

] Symphonic Safari [

Ephesians 4:6 – 13

][

~ Our Spiritual Safari through Ephesians thus far has been arduous and unpleasant for many readers. We're looking for the Lord Jesus Christ on every page of Scripture; and that's a difficult task to execute. Most so-called Christians aren't interested in our mission. Most people won't invest five minutes in pursuit of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord by first praying for wisdom, judgment and discernment, and then reading one of these safari reports the Spirit of God prepared exclusively for them — so many decades ago. Their minds are darkened and seared by Satan, and they abjectly refuse to hear Him. Well, we're still praying the Lord will choose them for salvation.

We have considered deeply convicting doctrine that should have made every one of us uncomfortable. Our last report showed that we live in a very bad and extremely evil world; and that Christ is the head of the church body, which is designed to walk down here on earth. Perhaps some of you have become so Heavenly-minded by reading our first several reports that you aren't doing any earthly good. There are two extremes connected to this. Well, this report is going to bring us back down to earth in a rather harsh manner. So, before we begin this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God, we're going to take a break, go to a symphony, and consider an orchestra as we listen to some sweet spiritual music that will teach us how we are to function individually as believers in the church body....

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

~ Paul is talking to believers. Unbelievers, this is not applicable to you. As children of the Most High, we are to walk in step with a *holy* God; and that walk brings us into the foyer of the concert hall as we look for our seating section. Hopefully, we're all happy to listen to the harmonies of Heaven. Suddenly, we are ushered to our seats, and we see the orchestra on the

stage platform. If you've never been here before, you might wonder what in the world is going on at this point; because the musicians all have on ordinary street clothes, they're all playing something — but not the same something! Their tuning-up by playing who-knows-what! They're all playing different pieces. The noise makes no sense whatsoever.

Then, the musicians abruptly stop what they're doing, on cue, and immediately exit stage-left — and disappear. The stage turns pitch black. Then, after fifteen minutes or so, the footlights light up; and the musicians appear on stage again; except, this time, they are fully dressed in tuxedos and evening gowns — very prim and proper. Each man and woman has their instrument with them; but there isn't a single noise of any kind coming from the stage. The silence is deafening. The lights are darkened again, and the whole place becomes pitch black — again. Then, a single spotlight appears, and a conductor steps out from the wings, and bows to thunderous applause. The conductor bows again — and proceeds to the podium where he faces the audience *again* — and bows a third time! More applause!

The audience is now cheering wildly. The conductor then picks up a tiny, thin stick, and makes a motion by which the applause immediately stops. The conductor then turns his back to the audience and raises the baton as high as he can above his head. You could hear a pin drop in that place at that moment. When the baton comes down, an unbelievably overwhelming amount of music rushes out suddenly with sounds so sweet and perfect, it makes the hair on your arms stand up. You've never heard anything quite as sensational as this.

We live in a world similar to the instrumental warm-up time on stage; where each person in the orchestra is practicing their part alone. It's disconnected, disjointed, out of tune, and incoherent. One group has a placard protesting politics, and they're violently against anyone and everyone who dissents. Another has an agenda comprised of anti-social tendencies, and doesn't concern themselves with *anyone's* problems. The world is so out of tune, tone-deaf, so out of harmony with everyone and everything — and things look totally chaotic. It's almost impossible to imagine a metaphorical musical monstrosity such as this ever coming

together in a cohesive tune that makes harmonic sense; as a properly conducted symphony does. Any honest person will tell you they wonder what the outcome of the world is going to be. Frankly, it's easy to become pessimistic and cynical as we observe our present earthly situational conundrum.

Well, friends, one day, the Director will step out from God's right hand, and appear in the wings of the universe, Whose Name is King of kings, and Lord of lords. *In that day*, He is going to lift the Golden Scepter in His nail-pierced hands, and everything from mankind to microorganisms will align in-step, and merge, in tune, playing one sweet entrancing melody after another. God is completely eminent and transcendent; tremendous and powerful above all, and through all, and in all believers. So, let's not give up, because the great Maestro Conductor will return and bring harmony to the symphony.

God is transcendent; above His creation. The Lord doesn't depend on oxygen to live, for example. God doesn't requisite supplies from earth, and He doesn't shop on Saturday in order to have groceries for the week. God is not dependent on His creation for anything, in any way, at any time, for any reason. God is *in* every believer, and He works through us; but if you and I weren't around, that wouldn't stop the purpose, plan and program of God from going forward. God is what motivates and moves a believer; and Christ is what gives us meaning in our lives that an unbeliever does not have. The Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God is the only thing that makes anyone's life worthwhile. Now, I'll admit, life can get rather boring and monotonous for everyone — irrespective of who you are, or what you have; you will have times when life just isn't fun and exciting....

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

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

~ Now that our concert exhibition is over, we exit the auditorium; and, hopefully, the music will manifest itself in the hearts and lives of us all. As

we walk home, let's talk about these gifts unto men again for a minute. This speaks to the inhibitions in the walk of the new man; of whom Paul spoke in our last several reports. Little children have no inhibitions; but the church body is to grow up, develop, and be refined into maturity. A mature saint can't remain a carnal baby any longer. We are to learn what to say and how to say it; and those things can only be learned in the Word of God, my friends. The little immature child will say anything to anyone at any time – as any parent knows – and it's almost always the wrong thing at the wrong time. A successful, dignified ambassador of Christ will be tempered and discerning; never speaking out of turn.

