

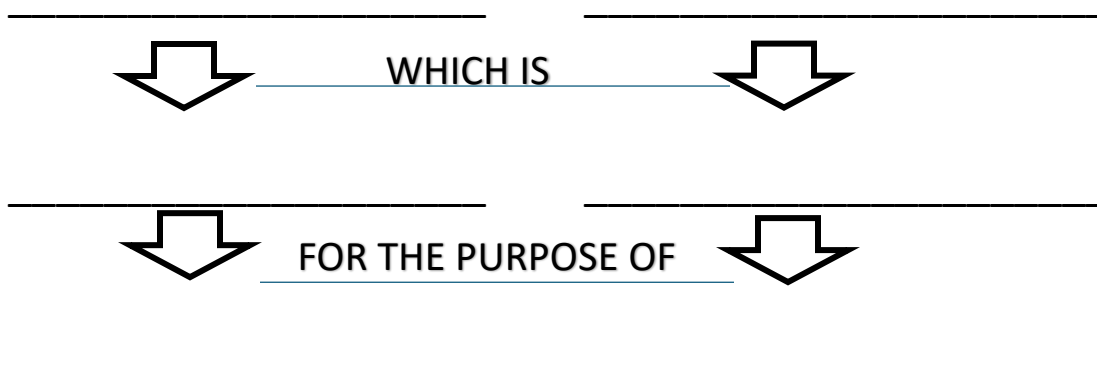
## The Book of Ephesians

### Ephesians 4:9-13

#### Session 32: The Unity of the Faith

We left off last time looking at the parenthesis contained in Ephesians 4:9-10. We have already commented on vs. 9, so we'll take it up in vs. 10. But, to get ourselves ready, let's read the context.

Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led **captivity captive**, and **gave gifts unto men**.



Let's talk about how this doctrine will effectually work in us.

We need to know that Christ led captivity captive so that we can choose to believe the truth that right now, we experientially share in Christ's victory over all of Satan's realm. As saints, we are no longer subject to Satan's darkness in any way. We can experience freedom from all the things in our past that have adversely affected our lives. Once we have gone through the steps to freedom, we can truly be transformed by the doctrine. Therefore, this is a truth which we intellectually believe, which replaces the "lies" which we previously believed and acted out of.

When we think things like: "I just can't forgive what they did to me," or "the doctrine doesn't work in me," or "I will never be what God wants me to be," or "I'm not smart enough to understand all of this," or "God is upset with me because I keep failing," or "I don't have the power to overcome temptations," or whatever lie Satan has put into your mind; when we think things like that, we

should identify and renounce the lie, and announce the truth that Christ triumphed over Satan, He ascended to His Father's right hand, and we are seated with Him in heavenly places (HP), far above any position of power that Satan or his minions hold. Therefore, we are not bound by our adversary unless we choose to be. We are not limited by the devil. Every one of us has the "exceeding greatness of His power" working in us, that same power by which God raised Christ from the dead and sat Him far above all principality, and power and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, and (and this is a big "AND") God put all things under Christ's feet and gave Him to be the head over "all things" TO THE CHURCH!

Do you get that? We are a part of His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, and have His victory over the darkness. We don't need to win the victory; we simply rest in His victory. And how do we do that? By faith in what He accomplished. It is when we are under the assault of the enemy that the power of God can rest on us; just like Paul!

Now, don't forget why we came back to chapter 1 in the first place; to see that God has put "all things" under His Son's feet. What are those "all things?" They are the positions of governmental power in the heavenly places. Now, take that definition into chapter 4.

Ephesians 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, **that he might fill all things.**)

The Christ that descended and preached to the spirits in prison is the same Christ that ascended up far above all heaven. This idea has already been expressed back in Ephesians 1:20-23.

