incarnation?

the incarnation is the word became flesh or another way to word it is the word took on flesh what does that mean?

It means took on the completeness of our nature the word or the son of God took on the completeness of our nature but without sin and the taking on of our nature did not take on our sin nature our inherited sin nature or the state of nature and it was taken on not by subtraction not by addition not by conversion but by assumption by way of assumption he took to himself so what does this mean we don't typically use the word in this sense but this morning when preparing to preach I decided it would be appropriate to wear a tie I did not wake up wearing this tie I woke up wearing my pajamas in my robe so I had to take to myself this tie I had to take on the tie it is not a transformation because

[20:09] I put the tie on I did not become a tie so also when Christ took on or assumed human nature he did not convert to human nature it is not a transformation from one to the other it is not transformation not conversion not an alteration and not an emptying of divinity it is not a subtraction it is not an addition this is important the divine essence cannot be perfected and the divine essence cannot be corrupted god was not lacking something that was subsequently benefited by god's creation the word did not change via the incarnation and when we say the word we mean the second person of the trinity who is very god undivided essence of god and god does not change the word the son of god did not change via the incarnation but we think well in the timeline of history there was a time before the incarnation and there is a time of the incarnation and now is a time after the incarnation so there is clearly a change so the newness and the sorry the newness is in the created order not the divine essence the divine essence does not change the infinite does not transform into the finite the second person of the trinity did not empty himself of divinity the trinity did not turn into abinity the trinity did not turn into a biunity it's not that there was a trinity from creation to the incarnation and then the trinity changed to being two and then later reverted to three there's not a change in the trinity the trinity did not become a biunity

Matthew Poole again he said a man is not made another person by the clothes he put on just like when I put on a shirt that can take on a tie I did not become a shirt when I put the tie on the shirt with the collar I did not become a tie a man is not made another person by the clothes he puts on just maybe a little bit more presentable to preach before the incarnation so if we look at the timeline again we see there's a change because a change in the created order because before the incarnation was a time in history where the incarnation had not yet occurred in the creative order so before the incarnation we think of the word the second person of the trinity what can we say that is true about the word of the son of god before the incarnation the divine essence of the second person of the trinity was not a creature but spirit what is god god is spirit infinite eternal and unchangeable and is being wisdom power holiness justice and truth that is applicable to the second person of the trinity before the incarnation the son of god is not a creature but spirit god what about after the incarnation what can we say that is true about the second person of the trinity after the

incarnation well after the incarnation the divine essence of the second person of the trinity is not a creature but spirit infinite eternal and unchangeable and his being wisdom power wisdom holiness justice goodness and truth it is not a conversion because of the incarnation the divine essence of the second person of the trinity was not a conversion from divinity into humanity it is a union of two natures in the person of

Jesus Christ who is the eternal son of God hence! Emmanuel God with us God with us means the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus bodily so when it says that he descended or in the incarnation not a conversion of divinity to humanity but that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus bodily that is true God true God and true man what is the significance of the fact that it is true God that is the fullness of the Godhead that dwelt in Jesus bodily the significance is that it is God that came to save us man is not left to himself to save himself this is divine intervention God came to save us the fullness of the true God came to save us the ransom payment of the death by finite human nature with the infinite value of the fullness of divine nature so in

Christ humiliation not a not a transformation not a conversion not a giving up not an emptying of divine essence but the fullness of divine essence dwelt in Jesus bodily and the union of the two natures being truly God and truly man and the human nature being truly man the human nature suffering and dying to pay the ransom payment and that by that death the death would have infinite value because the divine nature the infinite value of the fullness of the divine nature so back to our text that he descended or Christ's humiliation it consists not just in his being born in a low condition being made under the law the miseries of this life but also the wrath of God the cursed death of the cross being buried and continuing under the power of death for a time now the heidelberg catechism asks a question and provides the answer and it says why does the apostles creed add he descended into hell the answer it provides is in my greatest sorrows and temptations think about this do creatures in a fallen world in a dark fallen world ever experience in any way sorrows or temptations are any of us free of sorrows and temptations is there any who cannot take comfort in this answer in my greatest sorrows and temptations