We have previously considered spiritual gifts in our Spiritual Safari in Romans chapter twelve, first Corinthians chapters twelve, thirteen and fourteen — which is the broadest teaching on gifts — and here we have it again. We are to use spiritual gifts to diligently maintain the unity of the Spirit of God and edify the church. That means that we are not carbon copies of each other as Christians. This isn't a "*me, too*" proposition. Each believer is given a unique gift for them to exercise in, and for, others to function within the body of Christ. Gifts are a manifestation of the spirit; given for the profit of all body members. A gift is the Holy Spirit moving, speaking, acting, and loving, through a believer.

Gifts are not given for the benefit of an individual. The only purpose of having gifts is to build-up and edify the body of Christ. No gift is given to anyone to develop them individually. If you're not benefiting and blessing the church body with your gift, then you don't have a gift. Consider tongues as an example. If you are speaking in tongues in private prayer, then I can tell you categorically from the Word of God you're dead wrong. Paul said, *"....tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...."* Well, the unbelieving world looks at those speaking in tongues, and they laugh at them – and they pass the church by because it's ridiculous. No one will ever be saved by speaking psycho babble, friends – you can just write that down.

Conversely, if we speak in tongues openly in the church, we're still wrong; because Paul also says, *".... for if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.... Yet in the church I had rather speak five*

words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” Then, there is that most troubling verse for the tongue-tied saints as Paul says, “.... *he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesies edifieth the church.*” Our Spiritual Safari prophesies for your edification, dear reader. Gifts are never for us to edify ourselves. Gifts are only given to edify the church. I’m not sure the Lord could have made it any clearer than this. The only possible way to miss this truth is to ignore Scripture and interpret it in a disconnected, reckless, and irresponsible self-serving and self-righteous way.

Let me give a personal example: I love to write these reports, and I just give them away free to whoever will avail themselves of them. That’s my gift; and that means I have something to give to *YOU*. I’m not asking any of you for anything; and I don’t even ask my church to support me — although they do in certain ways. Well, after weeks and months on end of writing these reports every single day — when I’m not even sure anyone is reading them in the first place — it can get somewhat monotonous. I don’t get tired of doing the Lord’s work, but I sometimes get tired *in* the work. I need regeneration from the Holy Spirit, too; and I need an uplifting by God that reveals to me His plan and purpose. So far, God has always come through when I need Him. I know God is reading these reports, and that’s what motivates me to write from my heart.

However, just imagine if, one day, I started typing out my report and my fingers said to my eyes, “.... *today we’re going to type in tongues.*” Maybe my fingers wanted to make a private report to God this time; or prove to someone I have the Holy Spirit. Someone says, “*that’s absurd!*” — It sure is, friends; as absurd as believing your private tongue-talk is doing anything for the body of believers. If I don’t type these reports coherently, and in English, then they’re meaningless and useless. See how that works? Only when each believer exercises their gifts in harmony, according to Scripture, can we function as a body of Christ. My legs walked me over to the computer, my eyes are looking at the pages of Scripture, and my fingers type out the thoughts as my mind is regenerated to the Mind of Christ. That’s how gifts work; and no other way, by the way — because that would simply be impossible — not to mention unbiblical. You might want to make a

note about all of that; although I am sure the ones who really need to read this stopped reading a *long* time ago....

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

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

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

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:

~ Christ gave certain men in the church certain gifts in order that the church might grow, mature, and become complete and perfect witnesses for the cause of Christ, friends. That's the only reason we have gifts down here: to minister and build-up others in the faith. He is the One Who gave us those gifts. Let's be very clear about that. Christ is the only One Who has authority over our gifts, too; not us. Some churches need only one gift; but some need pastors who are shepherds. Others need teachers who instruct the flock. Evangelists in the Bible are not exactly what we think of as evangelists today; they were traveling missionaries. By that definition, Paul was an *evangelist* as he went to new territories and planted churches. Paul didn't work under the direction of an office, organization, committee, crusade or campaign, though. No, friends, he did it *ALL* by himself. Only the Spirit of God went ahead of Paul and made the way for him as he went.

Naturally, if Christ ascended, then He necessarily *descended* at some point; and some people see only Christ's incarnation here. The early church fathers saw Christ bringing the redeemed Old Testament saints out of Paradise, and to the throne of God at His ascension. I don't find it necessary

to assume Christ entered some form of suffering after His death on the cross. Of course, some people assume Jesus descended into hell; but His descent from heaven to earth in humiliation to die in poverty on the cross covers this passage adequately. So, that's the way we interpret this passage on safari; although we recognize there are other credible interpretations; but the final conclusion to said interpretations becomes untenable. At least, they do for me. After carefully considering those other interpretations, I must reject them, because each have flaws that cannot be substantiated; or are contradicted by other sections of Scripture. So, I breezed over that theological truth quickly as we end this leg of our Spiritual Safari. Read the text from your Bible again and pray the Lord will reveal His mind to you. Our next safari report is going to be very special; and completely unique to anything we have ever done before in this ministry; I truly hope you can all join me as we move along from here ~

]]