

Message Twelve

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

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

- 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.
- 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.

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:
 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.
- 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.
- 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.