I may be assured and comforted that my Lord Jesus by his unspeakable anguish pain terror and agony which he endured throughout all his sufferings but especially on the cross has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell man of sorrows what a name what a name for the son of God who came ruined sinners to reclaim hallelujah what a savior bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a savior the incarnate son of God ascended triumphant and exalted with all authority we think of his descent we think of Christ's humiliation and we think of Christ's ascent we think of his exaltation our text tells us about the giver's authority the gift giver's authority it is not just that

[27 : 55] Christ descended in his incarnation sufferings and death it is also that he was victorious over sin victorious over sin and death having taken captive the powers that had taken us captive he ascended is our living hope of the resurrection and of liberation from the dominion of sin and death Colossians 2 15 says having disarmed principalities and powers he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them in it remember the Heidelberg Catechism in my greatest sorrows and temptations I may be assured and comforted what was the reason given my Lord Jesus Christ specifically his humiliation and exaltation so verse 10 ascended far above all that he might fill all things the son of God descended and in the union of the two natures the son of man ascended you notice the son of God descended the divine nature and in the union of the two natures and the person of Jesus

Christ the Lord Jesus Christ the son of man the divine nature ascended just as the son of God was not converted into man by his descent so also the son of man did not convert into divine essence by his ascent but the union of the two natures remained in the resurrection and ascended Lord the human nature the physical body of Christ is in heaven and as such is our living hope of the resurrection this is not just a reference to the physical ascension but the exaltation of authority so Christ ascended or Christ exalted is not just the physical ascension but exaltation authority actually turn back to Ephesians chapter 1 keep your finger on 4 because we're going to come back to it but in Ephesians chapter 1 specifically verses 20 and 21 I'm sure you recall we'll read 20 and 21 which he worked in

Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come the exaltation and authority of the ascended Christ he

ascended that he might fill all things what does that mean to fill all things Christ ascending that he might fill all things involves the bestowing of spiritual gifts and graces he gave for the benefit of the church for the perfecting of the saints this is God's means of perfecting the saints God's means of bringing the saints to full knowledge so let's consider the God ordained trajectory of the purpose and work of the measure of

Christ's gifts so the trajectory considering the God ordained trajectory of the purpose so the trajectory we will look at we'll look ahead in our text ahead of today's at the purpose and the goal okay so the trajectory for the purpose and the goal the God ordained trajectory of the purpose and work of the measure of Christ's gifts okay so what is the purpose and the goal verse 12 if you look down in verse 12 says for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying to a perfect man to the measure of the stature sorry I'll read that again for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ 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 so if that's the purpose of the goal what's the negative of that what's contrary to that or what is the danger and harm and as such being the danger and harm in examining the God ordained trajectory would be in the prevention of the danger and harm so look down at verse 14 that we should not that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting so we won't go too into depth into this this will be the next sermon but the statement in verse 12 that says till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge this doesn't mean a future arrival at something that does not currently!

[33 : 08] Sometimes this text is taken in that way to suggest that it refers to something that doesn't exist it's an arrival in the future that we get there but that's not what this text says rather it is the perfecting of something already in existence God's means of growing and developing growing and developing who says we all what is we all reference to in the context of what's being said the saints growing and developing the saints now growing for something to grow it requires life so growing isn't a waiting with an absence of something for something to arrive in the future growing is something that's already alive growing requires life and life requires being made alive and you he made alive who were dead and trespasses and sin

Ephesians 2 1 so this growth this unity this perfecting is based on the covenant of grace those whom the Holy Spirit has worked redemption into and being made alive being made alive in 2 1 and growing so the ascended Lord's victory gifts furnish the church by the teaching ministry of the word I'll say that again the ascended Lord's victory gifts furnish the church by the teaching ministry of the word so in our text we see the gifts function the gifts and their function the ministry of teaching the gifts in

