

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Part 2

Ephesians 4:7-16

Intro: For those of you who are visiting with us today, I want you to know that in our Sunday morning services at the present time, we are studying the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. We have learned in the first three chapters that, after reviewing the Gospel in chapter one and speaking of some of the spiritual riches that we have in Christ, Paul indicated especially in chapter three that God had revealed to him a plan that He had kept secret, that is, that God had kept secret, but which at that time following the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, was to be made known. That secret was that saved Jews and saved Gentiles were in the present age, to be joined together in one body, the Church, of which the Lord Jesus was the Head. All believers in this age are made members of that body by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In His first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul had written the following words in 1 Corinthians 12:13:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

This is not a work of the Holy Spirit that we have to seek, nor even that we have to pray for. It is a work of the Holy Spirit that is performed for all who are saved in this present age. If you are saved, you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, and you are a member of the body of Christ, the Church. This gives us not only a very special relationship with Christ, but a very special relationship with each other. As the Gospel spread into the Gentile world following the Day of Pentecost which is referred to in Acts 2, *churches* began to be established all over the world as believers were drawn together for fellowship, for worship, to be instructed in the Word of God, and then to spread the Gospel to those who are not saved. Trinity Bible Church is such a church. We are not the body of Christ, but we are a part of that body. Everyone who really knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, is in the body of Christ.

Now having established what God is doing in this present age, calling His elect out of the world, and having united us to Christ, the Apostle Paul in chapter 4 began to tell the Ephesian Christians how they should live. Christians can be identified by what they believe, and by the way they live. And this is the reason that God has given us His Word. We learn in

Eph. 4:7-16 - Part 2 (2)

the Bible the truth of God which we believe as Christians, and how we are to live. The word that Paul used, and other writers of Scripture used the same word, is the word, *walk*. You can see it in Ephesians 4:1 where Paul told the Ephesian Christians to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Now the same thing applies to us since we are trusting in the same Christ in Whom those early Christians were trusting. The way Christians are to live has not changed from that day until this. The Bible is the book we live by.

By the word “vocation” Paul was referring to the fact that God has called us to salvation, and that He has had a very definite purpose in calling us to Christ as our Savior. If we understand the Gospel, we know that we don’t have any reason to be proud because of what He has done for us. But we need to be humble. We don’t deserve what Christ has done for us. We didn’t do anything to earn it. It can’t be purchased with money. Back in Ephesians chapter two, in verses 8, 9, and 10, we have the Gospel and the Christian life in about as few words as it is possible to say what they are. **(Read Eph. 2:8-10.)** We need to be very thankful to God for saving us, but this is definitely not a matter for us to become proud. Instead it should produce in us the greatest humility. And this humility should not only be shown toward people who are not Christians, but we need to be humble in our relationship to each other. That is what Paul had in mind when in verse three of chapter 4 he said that we as members of the body of Christ are to endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

You see, what you have in Christ, I have. We all have. Look at all of the *one*’s Paul mentioned in verses 4, 5, and 6. **(Read.)** I don’t have more than you have, nor do you have more than I have. What one of us has, we all have.

And then last week we learned from verse 7 here in Ephesians 4 that God has given all of us grace, enabling grace, strengthening grace so that we will be able to do what God wants us to do, strength to stay away from what God does not want us to do, and strength to endure the trials and testings that come upon us in our lives. And as verses 8, 9, and 10 show us, that grace was purchased for us by the Lord Jesus Christ – by His incarnation, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension.

But now we come to verse 11 where I want to pick up where I left off last Sunday. We not only have the gift of salvation, and the gift of the Holy

Spirit. But God has given us men to teach us, to be examples to us, and to help us in countless ways as we seek *to walk, to live*, in a way that is pleasing to God, a way that will glorify Him.

Now as we get into these next few verses, I want to make one thing perfectly clear, and I hope all of you are listening to me. As you visit churches throughout or area and through out our country, you will find a lot of different things that are being taught and a lot of different things are being done. This is not the way for the Church to go. I have no right, nor do the other elders of Trinity Bible Church have any right, to make our services any different from what they were designed to have been in Ephesus. Now I am not saying that any of the churches that we read about in the New Testament were perfect churches, because they weren't! But I am saying that God has given us a pattern in His Word, and we are to stay with that plan. The world may change, and it does. But the Church is not to change. We get our guidance from the Word of God, and the Bible does not change. God does not change. And the basic needs of people do not change. We are not to follow the world in the way they try to get people together. We are not to carry on the work of the Lord in a way that will please people. Our first and really only responsibility is to please the Lord. The message that the Lord has given us to proclaim is not designed to make them feel happy or good about themselves. It is to teach them truth that they are not going to hear any place else, the truth that is in the Bible.

I hope you have noticed in our study of Ephesians that God is described as the One Who is always giving. God gives, and man receives. God gave His Word. God gave His Son. God gives salvation. God gives in answer to prayer. Now we are to learn that God gives us His servants.

So we learn from verse 11 that

I. GOD HAS GIVEN HIS SERVANTS TO THE CHURCH (Eph. 4:11).

There are four groups that are mentioned: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors who are teachers, and so some refer to this fourth group as pastor-teachers.

