

"Till We All Attain ..."

"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine ..." (Eph. 4:13-14a)

When Christ ascended on high and gave gifts to men (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, Eph. 4:11), these were for a specific purpose and time. The purpose was *"for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ ..."* (Eph. 4:12). The time period was *"till we all attain unto the unity of the faith."* Some questions are in order here. Will we ever reach the state designed, the unity of faith? And if we do, will the gifts given to bring us there, cease at that point?

What did the apostle mean when he wrote *"till we all attain unto the unity of the faith"*? Is he saying until full inspiration is given? Some think so, but it appears that he rather speaks of a state of unity produced by the faith rather than attaining full revelation. Consider vs. 3 in conjunction with this: *"giving diligence to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."* *"Unity of Spirit;" "Unity of the faith."* These Ephesians were urged to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To enable them to do this -- to attain unto the unity of the faith, they were aided and abetted by the *"gifts"* Christ had given to men.

These gifts were designed to help us attain unto *"the knowledge of the Son of God."* Paul's strong desire was to *"know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering"* (Phil. 3:10). Paul was certainly acquainted with Christ -- this he claimed to be -- but his desire to *"know Christ"* meant far more than to be aware of Christ's claims, it meant to imbibe His spirit, to walk as He walked. Peter adds additional light when he wrote, *"For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ..."* (2 Pet. 3:20). Just as the word *"know"* is used to describe the intimate relationship of a husband and wife (Gen. 4:1); so must we also know Christ, become intimately acquainted with Him, making His life, our life. Paul wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me ..."* (Gal. 2:20). The gifts Christ gave help us attain unto the knowledge of the Son of God, maturity. Christ's gifts were designed to help us attain unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Maturity is the apostle's thought and the work of those whom Christ gave as gifts to His people to help us attain maturity for maturity ensures *"that we*

may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

But, does the phrase "*until we attain unto the unity of the faith*" indicate that once Christians reach maturity these Christ-given gifts would cease? By no means. It is true that we have neither living apostles nor prophets today. It is not true that the work of both groups of these men have ceased. Their work continues in the written messages they left for us. There will always be need for the work these men did (do) for the body of Christ. As to evangelists, pastors and teachers, who can say there is no longer need for them? These different works of these men will always be needed. While inspiration was essentially a part of both the apostles and prophets, inspiration may or may not have been exercised by evangelists, pastors and teachers. Lost sinners need the fervent, zealous searching of evangelists who seek them out, acquainting them with the gospel. Christians need the spiritual oversight of pastors who watch in behalf of souls; all need teachers who are equipped with the scriptures and adept in drawing out their spiritual truths to impart them to us.

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