

Equipping Saints to Minister (Ephesians 4:11-16, part 1)

Water of Life

Dr. John Niemelä

August 21, 2014

Summary of Ephesians 1:3–3:21:

(Earlier notes detailed the outline)

Despite Gentile and Jewish unbelievers universally being dead, God jointly-enlivened, jointly-raised, and jointly-seated Jewish and Gentile believers with Christ (by-grace through-faith), making peace between Jews and Gentiles in one body and reconciling both to the Father.

Review of Ephesians 4:1-11:

4:1-6 [In light of God joining Jews & Gentiles in one body (1:3–3:21)] believers ought to live in keeping with God calling them into His Church by humbly bearing with one another in love, by preserving the unity the Spirit effected through a jointly-bound peace [treaty], because the one body [the Church] matches how the one triune God has called the church in one way. [This passage sums up the whole book]

4:7 [In mild contrast with the unity that characterizes the Church] the Holy Spirit gave a spiritual gift to each believer in proportion to the number of gifted people Christ gave to the church

Step 1	Step 2
HS gives a believer a spiritual gift (4:7a). The Spirit is the giver of spiritual gifts .	Christ gives gifted-believer as a gift to the Church (4:7b, 11). Christ is the giver of gifted believers to the Church.

He gave gifted apostles, gifted prophets, gifted evangelists, gifted pastors & gifted teachers (4:11), HS gave apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring, and teaching].

Ephesians 4:9-10 Is Parenthetic

This means that the passage flows well, even skipping verses 9-10, when reading:

⁸ **Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high [Psalm 68:18], He led captivity captive, and gave [gifted believers as] gifts to men [specifically, to the Church]."**

[⁹ *Now this, "He ascended" —what does it mean but that He also first descended to 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 apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers...**

4:8 speaks of men being given as gifts to men [i.e., to the Church].

4:11 continues, speaking of certain gifted believers being given as gifts [to men: to the Church].

(4:8) In a victory procession the triumphant Christ parades His captives whom He gave to His army [the Church].

The verse cites (but does not quote) Psalm 68:18, which refers to a victory procession.

Many imagine that Paul was sloppy, because they wrongly think he was trying to quote it.

Ephesians 4:8b When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and **gave** gifts **to** men.

Psalm 68¹⁸ You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have **received** gifts **among** men.
Even *from* the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell *there*.

Explaining the relation between **receiving gifts among men** and **giving gifts to men**.

Psalm 68 speaks of God vanquishing Israel's enemies, receiving spoils of war [including captives], parading the spoils, and then sharing those spoils with His victorious army. Thus, **captives were received among men** for the purpose of **giving those captives to men**. Psalm 68:18 speaks of the former, but implies the latter (cf. Psalm 68:12b: *And she who remains at home divides the spoil*.)

In Eph 4:8 Christ receives captives from Satan's army as those people believe. The former captives are received among men [the Church] and are then those believers are given as gifts to serve the Church.

In Psalm 68, God has won a great victory on earth, so He triumphantly ascends to Mount Zion.

(4:9-10) The assertion “He ascended” [in verse 8] implies that Christ had already descended [from heaven] to the lower *of-earth* parts, so He might [again] ascend to heaven.

The fact that Christ ascended triumphantly (4:8)—on Palm Monday and in His ascension—implies that a descent—His descent from heaven in the incarnation—happened first.

We must consider *of* in Eph 4:8: *He descended to the lower parts of earth*. The word *of* has sent many preachers off after a red-herring. The word *of* should not cause such confusion here.

Unfortunately, the word *of* is extremely flexible, having 30+ distinct meanings.

The petition in Psalm 68 is that God would descend to earth, so He could ascend Mt. Zion in a victory procession (and implicitly He will return to heaven).

In order for Jesus (who is God) to ascend, Paul says that He must have first descended (from the upper parts = heaven), to the lower *of-earth* parts (at the incarnation).

This use of the word *of* is called a *genitive of apposition*. The word apposition means that two words referring to the same thing are placed next to each other. The term genitive of apposition means that the word *of* (a genitive) appears within the construction. Despite the presence of the word of, the two terms within the construction are equivalent. Examples:

The cities *of* Sodom & Gomorrah = the cities, *which are* Sodom & G. (2 Peter 2:6)

the feast *of* Tabernacles = the feast, *which is* Tabernacles. (John 7:2)

The sign *of* circumcision = the sign, *which is* circumcision. (Romans 4:11)

The promise *of* [eternal] life = the promise, *which is* [eternal] life. (2 Timothy 1:1)

The lower parts *of* earth = the lower parts, *which is* earth. (Ephesians 4:9)

The sanctuary *of* His body = the sanctuary, *which is* His body. (John 2:21)

Jesus descended from the upper *of-heaven* parts in the incarnation
to the lower *of-earth* parts. (Eph 4:9)

so He might ascend far above the heavens... (Eph 4:10)

What do we call someone who makes a round trip (heaven to earth and back to heaven)?

