

## Out of Many, One

### Ephesians 4:7-16

The words *E Pluribus Unum* appear on *The Great Seal of the United States*. Until 1956, *E Pluribus Unum* was the unofficial motto of the United States. In 1956, the official motto of the United States became *In God We Trust*. *E Pluribus Unum*, while not the official motto of our nation, still appears on our Great Seal and on other currencies and documents produced by our government.

*E Pluribus Unum* is a Latin phrase which means “*out of many, one*,” or “*one from many*.” This phrase pictures the United States as a melting pot. It envisions our nation as one nation, made up of many individuals. While there is diversity and division among the people that make up the United States of America, at the end of the day, we are all still Americans. Regardless of the country of our origin, the color of our skin, the type of politics we embrace, or where we stand on many social issues, we are “*one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all*.” The United States is a unity made possible by, and in spite of, great diversity.

I want you to see this morning that the phrase “*out of many, one*” could also be applied to the church. In the verses previous to our text, Paul has just told us that we are one in the Lord. That we stand together as one in the Lord. We are in the same body. We are indwelt by the same Spirit. We share the same hope. We serve the same Lord. We believe the same faith. We have experienced the same baptism. And, we are children of the same Heavenly Father.

**Eph 4:4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;***

**Eph 4:5 *One Lord, one faith, one baptism,***

**Eph 4:6 *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.***

As I mentioned in my last sermon All For One and One For All, we are made one through our relationship to the members of the Holy Trinity. The same Spirit lives in each of us. The same Lord died to save each of us. The same God has saved us and brought us into His family. We are one in Him!

Yet, as the first word of [verse 7](#) points out, we may be one, but we are still many. The word “*but*” in this verse is more than a simple conjunction. It literally means “*in spite of that*,” or “*on the other hand*.” The idea is that, while we may be united in Jesus, but we are still expected to be different people. We are expected to be individuals for the glory of God. We may be commanded to do everything in our power to maintain the unity of the body of Christ, ([v. 2-3](#)), but, at the same time, we are to celebrate the diversity that makes our unity possible.

Against the backdrop of our unity in Christ, I want to draw our attention to our diversity. We are all different one from the other. Yet, it is our differences that make unity within the body of Christ such a marvelous wonder to behold. In fact, it is our diversity that actually makes our unity possible.

Let me share a few *truths* that present themselves in this text. I want you to see that, while you are a part of the body of Christ, you have been uniquely gifted to serve the Lord. You are a member of the body of Christ, but you are different from every other member in the body. You are special and God wants you to use your uniqueness to serve the whole Body of Christ, so that it might reach its fullest potential for the glory of God.

## **I. The Root of Our Diversity**

Our unity as believers finds its root in the work of God in our lives. As He develops us and grows us, He continually reveals Himself within us. As He does, He allows us to stand as one in the Lord. However, it is also the Lord's work in us that magnifies our differences. Just as surely as our unity has its root in Him, so does our diversity.

### **A. The Grace of God**

**Eph 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**

Our diversity finds its root in the “*grace*” of God. The word “*grace*” is a common word in the New Testament. It refers to “*undeserved favor, or a gift.*” We often think of “*grace*” in the context of salvation. For it is “*by grace through faith*” that we are saved, according to [Eph. 2:8](#). The word “*grace*” in this verse however, does not refer to the grace of God that saves us. It refers to the grace of God that “*gifts*” us for service.

When the Bible says that “*unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of Christ,*” it simply means that the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, has given each of some gift, or gifts, of grace. These gifts are His enabling ministry.

When He saves a soul, the Lord Jesus takes up residence in the new believer through the person on His Holy Spirit. When the Spirit comes into a life, one of the ministries He performs is to give the new believer one or more spiritual gifts. These gifts determine that believer's place in the body, and how that believer will ultimately serve the Lord. This truth is fleshed out in detail in [1 Cor. 12:7-27](#). With this message in mind, I would encourage each of you to park on that passage a little while, maybe this evening.

The primary truth to note here is that you are an individual and you have been uniquely gifted to serve the Lord. When He saved you, He gave you gifts that you may share with other believers, but the way the Lord uses you to exercise those gifts will be unique to you! That is, you may preach, but your preaching will be unique to your personality. You may teach but your emphasis may be with a few children in Sunday School while someone else might stand before thousands. Either way, each one of us is gifted to reach others within our sphere of influence in a way that no one else can.

