

HWMR: EXPERIENCING, ENJOYING, AND EXPRESSING CHRIST (2) (Week 24)

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:7-16; 6:10-20

The Giver of Gifts and the Constituents of God's Armor

- Eph 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
- Eph 4:8 Therefore the Scripture says, "Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men."
- Eph 4:9 (Now this, "He ascended," what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?
- Eph 4:10 He who descended, He is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.)
- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a fullgrown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- Eph 6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
- Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,
- Eph 6:12 For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.
- Eph 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
- Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness
- Eph 6:15 And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace;
- Eph 6:16 Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.
- Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
- Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Eph 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel,
- Eph 6:20 For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak

Day 1

Ephesians 4:7-8 - But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore the Scripture says, "Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men."

I. Ephesians 4:7-16 presents to us Christ as the Giver of gifts for the intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ; this building up is by the giving, the dispensing, of the divine grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ:

- A. Every member of the Body of Christ is an indispensable gift to the Body—v. 7; 1 Cor. 12:14-22; Rom. 12:4-5:
1. The gift of Christ is a person constituted with Christ's life and element dispensed into him by the Divine Trinity—cf. 2 Cor. 1:15.
 2. Each gifted person has a measure, and the divine grace is given, dispensed, into him according to that measure—Eph. 4:16; cf. Rom. 12:3.
- B. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the giving of the gifted persons, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers, who are constituted by the dispensing of the Divine Trinity, by Christ as the Head in His ascension (including His resurrection), to the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:8-12:
1. Ephesians 4:8 says, "Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men":
 - a. Height in the quotation from Psalm 68:18 refers to Mount Zion (vv. 15-16), symbolizing the third heaven, where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30).
 - b. Psalm 68 implies that it was in the Ark that God ascended to Mount Zion after the Ark had won the victory (Num. 10:35); this portrays how Christ has won the victory and ascended triumphantly to the heavens.
 - c. Through His universal traffic and in His ascension, Christ led as captives those who had been taken captive by Satan and made them gifts to His Body—Eph. 4:8-11:
 - (1) The redeemed saints had been taken captive by Satan before they were saved by Christ's death and resurrection—cf. Luke 4:18.
 - (2) In His ascension Christ led them captive; that is, He rescued them from Satan's captivity and took them to Himself—Psa. 68:18.
 - (3) In His ascension Christ led them to the heavens as His captives in His train of vanquished foes and made them gifts to His Body.
 - (4) Now Christ is celebrating His triumph over them, His vanquished foes, and is leading them as His captives in a triumphal procession in His move for His ministry to build up His Body—2 Cor. 2:14.
 2. The more Christ ascends and descends within us, capturing and vanquishing us, the more He fills us with Himself to constitute us as gifts to His Body—cf. Eph. 4:9-10.

The Amplified New Testament renders "He led captive those taken captive" as "He led a train of vanquished foes." Vanquished foes may refer to Satan, to his angels, and to us the sinners, again indicating Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death. In Christ's ascension there was a procession of these vanquished foes, led as captives from a war, for a celebration of Christ's victory. Now Christ is celebrating His triumph over His vanquished foes and leading them as His captives in a triumphal procession in His move for His ministry to build up His Body.

Gifts in verse 8 does not refer to the abilities or capacities for various services but to the gifted persons in verse 11 —apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. After conquering Satan and death and rescuing the sinners from Satan and death through His death and resurrection, Christ in His ascension made the rescued sinners themselves such gifts by means of His resurrection life and gave them to His Body for its building up.

In verses 9 and 10 Paul says, “Now this, ‘He ascended,’ what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended, He is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.” Christ has done a great deal of traveling in the universe. First, in His **incarnation** Christ descended from heaven to earth. Then, in His **death** He descended farther, from earth to Hades. Eventually, in His **resurrection** He ascended from Hades to earth, and in His ascension, from earth to heaven. Through such a journey He cut the way that He might fill all things.