As you look over that list, I think that you will recognize that the Apostle Paul was in all four groups. There were twelve apostles originally. Judas

betrayed the Lord, and then took his own life. I believe his replacement by Matthias was honored by the Lord, but later Paul was appointed as an apostle, like he said, “as one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). One of the requirements of an apostle was that he had to be a man who had seen the Lord. They were the original leaders of the church.

NT prophets were like OT prophets. They were men used by God to convey messages from God before the NT was completed.

Evangelists were not like men today who have taken that title for themselves, The NT evangelists were men like Paul who were sent by God to preach the Gospel to people who had not heard the Gospel before. They could probably be called, pioneer missionaries. Paul was probably speaking as an evangelist when he spoke of his ministry in Romans 15:20 using these words:

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation.

We probably do not need help in understanding the pastor-teacher role because we are familiar with churches that have pastor-teachers. A pastor is a shepherd, and all that a shepherd would do for sheep, is an illustration of a pastor-teacher’s relationship to the people in a church. Those who have a teaching ministry in a local church, especially elders, are included here. But there will often be men in churches who have a pastoral ministry with people in the congregation by their knowledge of the Word and the godly manner of their walk.

Now for Paul to say that God “gave” some, not all, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, means that they were men called of God and given the gifts necessary for the performance of the duties for which they were God’s gift to the church. All of us can thank God for people who have ministered to us, helping us, and encouraging us in our walk with the Lord. I don’t believe that the Bible teaches that women should be pastors of churches, but probably every pastor can testify to the ways in which women in an informal way have ministered to them by prayer and by words of Scripture in times when pastors have been going through times of testing and trial. There are ways in which we all minister to each other.

But now let us notice what is the purpose of all of these leaders in the Church. It is not to entertain. It is not to become involved in the politics

of the nation. It is not the transformation of society. It is not to build big churches. If you want to understand God's purpose for the church, it is given to us very clearly and thoroughly in verses 12 through 16. And I want you to notice that the main purpose of the church is not even the evangelization of the world. If we do in our churches what we are supposed to be doing according to the Word of God, many of these other problems will begin to improve. But because churches today are failing to do what God has appointed us to do, the church has gotten weaker and weaker, and is no longer the mighty influence for good in the world like it once was.

Let us consider what the Apostle Paul said was:

II. THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH (Eph. 4:12-16).

To state it as simply as possible, these verses teach us that the primary ministry of the church is its ministry to the church. I have known of churches, many churches, where the Gospel is preached Sunday after Sunday with the idea of building up the membership of the church, and where the people of God sit and starve to death because they are not getting nourishment from the Scriptures by which they can begin to grow.

Notice the first thing that the Apostle Paul said here. Our primary job at Trinity Bible Church is "the perfecting of the saints." The moment a person is saved, he or she becomes a saint. But he, or she, has to learn what that means. God saves us and sets us apart from Himself. And this means that we are set apart from the world. Paul had spoken to the Ephesians about how they used to walk. See Eph. 2:1-3. For saints to be equipped for the work of the ministry means that that person needs to be told about the Word and how essential it is for Christian growth, both in knowledge and in obedience. Prayer is another part of our equipment. And every Christian needs to know how important it is for them to be with other Christians. All of this prepares us to minister to God and to one another, and when individual Christians are growing, this means that the whole body of Christ is edified.

I have informed some of you of what one of my Greek professors told our class years ago about verse 12. He said that it shouldn't have a single comma in it.

Now the object of equipping the saints is that "we all come in the unity of

the faith,” which speaks of our understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. And that which enables us to see the unity of Scripture, is what it says about Christ. And this in turn contributes to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is when we understand what the Scriptures teach of Christ, that the church is brought together in a unity around Christ.

It is often the case that those who are responsible to lead in the church are just waiting for the next movement to come along. They are blown this way and that way by first one doctrine and then another. Instead of growing up, they remain as children, and are subject to every kind of deception that comes along. When the Devil see a child of God who is interested in studying the Scriptures, and learning about Christ, he always brings some heresy along to turn that child of God away from the Scriptures, and away from Christ.

Verse 15 tells what we need. Speaking the truth does not mean that we no longer tell lies. That is a good idea. But “speaking the truth in love” speaks of our relationship to the Bible, delighting in the Scripture, and sharing the truth with each other in love so that we can all grow up into Christ.

And verse 16 emphasizes the effect that such Bible-centered teaching, with a Christ-centered emphasis, is the way that the church becomes what it should be, and believers are edified, and God is glorified.

Concl: What a tragedy it is when the church neglects the teaching of the Word of God with its emphasis upon Christ. The Lord spoke about this to His disciples when He was with them in the Upper Room just hours before His arrest and His crucifixion. One of the major points in the equipment of the saints is the truth concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He has been given to us to guide us into the truth, and in doing that He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

We live in a day when church leaders need to be awoken to the ministry of the Church to the Church. They need to be grounded in the Word and in lives of fellowship with each other. The truths which the Apostle Paul has emphasized in this passage is greatly needed. Unless it is by prayer, we can't do much to get others to pay attention to what Paul has written here, but there is nothing more important for the church to learn than that we need to be strong within if we are to be effective in getting te world to see what the church really is, and how there can again be a mighty witness to the world.