(4:9-10) The assertion “He ascended” [in verse 8] implies that Christ had already descended [from heaven] to the lower *of-earth* parts, so He might [again] ascend to heaven.

Paul reminds us that (as God) Christ’s ascension requires that He had first descended to earth in the incarnation. As God, He has the right to give gifted people to the Church.

⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high [Psalm 68:18], He led captivity captive, and gave [gifted believers as] gifts to men [specifically, to the Church]."

⁹ Now this, "He ascended" —what does it mean but that He also first descended to 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 apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers...

(4:11-12) Christ Himself gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (APEPTs)

**for [APEPTs] to equip the saints,
so [the saints] would do ministry work,
so the [ministry work by saints] would edify the body.**

This is a stair-step passage, not a grocery list (e.g., APEPTs equip, APEPTs minister, APEPTs edify).

- Evidence that it stair-steps:
1. Paul would use AND for a grocery list (unlike James).
 2. Verses 7a and 16.

The myth of a pastor-teacher gift. Many preachers with just enough Greek to be dangerous argue that the Granville-Sharp-rule applies to Eph 4:11. It does not, because the construction here fits within one of three recognized exceptions (both pastors and teachers are plural).

So, what is the Granville-Sharp rule? If Greek has a construction that has

“the”

followed by a noun [that is 1. singular; 2. personal; 3. non-proper-name]

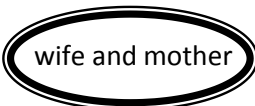
followed by “and”

followed by another noun [that is 1. singular; 2. personal; 3. non-proper-name]

English example: (The day Cain was born) imagine Adam saying,

“Eve is the wife and mother of this household (and the world).”

One woman (Eve) was both wife and mother (a wife-mother).

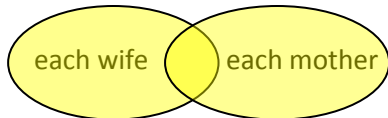


English plural counter-example: On Mother’s Day, a pastor says,

“I want the wives and mothers to stand up and be honored.”

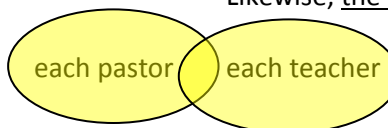
That invites three groups to stand:

1. Each wife who is a mother (overlap),
2. Each wife who is not a mother (non-overlap),
3. Each mother who is not a wife (non-overlap).



Likewise, the pastors and teachers (literal Greek of 4:11) can refer to:

1. Pastoral leaders (e.g., elders) who are teachers,
2. Pastoral leaders (e.g., elders) who are not teachers,
3. Teachers who are not pastoral leaders (e.g., elders).



Interesting counter-examples within Ephesians. Let us pretend that the Granville-Sharp construction [the + noun + and + noun] required the idea of pastor-teachers. I will do that by putting both terms inside an oval, but putting the rest of the terms in their own ovals for Eph 4:11.

- 1 **apostles** 2 **prophets** 3 **evangelists** 4 **the-pastors-and-teachers**

If so, then, Eph 2:20 and 3:5 would create **apostle-prophets:** **the-apostles-and-prophets**

So why would 4:11 separate apostles and prophets, if the construction in 2:20 and 3:5 joined them? Instead,

Paul speaks of **apostles** **prophets** **evangelists** **pastors** **teachers**

(4:11-12) Christ Himself gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (APEPTS)
for [APEPTS] to equip the saints,
so [the saints] would do ministry work,
so the [ministry work by saints] would edify the body.

Apostles needed to have seen the resurrected Christ (so they could testify¹ in court about Him):
1 Corinthians 9:1; Acts 1:20-26

Apostles needed to be designated by God:
Galatians 1:1 (etc.)

Apostles and prophets appear to be the only ones who wrote NT Scripture
(My understanding of Eph 3:5 and revelatory passages such as 1 Cor 14)
I see no evidence that the foundational ministry of apostles and prophets
continues. I could develop this further, but we should lightly touch on several
side-issues, so I think that this is sufficient on this topic for now.

What are **evangelists**? I do not think that the traditional definition squares with Eph 4:11f.
An evangelist equips saints to do ministry work, specifically, to evangelize (Eph 4:11f).