Notice that Christ ascended up far above all heavens so that He might fill "all things." We see these same "all things" back in Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, <sup>20</sup> Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own

right hand in the heavenly *places*,<sup>21</sup> Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:<sup>22</sup> And hath put **all things** under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over **all things** to the church,<sup>23</sup> Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The “all things” in both of these passages refers to the positions of authority (principalities, etc.) in the heavenly places which will be vacated by the fallen angels who hold them for now.

So what does this mean for us? It means that when Satan and his army of followers have been forcibly and finally removed from the HP, we, the church (which is His body), will fill those positions of authority (all things). And when we do, that will be our heavenly vocation.

What is the basis for determining our position in the HP? This will all be determined at the judgment seat of Christ (JSoC) and it will be determined based on our godly living in connection with the doctrine given by Paul, and our faithful endurance of the sufferings. It will not be based on the size of our earthly ministry, where the big-name preachers will get the most rewards. Every member of the body of Christ has the capacity to occupy the same position and to receive the same rewards as the most well-known preacher or evangelist.

We will be rewarded based on the faithful works which we allow the Lord to accomplish in and through us. The goal of all of this is to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. It is His life in us that matters to us, and to our heavenly Father.

Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;<sup>12</sup> For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:<sup>13</sup> Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

I want to reiterate that all the supernatural gifts have ceased since the completion of the word of God, and since then, God's method for equipping the church is through His word.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:<sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

It is the scripture that makes a man throughly furnished. If it is the word of God that furnishes the man to do "all good works," then supernatural gifts are unnecessary, as they would be working to do the same thing.

Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;<sup>12</sup> For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:<sup>13</sup> **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

The spiritual gifts were given for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ, UNTIL...something. "Until we all come in the unity of the faith" (how did we define "faith" a couple of weeks ago when we were looking at "one Lord, ONE FAITH..."? The "faith" was Paul's doctrine. So, the gifts were in operation until we all come to the unity of the faith, which would be "the completeness of Paul's doctrine.

Notice Paul says "till we all come **IN** the unity of the faith," not "till we all come **TO** the unity of the faith." What does this mean? What is the unity of the faith? The unity of the faith (the "faith" being Paul's doctrine) is the unity or completeness of Paul's doctrine. When the spiritual gifts were in operation, did they have the completeness of Paul's doctrine? No.

1 Corinthians 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.<sup>9</sup> **For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.**

A man who had the spiritual gift of prophesy could say what he was given by the Spirit, but he didn't know everything there was to know. His knowledge was partial, incomplete.

1 Corinthians 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

If the knowledge under the gifts (which eventually were going to cease) is partial, then what is being referred to by "that which is perfect?" Paul says, "when that which is "perfect" is come, that which is in part shall be done away," so what does the "perfect" refer to? It refers to knowledge!

Both the partial and the perfect are talking about knowledge. What was revealed by the gifts was a partial knowledge, which was good and needed at that time, but God had a plan all along to eventually reveal a complete knowledge; a perfect knowledge.

When the knowledge is complete/perfect (the written word), then the knowledge which is in part (the gifts) will be done away because they have been superseded by something "more excellent." In other words, when we come to the full revelation (complete knowledge) of everything God wants us to have, then God can do away with the gifts.

Now, take this back to Ephesians 4. God gave some apostles, some prophets, etc. (the spiritual gifts) until "we all come to the "unity of the faith" or, to say it another way, the time when Paul's doctrine is completed. The unity of the faith refers to the complete unit of the faith; Paul's doctrine.

Have we yet come to the full revelation of Paul's doctrine? We have. The unity of the faith has been delivered to us; is available to us.

But there is more. Look at vs. 13 again.

Ephesians 4:13 **Till we all come in the unity** of the faith, and **of the knowledge of the Son of God**, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

See the two mentions of the word “of” in vs. 13? We have the unity of the faith, which is a complete knowledge of Paul’s doctrine, and we have a **unity** of the knowledge of the Son of God. Do we have a complete knowledge of the Son of God given to us? We do. Where is this knowledge? In the scriptures.