Whatever we are, we are by the grace of God. We need to discover our gifts and allow the Lord to develop them to the greatest of their potential. By the way, the best way to find your spiritual gifts is to get involved in a local assembly of believers and just get busy serving the Lord. As you

faithfully serve Him, He will open doors of service for you that will dovetail perfectly with the gifts He has given you in grace.

So, our differences, our diversity, is rooted in the grace of God. We are all saved the same way, and we are all indwelt by the same Spirit, but we are uniquely equipped for His service, by His grace.

## **B. The Gifts of God**

**Eph 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**

**Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.**

**Eph 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?**

**Eph 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)**

Paul calls the gifts we are given "*the gift of Christ.*" Then, he goes on to describe the Lord Jesus as a mighty conqueror who shares the spoils of victory with His people. These verses quote from [Psalm 68](#), and they speak of the Lord as One Who ascended to Heaven in victory having defeated all His foes.

I personally believe this refers to the Lord's death and resurrection. When Jesus died, they buried His body, but His Spirit descended into Paradise to proclaim to all those who had been waiting on redemption since Adam fell, that sin had been defeated and the way opened to God. That seems to be what Peter refers to when he says,

**1Pe 3:19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;**

Jesus descended into Paradise and shouted the same message there that He had proclaimed on Calvary. He said, "*It is finished!*" Then, He led those precious souls out of Paradise and took them home to the Father's house.

Like a conquering hero when he has returned from a successful campaign, the Lord Jesus Christ shared with His people the spoils of His victory. As the Bible says in [verse 8](#) of our text, "*He gave gifts unto men.*"

Part of the Lord's victory over death, sin, and Satan, is the gift of a new life in Him. We are literally made "*new creatures*" when we are "*born again.*"

**2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

This new birth brings with it the ability to enjoy what [John 10:10](#) refers to as the “*abundant life*.” It is what Paul referred to when he wrote this:

**Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:**

**Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**

That new life manifests itself through the work of the Holy Spirit within us, as He enables us to serve the Lord Jesus through the gifts He gives us. I do not know what gift or gifts you have been given, but I want you to know that every one of those gifts is Christ's gift to you. They are the spoils of His victory over sin, death, hell and Satan!

### **C. The Giftedness of God**

**Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;**

Our diversity is seen in the gifts Paul mentions in [verse 11](#). This is merely a small list of spiritual gifts. Other lists are found in [1 Cor. 12](#); Rom. 12, and [1 Pet. 4](#). The gifts that are mentioned here are ministry gifts. They are places in the body that exist to help the body achieve its fullest potential in Christ. Let's take just a moment to look at this short list of ministry gifts.

- **Apostles** - This refers to "an ambassador; one sent with credentials to represent another." The Apostles were the pioneers of the faith. God sent them to the world at the birth of the church. He authenticated their ministry by special signs.

**2Co 12:12 says, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”**

When the church was established, there was no more need for the ministry of Apostle. The office ceased to exist with the deaths of those early, foundational giants that God used to establish the church. There are no Apostles today!

- **Prophets** - The word speaks of “*a foreteller*.” This was a person who received direct revelation from God to share with the world. The words of the prophet were literally the words of God. When the Bible was completed, the need for prophets ceased. There are no prophets in the world today, in the sense that no one is receiving new revelation from God. Everything we know, and will know, concerning God and the faith of Jesus Christ can be found in the pages of the Bible.
- **Evangelists** - This word literally means, “*a preacher of the Gospel*.” It has in mind those who are especially gifted at sharing the Gospel with those who have never heard. This spiritual gift is still very active in the church today. Missionaries, gifted witnesses, and preachers who take the Gospel to the unsaved have been given the gift of evangelism.

- **Pastors and Teachers** - While Paul uses two words here, one office is in view. The word "*Pastors*" means "*shepherd.*" It speaks of those who tend to the needs of the flock. It speaks of the one who reaches out to the fallen, who binds up the wounded, who feeds the hungry, who leads the flock to green pastures and beside still waters. It speaks of the man who has the care of the people of God as the driving force of his life.

*"Teachers"* speaks of "*those who faithfully and consistently open the word of God to feed the people of God.*" This spiritual gift is very active in the modern church and we see examples of this in many local assemblies, and in the person of many of the preachers who travel from place to place feeding the flock of God.

The whole point here is this: Your gift might have been in this list, and it might not have been mentioned here. Be that as it may, when God saved you, He gifted you. He gave you at least one spiritual gift, probably more, and He gave them to you so that you could serve Him and so that you could be a blessing to His church.