¹ It is my contention that when the Bible speaks of people as witnesses or of giving their testimony, they were testifying (as in court). I believe that American Christianity has become sloppy when we speak of “witnessing to someone” or “giving my testimony.” Unfortunately, what people often say on such occasions amounts to hearsay or heresy, rather than sticking to John’s Gospel-testimony (the Gospel of John). Cf. John 21:24. “His testimony” in that context equals the whole book of John, which John 21:24 tells us that the rest of the apostles certified that John’s testimony (his book) is true. In other words, John’s Gospel is ultimately the testimony of all the apostles, not just John himself. In that light, I do not like the weakened way that American Christianity treats the words *witness* and *testimony*. I consciously avoid using those terms with a weakened sense.

Pastors (Greek = *poimēn* = a shepherd). The word *pastor* comes from the same Latin root as the words *pasture*, and *pastoral* (as in “*pastoral* landscape,” e.g., meadows suitable for grazing). The verb to shepherd is *poimainō*. The word for flock (as in congregation) is *poimnion*.

Acts 20:17-35 addresses elders [*presbuteros*] who oversee the Miletan church. Cf. v 28a: ...take heed to yourselves and to all the flock [*poimnion*], in which the Holy Spirit set you as overseers [*episkopos*], to shepherd [*poimainō*] the church...

1 Peter 5:1f: I, a fellow-elder and witness of Christ’s sufferings, urge the elders among you...: Shepherd [*poimainō*] the flock [*poimnion*] of God among you, overseeing not by compulsion, but willingly.

1 Timothy 5:17: Consider elders who rule well worthy of a double-honorarium, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

A disclaimer. People tend to think of this passage as if it referred to full-time elders. It does not, so the compensation it speaks of is for part-timers. I bring up this passage (not as a plea for funds), but to show that not all elders (pastors) were expected to teach. That is, I am showing that 1 Timothy 5:17 does not argue for pastor-teachers in Eph 4:11.

Logical results: 1. Those ruling well and laboring in teaching, esp. 2 × \$
 2. Those ruling well, but **not** laboring in teaching, 2 × \$
 3. Those **not** ruling well, but laboring in teaching, ~~2 × \$~~
 4. Those **not** ruling well and **not** laboring in teaching. ~~2 × \$~~

Why is #2 favored over #3? Not all elders are charged to labor in teaching. All elders are to rule (administration); some are to labor in teaching:



In other words, a church might have a number of pastors (elders). Some of those elders were ruling elders, but a smaller number of elders would be called *teaching elders* or *teaching pastors*. Church leadership is a shared function.

Teachers

The word teach (in many languages, including Greek, Hebrew, and English) is causative. That is, “Jesus taught His disciples how to pray” means “Jesus caused His disciples to learn how to pray.” Teaching only occurs when learning happens. A teacher must be a learner, but seeks to present things in such a way that others also learn.

(4:11-12) Christ Himself gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (APEPTS) for [APEPTS] to equip the saints, so [the saints] would do ministry work, so the [ministry work by saints] would edify the body.

In a nutshell, Christ gave several types of gifted people to equip the saints in general to do ministry work. The purpose of that ministry work is to edify the body of Christ (the church).

As a related point, Paul's most extensive teaching on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14) likens the people possessing various spiritual gifts to body parts. The objective is for the whole body (church) to function together as a body. Here, in Ephesians, Paul does not go into as much detail, but he uses the word body more than once in Ephesians 4:11-16. His choice of this word is not accidental.

DISCUSSION OF A COUPLE OF ISSUES IN THE MOVIE: *GOD IS NOT DEAD*.

It shows that the case for Christianity survives scrutiny (the atheistic alternative fails the test).

It muddles Jesus Christ's unconditional guarantee of everlasting life to every believer.

Most people will misunderstand the citation of Luke 12:8f that came up twice

Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

This is a rewards passage. It is important to understand that the word *deny* takes a double-object. By analogy, the word *teach* also takes a double object. I can say:

I teach Greek, I teach seminary students, or I teach seminary students Greek.

He who denies Me [honor] before men, I will deny him [honor] before angels.

Similarly, 2 Timothy 2:11b-13:

¹¹ For if we [Paul and Timothy] died with *Him* [through believing in Him], We [Paul and Timothy] shall also live with *Him* [everlasting life].

¹² If we [Paul and Timothy] endure, we [Paul and Timothy] shall also co-reign. If we [Paul and Timothy] deny *Him* [endurance], He also will deny [Paul and Timothy] us [co-reigning].

¹³ If we [Paul and Timothy] are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny *Himself* [what He promised].

those dying with Him live with Him

those enduring co-reign