Let me show you something. Turn to Philippians 3. There was a time, before he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, when Paul trusted in his flesh. He gives us a list of those things in Philippians 3:4-8.

Philippians 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

<sup>5</sup> Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But after Paul encountered Christ, what was his opinion of those things?

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Paul says those things which used to be important to me, those things which made me what I was, those things by which I measured myself with others, I realized how hollow and worthless those things were. All Paul needed to have that happen is to have some knowledge of Christ – whom he met on that road.

Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and **I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ** Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, <sup>9</sup> And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: <sup>10</sup> **That I may know him**, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; <sup>11</sup> If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul says the thing he “counts” now, is to “know Him.” And that is what he writes in Ephesians 4:13.

What Paul is saying in vs. 13 is that the spiritual gifts were in operation until we all (the members of the BoC) are given the complete revelation of Paul’s doctrine and the complete revelation of the knowledge of the Son of God, as it pertains to the mystery!

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

<sup>17</sup> **That the man of God may be perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

It is the scripture that makes a man “perfect,” which means he has been given everything he needs. What did Ephesians 4 say the “unity of the faith” was supposed to produce?

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

How are you going to be perfected? We are perfected by the word of God. Before the word was complete, the gifts did that job.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**:

And if you have any doubt about how to define what it means to come unto “a perfect man,” let Paul define it for you in the same verse. To come unto a perfect man (which is now the job of the scripture) is to come unto the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” In other words, the unity of the faith (the complete revelation of Paul’s doctrine) is what produces the fulness of Christ in us.

(By the way: To come unto a perfect man is to become a mature person who is functioning out of all of Paul’s doctrine. I am not saying that we will ever come to plumb the depths of everything in Paul’s doctrine, we won’t. Why not? Because

there is more breadth, and length, and depth and height to what is in God's word than we have enough years to discover.

Did you ever read a verse, maybe one that you marked in your Bible, and all of sudden you realize something about it that you have never seen before? Of course you have. And guess what, you probably will see something else there again later. The word is inexhaustible. So, I am not talking about a perfect man being someone who knows everything there is to know; there is no such man. But the perfect man has the ability to function to some degree out of all of Paul's doctrine, and in every area of his life.)

But let's get back to the point: it is the complete revelation of Paul's doctrine that is meant to produce the fulness of Christ in us. This is the core of what God wants for every member of the BoC; the life of His Son being lived in and through all of us. That is what brings us unto a perfect man; Christ in us.

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.**<sup>19</sup> For it pleased *the Father* that **in him should all fulness dwell;**

This is what God is after, the knowledge of the Son of God. Why? Because it is the Father's plan that in His Son should all fulness dwell. In other words, that we all find our fulness in Christ. Everyone and everything finds its fulness in God's Son.

You see, the Father believes that if we really get to know His Son, we will love Him like He does. God has given us a unity of the faith (a complete revelation of knowledge) that allows us to know Christ. Now listen to me carefully. I love the doctrine, I do. And I preach the doctrine. And I want you to learn the doctrine. But in the end, it isn't about the doctrine, it is about Christ being formed in us. The doctrine is just part of the process of producing this living, loving relationship with the Lord Jesus whereby we are made to be more and more like Him. It is a glorious relationship. It can become the closest relationship you have.



I know this may seem odd, because we don't see Him with our physical eyes or hear Him with our physical ears, or touch Him with our hands like we do our friends and family. But, if we do this right, the relationship we have with Him can be the closest and most important relationship we ever have. And that is meant to continue and increase throughout eternity.

Actually, I believe that because of His infinite goodness and greatness, as we continue through eternity, we will learn more and more about the Lord Jesus which will continually deepen our love and appreciation for Him, and our relationship with Him. But for now, as we live as members of the body of Christ, we have been given everything we need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can experience the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The unity of the faith, being the complete revelation of knowledge in Paul's doctrine, is meant to bring us to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of the faith is to bring us "unto a perfect man."

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: