

Finding your Place of Service

Eph 4:7-16 CBC 8/16/09 Sun a.m.

ENGAGE: ILL [Will have box on stage w. box inside]: Imagine for a moment that salvation came in a box you could see and touch. On the outside of this box are written the words: GRACE, SALVATION, GOSPEL. Each word describes what the box contains.

There is no price on the box, for it is more costly than all the money in the world... it's not for sale. You can't earn it, no amount of good works and church attendance can gain this box. You can't make your own, the material required doesn't exist here. **The only way to get it is to ask, to acknowledge that salvation comes only through faith in Christ.**

As you open this box you find on top a hand-written card, it reads: **To you, from Jesus.** The first thing you find in the box is a **receipt titled SIN**, but every entry is blotted out and over the list is stamped the words **PAID IN FULL**. Beneath that is **an invitation to enter always and often into the presence of God**, it too has been signed personally by Jesus. Beneath that is a **certificate with a seal upon it stating that you have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit** and that a work is in progress to make you like Jesus. Below that is a **framed guarantee that your name is written in the Book of Life** and that you have eternal life, carefully wedged in the corner of the frame is a ticket with your name on it, confirming your reservation in heaven.

At the very bottom of the box is a shining box wrapped carefully with a bow, attached is a card that reads: (Your name). A special gift chosen specifically for you and bought at great expense. For you to use until you get here - with love, Jesus.

This is the box of salvation. If you have received salvation all of these things are already yours, but I wonder...I'm sure that many of us have our eternal life certificate displayed on the wall for all to see, our heaven ticket is carefully tucked into our pocket and we frequently use our invitation to enter into the Lord's presence. **But where is your gift? Is it lying unopened and unused in the closet?**

FOCUS: Today I want to invite you to open that box and see what it holds. For within you will find purpose, pleasure, fulfillment and joy. **This morning we are going to see that unity and growth are accomplished by recognizing that Christ has given each of us one or more spiritual gifts, as well as gifted people to the church, so that the body of Christ might grow up in all areas.**

SET THE STAGE biblically: In the passage of Scripture we'll going to briefly consider the apostle Paul shows us how the special gift Christ has given each of us is to be used to build up His body in love.

PREVIEW: We are going to see **FIRST** that every **one of us has been given grace for the purpose of ministry**. Every one of us has been entrusted with a special ministry in the body of Christ. **You have been given a special gift by Christ.** **SECOND**, we'll see Christ gives gifted people to the church to equip you for ministry and bring us to maturity. Then **THIRD**, we will answer the question, In light of the fact that Christ has entrusted you with a special ministry in the body of Christ and given gifted people to the church to equip you for the work of the ministry, **what does God want you to do?** How can you get involved in serving here with your spiritual gifts?

ANNOUNCE the passage: For the Scripture reading this morning turn with me in your Bibles to **Eph 4:7-16 [p. 1039]** (Congregation: “I am important to this body of believers.”) Why are you important to this body of believers?

Christ has given you a special gift of ministry (Eph 4:7-10).

God has given each one of us a gift of His grace for building up the community of believers.

Look with me at Eph 4:7. “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph 4:7 NKJV). **The word “grace” is used here as it is in Eph 3:2, 7–8, where it refers to the privilege of having been called by God to serve Him.** Every one of us has been given a gift of Christ’s grace.

God has given you at least one spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are not just natural abilities. When you were born into this world God gave you certain natural abilities; some areas come easier to you than others. You may be good in mechanics or other tasks that require you to work with your hands, while someone else might shine in working with numbers.

Besides natural abilities, **God has given you at least one spiritual gift** no matter what natural abilities you may or may not possess. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are built up.

You have a specialized role to play that no one else can fill. Christ has given you a special grace to serve in a way that the body of Christ needs, so that Christ’s body can be built up.

This means **you are important to the body of Christ.** Christ has entrusted you with a spiritual gift that comes from His abundant goodness. (“According to the measure of Christ’s gift” [Eph 4:7b].)

Although as Christ’s body, we are one unified body, **each of us has a special ability to be used for the good and growth of all. Christ has given you a special gift of ministry. Your role in Christ’s body is important.** No one is overlooked; everyone is important to building up this community of believers!

IL: From an experience of her childhood, **Mrs. Floyd Crook** recalls how a great truth was impressed upon her with special meaning. She writes, “I came home from school one day crying because I had been given only a small part in the children’s program, while my playmate got the leading role. After drying my tears, my mother took off her watch and put it in my hand. ‘What do you see?’ she asked. ‘A gold case, a face, and two hands,’ I replied. Opening the back, she repeated the question. I told her I saw many tiny wheels. **‘This watch would be useless,’ she said, ‘without every part -- even the ones you can hardly see.’** That object lesson has helped me all through life to see the importance of the small duties we’re asked to perform.”

REIT: Christ has specially gifted you. You have been entrusted with a gift from Christ to be used to help Christ’s body, the church. Christ has given you a special gift to help the body of Christ grow.

TRANS: But is it really true that the Jesus who once walked the earth is now so highly exalted, so glorious, and so richly endowed with authority that He is able to bestow His gifts upon the church and upon us, its members, in lavish quantity? In answer to this question the apostle writes about the ascended Christ and the gifts He gives.

