

Ephesians
Economy of Grace
Ephesians 4:4-13
July 6th, 2025

I. Introduction: The Body of Christ

From our sevenfold oneness, Paul in our passage turns to address the Church's diversity. The unity we share is the unity of a *body*. And a body is made of many members. Every cell in your body contains the same genetic code. But not every cell in your body is the same kind of cell. Your body is made up of a variety of different cells, doing all kinds of things. This is how God has arranged our physical bodies, and it is how God has arranged Christ's spiritual body. We are tied together by a strong seven-cord unity. But we are tied together without erasing our differences. In fact, we need our differences. Just as the body cannot function were it just a foot, so the body of Christ is comprised of many members that are to work together and build itself up until 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 (Eph. 4:13).

II. Text - Ephesians 4:4-13

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says:

*"When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men."*

9 (Now this, "He ascended" – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 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.

Psalm 68 recounts the victory of the triumphant Davidic King. The psalm speaks of how things normally go when a triumphant king ascends from the battlefield. Ordinarily, _____ start pouring in (see Psalms 68:18). The victorious King starts receiving gifts from all the smaller, lesser kings and noblemen around him. This is normal politics. But with Christ, it's different. Paul transforms the psalm to better reflect the politics of Christ. Whereas the Psalm speaks of the victorious Davidic King *receiving* gifts, Paul reverses this, writing that Christ _____ gifts to men. We find this pattern in God's economy: God gives us His Son, the Son gives Himself and bestows us with the Spirit. The Spirit gives Himself and bestows us with apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers. These men give themselves, and bestows us with one another, equipped for labors of love. And then we each and all give ourselves to one another and to the world so that Christ might become all in all. In other words, so that the fullness of *His* gift might permeate the entire cosmos. This is God's economy of _____.

III. Economy of Grace

This pattern of gift and grace and giving is diametrically opposed to the self-seeking, receiving, taking, exploitative dealings of modern _____ run rampant in the world. The world about us is full of individuals fending for themselves, laboring to maximize whatever serves their own best interests in a world believed to be marked by constraint and scarcity. It is Hobbes' universe, and "the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty,

brutish, and short.” But this kind of cut-throat, self-centered, individualistic mindset is the opposite of that mind which is ours in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:3-5), who gave Himself to us, who gave His Spirit to us, who gave leaders to us, who gave us to one another. Christ’s is a gift economy, not a self-centered *Take What I Can Get* economy. The two are completely opposed.

IV. Principles of God’s Gracious Economy

We are to *put off* the mindset of this world with all of its corruptions, and put on the principles of grace that characterize the new world Christ inaugurated with the gift of Himself.

First. God’s economy of grace cuts against individualism and promotes the _____ good (1 Cor. 12:4-7). Just as every member and cell of the body works for the good of the whole, the same principle follows in God’s gracious economy. God gives grace for the good of the whole. Christ has bound Himself to us by taking on our flesh and blood, and in so doing, He has bound us even closer—bound us in destiny and goal to one another. So that our good is a common good.

Second. God’s economy of grace does not bestow rights, but it bestows gifts and _____. Scripture does not speak of ‘rights’, but rather in terms of gifts and debts—but in a paradoxical way. Scripture says that we have received gifts, and now we are debtors to that grace—not in the sense that we must now repay that grace to God. But in the sense that we are now obligated to _____ that grace with others. See Matt. 18:33; Rom. 13:8; 1 John 4:11.

We like to talk of ‘rights’ because they come with demands. They toss humility to the wind. They don’t require gratitude. They are perfectly suited to our own self-centeredness. But in God’s economy of grace we don’t get to demand stuff of one another. And yet, we are all in each other’s debts. We have all received from God all manner of gifts and graces. And those obligate us to give of ourselves to one another. As we do this, we give of ourselves to one another, and receive from one another with all humility, with gratitude, with joy, with love.

- Martin Luther writes, “For man is a creature placed between God and his neighbor, as a medium which receives from above and gives out again below, and is like a vessel or channel through which the fountain of divine blessings continuously flows without intermission to other men.”

Third. God’s economy is an economy of _____, not scarcity. One of the main tenets afflicting modern man is the scarcity principle. There’s not enough to go around. If I have that means you can’t have. So we have to compete, fight, drive one another back so *I* can have *my* piece. Underlying this is the idea that the earth and its fullness isn’t full enough for all of us. But really, this is less based in fact, than in _____. See James 4:1-4. We only try to justify ourselves by claiming a scarcity of resources. But really this is just blame-shifting. And ultimately, it is blaming God, for it claims that God made a world which cannot adequately support all of His creatures.

- As one commentator puts it: “The values to which the modern world gives the greatest veneration, in which it pursues with greatest abandon, are values which inherently lead to strife and conflict. They are political and economic goods which cannot be shared without decrease, and which give rise to greed and strife, rather than lead to cooperation and peace.”

God’s gracious economy is one of giving without decrease, without loss, without depletion. It is an overflow of goodness—of grace that breeds more grace, of life given and shared that results in more life—more life for everybody involved, including the giver.

V. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