

LIFE-STUDY OF EPHESIANS
MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN
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C. One Baptism

In faith, we believe into the Lord (John 3:36, Gk.), and in baptism we are baptized into Him (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3) and terminated in Adam (Rom. 6:4). Through faith and baptism, we have been transferred out of Adam into Christ and have thus been joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17).

The reality of baptism consists in realizing and confessing that our natural being has been crucified and buried. Hence, baptism is the realization of death, burial, and resurrection. Through faith we are joined to Christ, and in Christ we are crucified, buried, and resurrected. Immediately after we believe in Christ, we should be baptized as a testimony of our realization of this fact. Baptism always follows faith. Through baptism, we have a complete and thorough transfer out of Adam and into Christ. Now we are in Christ who is our life and our Lord. No longer are we in Adam with Adam as our head. We are in Christ with Christ as our Head. Because the Lord, faith, and baptism are related in such a way, Paul spoke of them together in verse 5.

III. THE ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

Verse 6 says, "One God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all." God is the Originator of all things, and the Father is the source of life for the Body. In verse 4 we have life; in verse 5, headship; and in verse 6, origin or source. Because everything has a source, it is possible to trace things back to their origin. However, most Christians today, being superficial, do not care for the origin or source of things. We in the church life, on the contrary, must have sober discernment. This means that we must consider the matters of life, headship, and source, or origin. If we trace something back to its source, we shall not be cheated or deceived or led astray.

The Apostle Paul was a very discerning person, having received a keen discernment from the Lord. Beginning with the one Body, Paul traced the source all the way back to the one God and Father. This means that he went all the way back to the very source, to the origin.

In verse 6 Paul speaks of the one God and Father "Who is over all and through all and in all." The thought of the Trinity is implied here. "Over all" mainly refers to the Father; "through all," to the Son; and "in all," to the Spirit. The Triune God eventually enters into us by reaching us as the Spirit. Our oneness is constituted of the Trinity of the Godhead: with the Spirit as the life-giving Spirit, with the Son as the Lord and Head, and with the Father as the source and origin. If we see this, nothing will be able to distract us or lead us astray. We shall have the proper discernment regarding the oneness and how to keep it.

The keeping of the oneness is a matter in the Triune God. This means that the Triune God Himself is the base of our oneness, its fundamental basis and very foundation. The Originator of our oneness is the Father, the Accomplisher of our oneness is the Lord, and the Executor of our oneness is the Spirit. In our experience, however, the Spirit is first because He is directly related to the oneness, to the carrying out of the oneness in the one Body. Following this, we have the Lord as the Accomplisher and the Father as the source. Therefore, our oneness is the Triune God realized and experienced by us in our Christian life.

Although many of us have been Christians for years, we have never heard that oneness is actually the Triune God becoming our experience. Our oneness is the Triune God - the Spirit, the Lord, and the Father - wrought into the Body. Along with the Triune God, we have the faith, the baptism, and the hope. One day we received faith and were brought into Christ. What a glorious visitation was this coming of faith! After we believed into Christ, we were baptized. We became members of the Body with the hope of glorification. This is our oneness. This oneness is the Triune God wrought into the Body,

which comes into existence through faith and baptism and which has the hope of one day being glorified. May we all have the heart to care for this oneness.

LIFE-STUDY OF EPHESIANS MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE GIFTS PERFECTING THE SAINTS

Ephesians 4:7 says, "But to each one of us was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Concerning the Body, all the basic elements are one. This is covered in verses 4 through 6, where we have one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. Although the basic elements of the Body are one, the gifts, or the functions, are many and varied. The word "but" at the beginning of verse 7 brings out this contrast between the oneness of the Body and the variety of the gifts or functions.

GRACE ACCORDING TO THE GIFT

Verse 7 says that each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Here grace is given according to the gift, but in Romans 12:6 gifts differ according to grace. Grace actually is the divine life that both produces and supplies the gifts. In Romans 12 it is the grace that produces the gift. Thus, the gift is according to grace. In Ephesians 4 it is grace that supplies the gift. Hence, here the grace is according to the gift, according to the measure of the gift. Grace according to the measure of the gift can be compared to our blood, which supplies the members of our body according to their size. The measure of the gift of Christ is the size of a member of His Body.

CHRIST GIVING GIFTS TO MEN

Verse 8 continues, "Wherefore He says, Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men." "Height" in the quotation of Psalm 68:18 refers to Mount Zion (Psa. 68:15-16), symbolizing the third heaven where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30). Psalm 68 implies that it was in the ark that God ascended to Mount Zion after the ark had led the way to victory.

Verse 1 of Psalm 68 is a quotation of Numbers 10:35. This indicates that the background of Psalm 68 is God's move in the tabernacle with the ark as its center. The ark was a clear type of Christ. Wherever the ark went, the victory was won. Eventually this ark ascended triumphantly to the top of Mount Zion. This portrays how Christ has won the victory and ascended triumphantly to the heavens.

"Those" in verse 8 refers to the redeemed saints who had been taken captive by Satan before they were saved by Christ's death and resurrection. In His ascension Christ led them captive; that is, He rescued them from Satan's captivity and took them to Himself. This indicates that He has conquered and overcome Satan, who had captured them by sin and death.

The Amplified New Testament renders "He led a train of vanquished foes" for "He led captive those taken captive." "Vanquished foes" may refer to Satan, to his angels, and to us the sinners, also indicating Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death. In His ascension, there was a procession of these vanquished foes as captives from a war for a celebration of Christ's victory.

"Gifts" here does not refer to the abilities or enablements for varied services, but to the various gifted persons in verse 11 - apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. After conquering and rescuing them from Satan and death through His own death and resurrection, Christ in His ascension made the rescued sinners themselves such gifts with His resurrection life and gave them to His Body for its building up.

Verses 9 and 10 are a parenthesis. This means that verse 11 is the continuation of verse 8. Verse 8 says that Christ gave gifts to men, and verse 11 says that He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers. "Each one" in verse 7 refers to every member of the Body

of Christ, each of whom has received a general gift, whereas the four kinds of gifted persons mentioned in verse 11 are those who have been endowed with a special gift. As we shall see, these are the leading apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. As followers, we all can be such gifts to the Body.

Verses 9 and 10 explain how Christ gave the gifts to the Body: "Now this, He ascended, what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He Who descended is the same Who also ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things." The "lower parts of the earth" refers to Hades, underneath the earth, where Christ went after His death (Acts 2:27). Christ firstly descended from heaven to earth in His incarnation. Then after He died on the cross, in His death He descended further, from earth to Hades. Eventually, in His resurrection He ascended from Hades to earth, and from earth to heaven in His ascension. By His descending in death and ascending in resurrection, He gave gifts to men.

CHRIST FILLING ALL THINGS

By descending and ascending, Christ also cut the way that He might fill all things. The thought here is profound. Firstly, Christ was in the heavens. In His incarnation, He came down to earth as a man and lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years. Then He died on the cross and descended into Hades, ascended in resurrection from Hades to earth, and then ascended to the third heaven. By means of such a traffic of descending and ascending, He fills all things. Now Christ is everywhere, on the earth as well as in the heavens.