Ephesians 4 11 the ministry of teaching is to enrich mature and equip his people the unity of body there is diversity of function and in that diversity of function means that not every believer is called and equipped to the ministry of teaching verse 11 says some he gave some some and some etc says some and is graciously distributed not by self appointment but is graciously distributed by the Lord not by personal desires so from our text we see five offices that are listed apostles prophets evangelists pastors and teachers apostles is an extraordinary officer for the foundational revealing function of inscripturated witness prophets are also extraordinary officers extraordinary officers for the foundational revealing function of prophecies prior to the inscripturated copies of the New Testament the evangelists were extraordinary officers this is not a reference to gospeling Christians when we think of the word to evangelize to gospel this is not a reference to gospeling or to proclaim the gospel but this is a reference to a specific office a unique foundational revealing role in the life of the church and it goes on with two more offices that of pastor and teacher pastor being the ordinary officers or the continued use in the church for her shepherding through the ministry of the word and sacraments and then we have teachers which also is an ordinary office or ordinary officers who teach doctrine and refute error these gifts are not to be redistributed and delegated to all members but are a specific calling and gifting where the risen lord uses men as means to feed the flock of god as the continued furnishing of the church as an illustration let's say you take a paper target and on that paper target there's a bullseye in the middle and around the bullseye there's a circle small circle middle of it is a bullseye you put that target out take a shotgun and you use a light load let's say birdshot or target load and at a fairly close range you shoot at that target and when you shoot at the target should your aim be true there will be a concentrated pattern of holes around

the bullseye ideally within that small circle there will be some BBs that are outside of that concentrated pattern but the majority will be within a concentrated pattern and some of those that aren't within the concentrated pattern so let's say there's a rogue BB that's outside of that small circle let's say you zoom into that BB and isolate it from the rest and you lose focus of what is true by the bullseye you lose focus of the fact that the majority is within a concentrated pattern within that circle you lose focus of all that and all that you have is this perspective of the single BB and when we apply that to contending for the faith once delivered to the saints sometimes you might say well how do we know that the majority the aim of the majority was not true for example with Martin

[39 : 35] Luther remember he said am I alone wise and the majority wasn't true the majority was off the mark or J.C.

Ryle prepared to stand alone or John Knox who said that he who stands with God never stands alone so there are times in history where the majority is not true the majority has missed the mark but yet there is an isolated BB so when we find ourselves perhaps in historic times where our focus is there only in that situation and in time how do we know comparatively if the aim is true or if it has missed the mark certainly when we take that target and that concentrated pattern is in that circle around that bullseye there is much safety in the majority because it is true but as we've just covered sometimes in history the majority is not true sometimes the majority has missed the mark so you've taken that you've taken that target okay you've shot it with the shotgun there's a concentrated pattern within a small circle around a bullseye you say you scan that onto it remember the old overhead projectors with those transparency sheets you put the transparency sheet and it puts it onto the screen let's say you take one of those transparency sheets and you scan the bullseye and all the holes onto the transparency sheet along with the bullseye and the circle there's one target take a second one take a shot should your aim be true concentrated pattern around the bullseye scan it transparency sheet another one another one another one another one do hundreds of them do thousands of them if you do a target for every day of history since since christ there will be over 730 thousand days so let's say that many targets and take a very long spike and on that spike put that transparency paper right where the bullseye is and then each transparency paper on top of the bullseye when you hold it up let's say you can scan it somehow as a 3d image where that spike is the bullseye so that means where that spike is is what is true that's the mark that's hit the mark okay so when you line up those thousands and thousands and thousands of scanned targets should your aim be true there will be a concentrated pattern around the bullseye around the mark of what is true so then you will see on that if that spike is a timeline you will see a thick smear throughout those transparency papers along the timeline and we can call that thick smear contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints and from that perspective of that timeline we will see where there's rogue

BBs that are not around that which is orthodox and it'll be very obvious because of that thick smear and then you can see how in time because of that heresy or heterodoxy whatever it is how it has been addressed and brought back to orthodoxy or perhaps you will see times in that thick smear when the thick smear does a little bit of a dip from what is true and comes back up for example Martin Luther am I alone wise when the majority did miss the mark should your aim be true the majority of the BBs should be in the circle some will be a bit off how you know if the majority is not off of true for example Luther and J.C.