Regrettably, however, within some of the saints Christ’s traveling may have **ceased**. Christ no longer goes up and down within them. We need to be **constituted as a gift to the church** through Christ’s descending and ascending within us. **Christ should have many ups and downs within us**. This means that Christ should go down and up within us; Christ should come **down to where we are** and should **ascend with us into the heavenlies**. If we try to hold Christ as the Head without allowing Him to descend and ascend within us, we damage the process by which we are constituted gifts. The Lord will constitute us as gifts only through His descending and ascending within us. After such experiences of Christ’s inward traveling over a period of time, we become useful in the church. We should experience and enjoy Him as a descending and ascending Christ. (*Conclusion of the New Testament, Message 340*)

Day 2

Ephesians 4:11-12 - And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

- C. The **intrinsic building up** of the organic Body of Christ is **by the gifted persons’ perfecting** of the saints in the divine dispensing so that all the saints may be able to do the work of the New Testament ministry, that is, to build up the Body of Christ—vv. 11-12:
1. The gifted persons perfect the saints by **nourishing them** according to the tree of life with the life supply for their growth in life—Gen. 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:2, 6.
 2. The gifted persons perfect the saints **to do what they do for the direct building** of the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12.
 3. The result of this perfecting is that **we will all arrive** at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—Eph. 4:13; cf. John 17:23.
 4. This perfecting will cause us to be **no longer little children** tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to the satanic system of error—Eph. 4:14.
 5. This perfecting will cause every member of the Body of Christ to be a **building member in love**—growing up into the Head and functioning out from the Head—vv. 15-16.

In chapters 3 and 4 we saw that the Lord desires to recover the organic building up of the Body of Christ. The building up of the Body must be organic. It is altogether a **matter of life**. Without life, there is no genuine building up of the church. There is very little of the element of life in today's Christianity. What we see built up among most of today's Christians is mostly inorganic. According to the New Testament, however, the **building up of the church should be altogether in life**.

Ephesians 4 tells us clearly how the Body of Christ is built up. Paul points out in Ephesians 4 that Christ, the ascended Head, in His ascension gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. When we Christians read the Bible, we have a tendency to take everything for granted. We need to get into the depths of the truth revealed in Ephesians 4:11-16. Not many Christians understand these six verses. What does it mean to perfect the saints? What is the work of the ministry, and what is it to build up the Body of Christ? Ephesians 4:11-16 is a portion of the Word that has been missed by most Christians. This portion of the Word has to be recovered, and I believe that today is the right time and that we are the right people for the Lord to carry out such a recovery. We must cooperate with the Lord for the advance of His recovery today.

We need to enter into the apostle Paul's thought when he talks about the perfecting of the saints. The thought of his word concerning the perfecting of the saints is that **God's intention is to have every believer able to do the things that the gifted persons do**. Every believer should be able to do the work of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers. The thought in today's Christianity, however, is different from this. A certain group of people is a clerical class. They are the ones who do the holy service, whereas the rest of the believers are the laity. This kind of philosophy and practice annuls the spiritual, organic function of all the believers.

There is a capacity in the divine life that the believers possess and enjoy, and this capacity needs to be developed unto their ability. In the human life there is the capacity of hearing, seeing, smelling, speaking, and walking. All these capacities need a certain amount of development, and for the development to take place there is the need of practice. A little infant has the capacity to see, but if his eyes are always covered, he will become blind because his seeing function has never been practiced or developed. To cover the infant's eyes is to annul the seeing function. For the function to be developed, **there is the need for the growth of life and practice**. An infant learns to speak by practicing and by the growth of life.

The traditional practice of Christianity annuls the capacity in the divine life that the believers possess and enjoy. The practice of Christianity with one pastor speaking to many believers week after week annuls their spiritual ability and function. Hundreds of Christians may sit in a pew and listen to sermons for many years without learning how to pray. When there is the need of prayer, they will go to their pastor.

The practice of Christianity also robs the believers of the opportunities to function. If a person gets saved and sits in a pew for a year, he will not learn how to function. Mostly he will learn how to sit passively and listen to a choir sing and a pastor preach. Even listening to a choir annuls the singing ability of the saints. The truth concerning the perfecting of the saints is the opposite of the practice of traditional Christianity. The apostle Paul's way was to perfect the saints in everything. Ephesians 4:11-12 shows us that for the building up of the Body of Christ, the **saints need to be perfected by the gifted persons**. (CWWL, 1989 Vol. 4, Chapter 5 "The Perfecting of the Saints by the Gifts")