What did Christ do to provide you and me with a grace gift? A gift often means more to us when we recognize what someone had to do to obtain a gift for us.

ILL: I appreciate what Janel, my wife, does in thinking and planning for gifts for our children. My typical idea of shopping is taking 15 minutes to go in and make a quick purchase. On larger items I spend quite a bit of time weighing the pros and cons of a particular brand, often going online to do research, but in general, I don't like to spend a lot of time going through stores looking for just the right gift.

TRANS: But as we think about spiritual gifts, and what our spiritual gifts cost, think about the SACRIFICE Christ made. **Christ gave His life** that He might give you the special gift He's entrusted to you.

In Eph 4:8-10 the apostle Paul summarizes Psalm 68. The essence of Psalm 68 is that a military victor has the right to give gifts to those who are identified with him. **Christ, having captivated sinful people by redeeming them, is Victor and gives them gifts and as gifts to the church.** Christ, the One who won the victory over death is the giver of these gifts through the Holy Spirit. Notice v. 8: *“Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men’* (Eph 4:8 NKJV).

Now in the remainder of verses 9-10 Paul comments on the words “He ascended.” *“(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.)* These two verses are parenthetical in thought because **the issue of the passage is the giving of gifts.**

Before Christ could ascend He had to descend. Christ left heaven and descended to earth. We call this the incarnation, God the Son, taking on human flesh. When Christ came to earth He experienced the depths of humiliation, including the ultimate humiliation of going to the cross (cf. Phil 2:5-11), **but He ascended to heaven victorious.**

So what did the special gift Christ give you cost Him? The privilege to entrust you with a spiritual gift to build up Christ's body cost Jesus His life. How important that we value the privilege Christ has given us to serve Him, **and His body** with our spiritual gift(s).

Transition & Reiteration: The primary point here in vv. 7-10 then is this: Christ has given you a special gift of ministry. Christ has given you a special gift to use to serve His body. You are important to this body of believers.

Now in vv. 11-15 we see:

Christ gives gifted people to the church to equip believers for ministry and bring to maturity (4:11-15).

In vv. 11-15 we see that Christ has given gifted people to the church to equip believers for ministry and bring to maturity. Note v. 11, *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”* This verse is a commentary on the second part of the quotation in verse 8, namely, Christ's giving gifts to Christians. **The gifts to the church are gifted people.** The subject **He** is emphatic in the Greek to denote that **Christ Himself gives the gifted people.** Paul lists for us **five types of gifted** men who were given for the church. The first two, **apostles and prophets,** were already mentioned in Eph 2:20 and 3:5 as

the foundational gifts to the church. The apostles include the Twelve, who had the office of apostleship by virtue of being with Christ (Acts 1:21-22) and having been appointed by Him (which would also include Paul; 1 Cor 15:8-9; Gal 1:1; 2:6-9). Apostles were those who carried the gospel message with God's authority. "Apostle" means "one sent as an authoritative delegate." An apostle of Christ then had the same power and authority Christ did.

New Testament prophets were gifts to the church to provide edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3). They probably revealed God's will to the church when the biblical canon was incomplete. Since the apostles and prophets were foundational, they did not exist after the first generation of believers, but we have the result of their ministry in the New Testament.

Evangelists were those engaged in spreading the gospel, similar to present-day missionaries. [Ex: Philip, Acts 21:8 with 8:5ff.; cf. 2 Tim 4:5].

The last two gifted people Paul mentions here that Christ gives to the church for equipping God's people are **pastors and teachers**. Paul links these two gifts closely together. While some interpreters understand the phrase *pastors and teachers* to refer to one and the same group, it is better to regard the pastors as a subset of teachers. In other words, all pastors are teachers (cf. 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9), but not all teachers are pastors [cf. NET notes].

TRANS: Now what is the purpose of Christ giving these gifted people to the church? **Look with me at v. 12: "For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12 NKJV).** Christ gives gifted people to the church to EQUIP the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ.

APPL: Thus, the primary responsibility the pastoral staff, teachers, and evangelists have in our congregation is to help us be equipped as a church body so that together we perform the work of the ministry—to seek the lost and equip the found. **Again I appreciate the work and ministry that so many of you do.** Yet we are reminded here that **our job is not done until we get each of you involved in using your spiritual gift**, and until we are like Christ in every way!

ILL: If someone were to ask, "How many ministers do you have at Calvary Bible Church," do you know the answer? With a membership of 445 or so, the answer should be that we have **445 ministers**. Our responsibility as one gifted in evangelism or as a pastor or teacher is **to help further equip each of you for the ministry God has entrusted to you**. We are to come alongside you to help you be effective in using the spiritual gift God has given you.

The fact that Christ gives gifted people to equip the saints means **that ALL OF US as believers and not just a few leaders should be involved in the "ministry."** Christ has gifted you (v. 7) to serve others, so that they body of Christ is built up.