I challenge you to find your gift and put it to work for Christ. Every gift is needed. If it wasn't needed, it would not have been given!

## **II. The Reasons for Our Diversity**

So, God saved us and He gifted us. Why did He make each of us different? Why didn't He just give us all the same gifts? He made is diverse one from another because that was what was best for the Body of Christ. If every member of the body was an ear, who would do the seeing? If every member was a hand, who would do the walking? If every member was an armpit, who would do the smelling? God made us diverse for His Own reasons, and Paul shares some of those reasons in these verses. The first is for:

### **A. The Completion of the Body**

#### **Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints:**

Paul says "*for the perfecting of the saints.*" The word "*perfecting*" has the idea of "*strengthening, developing, furnishing completely, or equipping.*" It simply means that God has placed the various members in the body to help the body achieve its fullest potential for His glory. He has given the church, through the work of the Holy Spirit in gifting the various members of the body, all that we need to be strong, whole, and complete for His glory.

When I fill my place and you fill yours, the Lord is glorified and the church becomes what the Lord established it to be. We become His body, carrying His light to a world trapped in darkness. The next reason is for:

### **B. The Commitment of the Body**

#### **Eph 4:12 ... for the work of the ministry**

When Paul refers to “*the work of the ministry,*” he is talking about “*the business of serving.*” Effective ministry is the work of the entire church. No matter how talented a Pastor or a group of leaders may be, there is no way that one person, or even a few people, can effectively do everything that needs to be done in the local church. No one is that gifted, and no one has that much time.

God has designed the church so that each member brings a different piece of the collective puzzle to the table. When the “*evangelists*” and the “*Pastor/teachers*” are faithful in prayer and the ministry of the Word, the church is equipped to serve the needs of the body of Christ. It is not enough for us to simply to show up at the church. We must go beyond merely attending and become actively involved in the work of the Lord in the world. We do this by yielding to Him and exercising the gifts we have been given. In other words, we serve the Lord and His church by doing just what He saved you and equipped you to do. Nothing more, and nothing less! Another reason is for:

### **C. The Confirmation of the Body**

**Eph 4:12 ... for the edifying of the body of Christ:**

**Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**

**Eph 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;**

Now, Paul tells us that the gifts of God, especially the ones mentioned in [verse 11](#), exist “*for the edifying of the body of Christ.*” The word “*edifying*” means “*to build up, to establish, or to confirm.*” It speaks of the church progressing from salvation to sanctification. It pictures the church doing more than merely professing Jesus, but actually projecting Jesus. It speaks of us reaching our fullest potential and maturity in Him. It speaks of the church growing up and being settled in our walk with the Lord. Paul tells us how the gifted individuals in the church make this a reality. Again, Paul is referring to the ministry gifts make this possible, but I would remind you that everyone has a stake in this. As I serve in the manner God gifted me to serve, and as you do the same, the church will grow spiritually and leave a more Christlike footprint in the world.

#### **1. It Brings The Body To A Place Of Conviction.**

Look at verse 13. It says, “*till we all come in the unity of the faith.*”

As the church is properly led, fed and service by the gifted individuals that make it up, it will come to the place where it believes and practices the same body of doctrine. God's goal in sending preachers to the church is to teach the church His Word, so that the body might be built up through a belief in common truth.

## **2. It Brings The Body To A Place Of Consciousness**

Look again at verse 13. It continues, ***“of the knowledge of the son of God.”***

As we are taught the truth by those gifted to share it, we learn more about the Savior. The word *“knowledge”* means *“to fully discern.”* God sends the church preachers and teachers to help us come to know Christ better. As the gifts of the Spirit are exercised in the church, one of the outcomes is a fuller knowledge of Christ. One of the surest ways for a church to grow in power, love and glory is for that church to more fully understand Whom they serve and who they are in Christ. Paul phrased it this way:

**Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;**

## **3. It Brings The Body To A Place Of Christlikeness**

Let's continue with verse 13. It says - *“unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”*

This phrase simply refers to *“reaching a place of maturity.”* God has gifted His church to help the whole body come to a place of maturity. He wants us to grow up into the image of His Son. That is why He saved us! He saved us so that Christ might be formed in us.

**Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,**

God's desire for every one of His children is that we all, without exception, become like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the ways God works to achieve this goal is by giving His church gifted individuals who use their giftedness for the glory of God and for the good of the church!