Day 3

Ephesians 6:11 - Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

Ephesians 6:13-14 - Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

II. **Ephesians 6:10-20** reveals that **Christ is the constituents of God's armor**:

- A. The whole armor of God is for the entire Body of Christ as the **corporate warrior**, not for any individual member of the Body; we must fight the spiritual warfare **in the Body**, not as individuals—vv. 10-13; James 4:7; cf. Rom. 13:12-14; Deut. 32:30.
- B. In Ephesians 2 we sit with Christ in the heavenlies to participate in all His accomplishments (v. 6); in chapters 4 and 5 we walk in His Body on the earth to fulfill God's eternal purpose (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15); then in chapter 6 we stand in His power in the heavenlies to fight against God's enemy (vv. 11, 13-14; cf. 1 John 5:4, 18; John 3:6b).
- C. "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with **truth**"—Eph. 6:14a:
 - 1. *Truth* here refers to **God in Christ as the reality in our living**, that is, God **realized** and **experienced** by us in our living; this is actually Christ Himself lived out by us—4:15, 21, 24-25; John 14:6; 8:31-32, 36.
 - 2. The truth with which we are girded is actually the **Christ** whom **we experience**; because Paul's living was conformed to the pattern of Christ, he had the strength to face all opposition and adverse circumstances—Eph. 4:20-21; Phil. 1:19-21a.
- D. "Having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**"—Eph. 6:14b; 1 Cor. 1:30; Jer. 23:6:

Revelation 12:11 says, "*They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.*" To be covered by the blood of the Lamb is mainly to have upon us the **breastplate of righteousness**. Righteousness is in the blood, and the covering of the blood is the breastplate. Although this may be difficult to explain doctrinally, we can understand it experientially. Whenever we intend to fight against the powers of darkness, Satan, through his accusations, causes our conscience to become very sensitive. These feelings actually are not the sensitivity of the conscience but the result of Satan's accusations. Immediately our response to such accusations should be, "I overcome Satan, the accuser, not by my perfection and not even by a conscience void of offense but by the blood of the Lamb. I am defended against his accusations by the breastplate of righteousness."

The righteousness that covers our conscience and that guards us from Satan's accusations is Christ Himself. He is our righteousness. **We are covered not by our own righteousness but by Christ as our righteousness.** Some may wonder how the breastplate of righteousness can be related both to Christ and to the blood. In experience we cannot separate the blood from Christ. Apart from His blood, Christ could not cover us. Under the cleansing of His blood, He becomes our righteousness. (*Conclusion of the New Testament, Message 344*)

Day 4

Hebrews 9:14 - How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Ephesians 6:15 - And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace;

1. Christ as the breastplate of righteousness covers our conscience, signified by the breast; in fighting against Satan, our accuser, we need a blood-purified conscience, a **conscience void of offense**—Heb. 9:14; 10:22; Acts 24:16.
2. “They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11); our response to Satan’s accusations should be, “I overcome Satan, the accuser, not by my perfection and not even by a conscience void of offense but by the blood of the Lamb; I am defended against his accusations by the breastplate of righteousness.”
- E. “Having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the **gospel of peace**”—Eph. 6:15:
 1. **Christ has made peace for us on the cross**, both with God and with man, and this peace has become our gospel; the gospel of peace has been established as a firm foundation, as a readiness with which our feet may be shod—2:13-17.
 2. We fight the spiritual warfare by **standing in peace**; if we lose the peace between us and God or between us and other believers, we lose the standing to fight—Col. 3:15.

In the military today it is foolish for a soldier to fight alone. In order to fight the battle, we must form an **army**. If there is no formation of the army, there is no possibility to fight the battle. In Ezekiel 37, when the dead bones were revived and made alive, they joined together. When they were dead, they were scattered in thorough, absolute death, but when they were made alive, they became members joined to be a living body. According to the context of the chapter, this living body is the house of Jehovah, the building, the dwelling place of God, and it is also the army. **This body is the building and the army**. This is a good picture of the Body life. Can separated and scattered bones fight the battle? This is ludicrous. We must realize that no matter how strong we feel, we are not adequate by ourselves to fight the battle. **To fight the battle is a matter of the Body**. We must be **built together**. We must be in oneness and harmony as the living Body, the living building, and the living house of God. Then we can be the army.

If we read Ephesians from the first chapter to the sixth chapter, we will see that warfare is a matter of the **Body of Christ**, and the Body is a new creation in Christ, in the Spirit, and in the heavenlies. First, we must have the Body life, and then we can have the spiritual warfare. If we **do not** have the Body life, we are simply **not adequate** to have the warfare. In order to fight the battle, we must be in the reality of the Body life. In order to fight for America, one must be in the American armed forces. He cannot go to the battlefield alone. No one would be so foolish as to do this. He must first join the army and be trained, built up, and formed with the army. It is exactly the same with the Body of Christ. Why is spiritual warfare in the last chapter of Ephesians and not in the first, the second, or even the fifth chapter? It is because warfare is something of the Body, which is in Christ, in the Spirit, and in the heavenly places. (*Basic Principles for the Practice of the Church Life, chapter 6*)

Day 5

Ephesians 6:16 - Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Hebrews 12:2 - Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