TRANS: Now God's goal is for us to be conformed as a church body to the image of Christ, to be mature rather than immature. Notice how Paul brings out our goal is to be like Christ, **practicing** the truth in love. **Look at v. 13 (NKJV). "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;** [Christ is not only the Source of our growth, He is also the Aim and Goal of our growth. Our concern is that each of you would be growing into maturity. Here we see as well Paul's concern that certain kinds of very cunning people, who are skilled at deceit and scheming, would come in and teach false doctrines that in turn would stunt your growth as a believer. Notice v. 14:] 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness

of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, [or this might be better translated, “practicing the truth in love, as this refers to being real or truthful in both our conduct and speech; so practicing the truth in love we] **may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ**” (Eph 4:13-15 NKJV). In contrast to those who practice falsehood and deceit God’s concern is that we be real or truthful in both our conduct and speech so that we promote spiritual growth. As we are being real or truthful in both our conduct and speech we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.

Transition: Now in light of the fact that Christ has entrusted you with a special ministry in the body of Christ and given gifted people to the church to equip you for the work of the ministry, **what does God want you to do?** How can you serve Christ here?

Use the “grace gift” Christ entrusted to you (Eph 4:16).

Be faithful in doing your part to make Christ’s body grow in love. **OPEN YOUR GIFT!** Each of us has a responsibility to adjust ourselves to one another and to submit ourselves to our exalted Head, Jesus Christ, so that His will is carried out through us, His body.

From the Head the body derives its whole capacity for growth and activity (Eph. 4:16). Note Eph 4:16 (NKJV): *“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.”*

APPL: As a Christian you or I cannot deliberately withdraw ourselves from the visible assembly of God’s people without suffering from spiritual malnutrition. Each of us needs one another in the body of Christ.

ILL: Imagine if your foot says, “Okay leg, I’m tire of going where you go. I want to split and go on my own.” The foot’s not going to get far without the rest of the body. **So too, each of us need one another.**

We, as part of Christ’s body, are fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. Each of us needs one another.

APPL: **Do you realize the important function you have in this body?** Do you recognize that your contribution of service will help this body grow in love and Christlikeness? Your contribution of service will help us work effectively as Christ’s body!

As each of us function in accord with the gift(s) Christ has given us (v. 7) the body as a whole enjoys unity (cf. vv. 3-6) and becomes more spiritually mature (cf. v. 15), more like Jesus Christ in all His fullness.

ILL: Our orchestra playing together can produce music that is breathtakingly beautiful. The same musicians playing independently of each other can produce earsplitting noise. The difference is that while the second group is completely self-absorbed, focusing only on themselves, the first group is in harmony, concentrating on the music and following **Pastor Rick’s** leadership. The analogy for us as a church should be obvious. **When we focus on following the Lord and fulfilling His purposes for us, it is a beautiful—even awesome—thing to see. When we focus on ourselves and pursue our own selfish agendas, it is a pitiful or even laughable sight.** God has given each of us one or more gifts according to Christ’s own matchless gift. These gifts are not just for our own personal benefit. **They are for the good of the whole body.**

Conclusion:

You are important to the building up of the body of Christ. I challenge you in two areas in particular today. **First**, if you consider Calvary Bible Church your church home, I want to encourage you to officially join. Our desire is that you would have a vital connection to this body. God designed us for relationships, and **community is critical**. Genuine Christianity is a **shared experience**, not simply an individual one.

The difference between “attenders” and “members” can be summed up in one word: commitment. Let me briefly share with you four reasons we, as church leaders, believe membership matters:

First, **A biblical reason:** Christ is committed to the church. “. . . Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (Eph 5:25 NET).

Second, **A cultural reason:** it is an antidote to our society. We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything—a job, a marriage, our country. This attitude has produced a generation of “**church shoppers and hoppers.**” Membership swims against the current of America’s consumer religion. It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

Third, **A practical reason:** it defines who can be counted on. Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. **Membership identifies our family.**

Fourth, **A personal reason:** it produces spiritual growth. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable if you’re not committed to any specific church family.

As a newcomer or perhaps one who has been around for a while but still has questions about Calvary Bible Church, **I want to invite you to COME TO THE NEXT WELCOME CLASS designed just for you. This class will give you a clearer overview of who we are as a church, and it is also a requirement for church membership. Join us Sunday, Sept 13 & 20 during Sunday School.**

THE SECOND AREA I want to challenge you in today is this: For Jesus sake, for your sake, for our sake - OPEN YOUR GIFT AND BEGIN TO USE IT, that’s what it was given for. [Go to box and open the “spiritual gift box.”.. list some of the spiritual gifts]

Christ has given you a special gift of ministry. The gift He gave you according to His grace cost Him His life! Unwrap your gift. Let’s use our gifts to build up His body in love. You are important to our growth in love. There are no small roles in God’s kingdom.

APPL: Use the grace gift Christ has given you! Today at the conclusion of the service we invite you to look at **the various ministry opportunities highlighted.** [MINISTRY FAIR] Ask God, “God thank you for the special gift you have given to me to build up this body in love. How would you like me to serve you?” [Also remind of spiritual gifts workshop end of month...]
[Salvation....]

CONGREGATIONAL SAYING: “I’m gifted and needed in the kingdom to do good works.”
(3X)