Ryle but with the thousands of targets lined up with the bullseyes and the axis a thick line of what is true of what is accurate you will also see on that timeline where the church with the thick line of orthodoxy and where the Lord's gifts in the church contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints so all of those targets lined up all those BBs that make that thick line on that axis on that spike of the saints contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints those are what verse 11 is speaking about it's God's gifts to the church men are not fallible but throughout ages this text is true when this letter was written this text was true a thousand years ago this text was true 1517 this text was true when J.C.

Ryle was prepared to stand alone this text was true and even today this text is true which means that the ascended Lord gives victory gifts to the church for the preserving and maintenance of unity and edification of the church and so as such we can associate all those BBs as a thick line and some are owed those BBs on that thick line as Christ's gifts to the church through the teaching ministry of the church and through such the fruit of such things we have for example the Nicene

Creed the Athanasian Creed or the Chalcedonian definition definition so you will see through tradition how rogue BBs are identified and refuted and you will also see if the majority pattern has strayed from what is true in conclusion 2nd Thessalonians 2 15 says stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught whether by word or our epistle and also Titus 3 10 to 11 said it tells us to reject heretics that is to not embrace heretics to not receive heretics to not tolerate to not compromise it is not a pretense of unity and a fellowship a false teacher is a danger to the church reject and stand fast in the church some churches take a pragmatic approach where they seek to increase numbers a pragmatic approach to increase numbers so as such they need to have a form of doctrinal indifference in order to get these numbers but by their pragmatic approach to increase numbers now there's an increased amount of numbers so now there's all these people and now their next approach is we must pretend like we're united so in order to pretend like we're united we will reduce doctrine to give the appearance as though we are united in doctrine and then by reducing doctrine or by doctrinal indifference what does that do what are the consequences pause there and then think where churches have come to the point where they've embraced and taught heretical practices and think how how did things get there how did they get to that point what happened in order for them to allow this to come in and spread and take root the importance of creeds and confessions speaks to this issue the creeds and confessions is like that thick line of BBs forming a straight and true line doctrinal indifference is lowering the guardrails of the faith once for all delivered to the saints it is lowering the pillar and the ground of the truth it is opening the door for the false teacher who is nice and charming and personable and emphatically inserts good truth but also subtly inserts false teaching unnoticed how does the church get to the point where it embraces heresies well obviously those things begin to be taught by people in prominent teaching positions well how did they allow someone and to come in to take that position it's not like they come in the door with the lanyard over their neck in a card that says dr false teacher it's it's a deception so by lowering the pillar on the ground of the truth and opening the door to the false teacher subtly inserts his false teaching unnoticed doctrinal indifference is opening the door for the wolf in sheep's clothing the clouds with no water damnable heresies such as those who deny

[48 : 32] the human nature of Christ or who deny the divine nature of Christ or teach a conversion of natures or deny the resurrection so you can see the importance of the nicene creed the athanasian creed the chalcedonian definition in order to understand contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints the fruit of God's gifts to the church and God continues to give gifts to the church for the contending of the faith once for all delivered to the saints contending for the faith is important because theology is important knowledge of Christ descended and knowledge of Christ ascended victorious over sin and death so our only comfort and life and death but to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift therefore he says when he ascended on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men now this he ascended what does it mean but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth he who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things and he himself gave some to be apostles some prophets some evangelists and some pastors and teachers our Lord Savior Jesus Christ we thank you for your work in redemption we thank you for the incarnation and that you descended into the realm of the earth that you assumed our nature that you took on flesh being born under the law and in our nature perfected obedience in our nature suffered and died to pay our debt not only suffered and died were buried but you raised from the dead the almighty power of God on display and ascended on high with all authority we thank you for your work of redemption and I pray Lord that you would cause us to grow in our reverence of you in order as we consider that in your triumphant victory that indeed you did triumph over sin and death and Satan and hell and that as such in your ascent your victorious ascent you gave gifts to the church we thank you Lord for the ways in which you are active in preserving and maintaining unity and edifying the church we thank you for the teaching ministry through the ways in which you equip those within the church to continue to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints pray these things in Jesus name amen we'll stand and sing