## **4. It Brings The Body To A Place Of Certainty**

**Eph 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;**

This speaks of stability within the church. When we grow up in Him, we are no longer little children tossed around by every changing wave of doctrine that strikes us. We are not washed off our feet by every new teaching we hear. We are not easily deceived by those who would try to trick us and lead us away into error. The word "*sleight*" refers to "*dice*." It speaks of those who rig the game in their favor by using "*loaded dice*." Satan has agents try to trick and trap the people of God, "*They lie in wait to deceive*," but when we are mature in the Lord, we are not so easily lead into a game of chance with the devil.

This kind of maturity is only possible each member of the body is in his or her place, walking in the will of God, and exercising faithfully the gifts He has given us. The reason for our diversity is this: *He makes us different, so that in the end we will all become the same*. He gives us different gifts so that you can benefit from how He has gifted me, and so that I can benefit from how He has gifted you. He made us different so that He might make us one with Christ!

### **III. The Results of Our Diversity**

**Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:**

**Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**

When we are each doing what the Lord equipped us to do, certain results will develop for the body of Christ.

#### **A. Our Diversity Makes the Body Possible**

**Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,**

Just as every member of our physical bodies is unique, so are each of the members of the body of Christ. Without diversity, there would be no unity. Just as our physical bodies are a united whole, so the body of Christ is "fitly joined together" and "*compacted*." Those phrases mean "*solidly put together*," and "*from many to make one*," respectively. God has taken individuals from every conceivable lifestyle and background, saved them by His grace, and placed them within the body of Christ. Every member has been given a unique assignment, and as the



various members fulfill their assignments, the body of Christ is able to exist and function in the world.

## **B. Our Diversity Makes the Body Powerful**

**Eph 4:15** *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

The same diversity that makes the body possible also makes the body powerful. As we each exercise the individual gifts we have been given, the body is fed, nurtured and helped to grow to maturity in Christ. When the body is given the truth, and when that truth is given from a heart of love, the result will be a maturing of the body into the image of its Head, the Lord Jesus.

The idea of "*speaking the truth in love*" speaks of the truth of the Gospel proclaimed and lived out by a church that is in love with the Lord, one another and the lost world around it. This kind of church, the church that preaches truth, loves truth, shares truth and that loves the God of truth is the kind of church that God will use in powerful ways to glorifying Himself and to reach the lost.

The truth is never to be used as a club. But the truth is to always be given out in love. When it is, the church will mature and become more like the Master. By the way, that, rather than numbers, should be how we determine whether our church is growing!

## **C. Our Diversity Makes the Body Productive**

**Eph 4:16** *...according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

This last part of [verse 16](#) tells us that the measure of grace each member of the body brings to the table serve to cause the whole body to grow, and to walk as one in the Lord. As God works in you to develop your life to its fullest potential, and as you allow Him to pour your life into the lives of your fellow believers, the whole church is blessed, and strengthened and will experience growth.

It is the loving exercise of our spiritual gifts one for another that enables the church to make a difference in the world around it. Only as I do what He has gifted me to do, and you do what He

has gifted you to do, can we ever hope to be used of God to effectively serve Him in the world today.

Paul tells us that the body to edify *"itself in love."* If we love the Lord like we should, we will want to be all that He saved us to be. If we love one another like we should, we will want to help our fellow Christians reach their fullest potential in Jesus. As we walk in love toward the Lord and toward one another, we show the world that our faith is real.

**Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**

**Joh 13:35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.**

***"E Pluribus Unum." "Out of many, one."***

Every one of us is different in so many ways, but we are brought together as one in Christ. God has called us, saved us, indwelt us, and gifted us; individually, and uniquely, to put us together in such a way that we can be a blessing to the whole body of Christ.

I thank God that you are not just like me. I thank God that I am not just like you. I praise Him for the diversity that we enjoy in Jesus, because our differences help us to better serve Him and one another.

I want to close this message by inviting you to come before the Lord in prayer. Here are some of the challenges I want to lay before you today.

1. If you are not saved, I invite you to come to Jesus Christ. He will save you and He will gift you to serve Him and His church. Let us help you with this, please ask us about those classes today.
2. If you are saved, but you are unsure of your spiritual gifts, please come and talk to the Lord about that matter. If you will ask Him, I am sure that He will reveal to you just what it is that He would have you do.
3. If you know what the Lord has gifted you to do, but you haven't been doing it, I challenge you to come before Him to confess that sin and to ask for His help to get busy for His glory.

4. If you feel impressed to come before the Lord to pray for the other members in this local assembly, that we would be all that God saved us to be and that He would be glorified in this place, I invite you to do just that.

Has God spoken to you on some level today? If He has, please respond as He calls.