- F. “Besides all these, having taken up the **shield of faith**, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one”—Eph. 6:16; 2 Cor. 4:13; Heb. 12:2:
1. The flaming darts are Satan’s **temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, lies, and attacks**; we need to **take up the shield of faith** to quench these flaming darts.
 2. We need to **exercise our spirit of faith** with our subdued and resurrected will to believe that the Lord’s manifestation is to **destroy the works of the devil**—1 John 3:8; Matt. 16:22-23; Luke 4:39-41; Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:17, 19.
 3. We need to **exercise our spirit of faith** to believe that the **Lord’s death has destroyed Satan**—Heb. 2:14; Gen. 2:17; 3:15; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:3-6; 1 Cor. 15:54-58.
 4. We need to **exercise our spirit of faith** to believe that the **Lord’s resurrection has put Satan to shame**—Col. 2:12-15, 20; 3:1; John 14:30; Phil. 3:10; Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:4-5.
 5. We need to **exercise our spirit of faith** to believe that the **ascension of the Lord is far above Satan’s power**—Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6; 6:11, 13.
 6. **We must have faith** in **God**, who is **real, living, present, and available**—Mark 11:22; Rev. 1:18.
 7. **We must have faith** in **God’s heart**; God’s heart toward us is **always good**; He has no intention to punish us, to injure us, or to cause us to suffer loss—Rom. 8:28-39.
 8. **We must have faith** in **God’s faithfulness**; God cannot lie but is always **faithful to His word**—1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:9; Titus 1:2.
 9. **We must have faith** in **God’s ability**—Eph. 3:20.
 10. **We must have faith** in **God’s word**; God is **bound to fulfill** all that He has spoken—cf. 1 Thes. 5:24; Eph. 6:17-18.
 11. **We must have faith** in **God’s will**—1:5, 9, 11.
 12. **We must have faith** in **God’s sovereignty**; under His sovereignty even our mistakes work for good—Rom. 9:19-29.
- G. “Receive the **helmet of salvation**”—Eph. 6:17a:
1. The helmet of salvation is for **covering our mind**, our **mentality**, against the negative thoughts shot in by the evil one; such a helmet, such a covering, is God’s salvation.
 2. Satan injects threats, worries, anxieties, fears, and other weakening thoughts into our mind; **God’s salvation is the covering** that we take up against all of these, and this salvation is the saving Christ whom we experience in our daily life—John 16:33; Phil. 1:19; Rom. 5:10; 10:12-13.

Day 6

Ephesians 6:17-18 - And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

- H. Receive “the **sword of the Spirit**, which Spirit is the **word of God**”—Eph. 6:17b:
1. Among the six items of God’s armor, the **sword of the Spirit** is the **only one for attacking the enemy**; with the sword we cut the enemy to pieces.
 2. **Christ as the Spirit and the word** furnishes us with a sword as an offensive weapon to defeat and slay the enemy.
 3. When the logos (the constant word in the Bible) becomes the **rhema** (the **present, instant, living** speaking of the Spirit) to us, this rhema is the sword that cuts the enemy to pieces—cf. John 6:63.
- I. “By means of all **prayer** and petition, **praying** at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints”—Eph. 6:18:
1. **Prayer** may be considered the seventh item of the **armor of God**, because it is the means by which we apply the other items.
 2. Prayer is the **unique way to apply Christ as the armor of God**; it is prayer that makes the armor available to us in a practical way.

By the Word with the Spirit we are also filled in our spirit. Ephesians 5:18-20 speaks of being filled in spirit, speaking, singing, psalming, and giving thanks. If we compare this passage with Colossians 3:16 and 17, we see that the **Spirit fills us through the Word**. Hence, to be filled with the Word is actually to be filled with the Spirit.

By the Word coming into our being and filling it, we are also washed; we are cleansed by the washing of water in the Word. According to the New Testament, this water, the water in the Word, is the living Spirit. **When we receive the Word into us, the water in the Word will wash away our inward filthiness.**

According to Ephesians 6:17 and 18, if we receive the Word into our being **by means of prayer and petition**, we shall put on the armor of God and be empowered. Apart from the Word, there is no way for us to have the armor of God. **To put on the armor of God is to receive the Word by means of all prayer and petition.** Our experience confirms this. When we come to the Word and take it into us by pray-reading, singing, or musing, we eventually sense that we are armed, equipped, and empowered. We have the confidence that should Satan attack us we would have the power and the armor to defeat him. We can even say, "Satan, don't you see that I have put on the armor of God and that I have been empowered to defeat you and to put you to shame?" We are thus able to fight the spiritual warfare and defeat the evil powers of darkness in the air. (*The Secret of Experiencing Christ*, Chapter 10)