

**Ephesians 4: 12 & 13; “Til We all Come to Unity”, Message # 29 in a series
entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study
prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall, on July 14th, 2021.**

Now, if you will recall, when I spoke to you on the first 6 verses of chapter 4, I told you that there is a spiritual unity which exists between all Christians because of our all having been placed into the body of Christ at the time of our conversion to Christ. It says in 1st Corinthians 12: 13 and 14 – “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” “For in fact the body is not one member but many.” This one body is the mystical spiritual universal body of Christ; all believers in heaven and earth. There is a unity between all of its members which is a true, unbreakable one in the ultimate sense of spiritual unity, because the Spirit created it, and no man can dissolve it.

However in verse 3, we are told that each of us should personally endeavor to keep that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Each of us who is a believer in a local church, has the responsibility in relation to the Holy Spirit’s working, in relation to the truth of the word of God, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The reason for this is, so that the whole Church of Jesus Christ, not just individual churches, might grow up into the stature of Christ, spiritually speaking. So, let’s see if we can discover more of what this means to us personally, and to the church which we are a part of. Christ gave His Church pastor-teachers for the following 3 reasons.

1st of all – He has given His pastor-teachers their gift in relation to their equipping the saints for the work of service.

I went over this truth with you in my last message on verse 11, but I would like to build on it here now. I said to you that the apostles, prophets, and evangelists were given to the church by Christ for the purpose of laying the foundation of the New Testament Church. And when the apostles had completed their work and the last apostle, John, died, the revelatory gifts ceased. And the only office which was left, and which would continue throughout all the rest of the Church age, would be the office of pastor-teacher. We are not given a list of qualifications concerning any local church raising up apostles, prophets, and evangelists because those offices were all related to the foundation-building of the Church and are they are no longer necessary to the completion of the building because we have the completed canon of Scripture.

We can say, however, that what evangelists were then, even so, in their calling and work now, we find that God does call missionaries to foreign lands, people to spread the gospel far and wide; those who are sent out by a constituted local church. Furthermore, we should glory in the work which the apostles did, in laying the foundation of the church, and in giving us the Holy Scriptures. It stands to this day, and it will stand to the end of the world. But in regard to the office of pastor-teacher, we know that this gift will be given to churches until Christ’s 2nd Coming. We know this because a list of qualifications for that office is given to us in 1st Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1st Peter 5.

We are told here in verse 12 that The pastor-teacher’s job is to “equip the saints”, the believers in that church, for the work of service to that church. He also equips them for their service in good works to other people in the community that they live in. The word “equip” in verse 12 is Καταρτισμον (Kat-ar-tismon). In the King James it is translated –“for the perfecting of the saints”. This is a good translation for this, as it is what takes place in our sanctification by the Spirit, in our everyday lives, as we go about our duties and responsibilities. The best of God’s saints are imperfect, but they are being perfected. They have faith hope and love, but those graces are being perfected in relation to the various situations that the Lord providentially bring them into.

By His grace Christ perfects His people, showing them their need of His grace in all of their thoughts and actions. And through this holy means, He leads them in the truth and teaches them. Look over at Hebrews chapter 13, verses 20 and 21, with me. “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you

what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever.” “Amen.” The words “make you complete” in the New American Standard version are – “equip you”. And in the King James it is rendered – “make you perfect”. The word in the Greek is *καταρτισαι*, the same word essentially as we have in our text in Ephesians 4.

It is Christ the Chief Shepherd who makes complete, equips, and perfects. In this holy work, He uses the pastor of the church, in many ways, through his teaching, to show the saints what the truth is, and explain to them what they need to do, in relation to that truth. The pastor will explain from the word, the kind of graces and attitudes which God’s saints will need to manifest, and the way that they should go about to do their good works. He will explain that each saint needs to consider others in the church in relation to themselves; to think carefully about their words and works, so that true unity is preserved and promoted among them. In this holy way, then, the whole church advances in truth and righteousness, each according to their faithfulness, and they will become useful to Christ Himself then.

They will strive together to extend His kingdom by promoting the truth of the Bible in whatever ways they possibly can. The pastor in using his gift of preaching and teaching, will be delivering to them everything that is profitable to them, and exhorting them to engage in good works and using their gifts in doing those good works. The pastor and the people will consciously engage in this together. They will together be learning to keep all of God’s commands and further Christ’s purposes in the community that they live in. A local church of Christ’s saints should honor God in their worship. And they will consciously strive together to please Christ by their taking the initiative to do good works.

They are not to live simply to themselves and their own interests, or to only do things from their own selfish perspective, but they are to consider what gift God has given to them and how they should use it. The pastor will take the lead in this, and he will encourage all of the people in the church to do the same by his own good example. Look at Paul in this regard, in Acts chapter 20, verses 17-20. “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.” “And when they had come to him, he said to them: ‘You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.’”

So Paul was a good undershepherd of the flock of Christ’s Church. He was a good example to all pastors in all generations of this Church age. He says in verse 27 – “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” He knew, and he wrote in the verses that we are studying, that God has given to each of His saints in the church, a certain amount of knowledge and giftedness, and so he will teach them to consider how they might use those things in such a way, that the church will be united in their vision of the Christian life. They can then learn and grow together, in their spiritual strength and ability to minister their gifts in the way that would be righteous and most effective for the Lord.

2nd – Christ has given His pastor-teachers their gift for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The equipping of the saints for the work of service is for the edifying of the body of Christ, Paul says in verse 12b. The word in the Greek for “edifying” is *οικοδομην*. (Oikodomen) The pastor’s teaching and preaching of God’s word is intended to edify the saints, to build them up in their faith, and encourage them in their service to Christ. They should become more spiritually discerning under his ministry, and should love learning from him, all the truth of the word of God. The pastor will preach to them all of the principles of truth which flow from the knowledge of Christ, how all of the promises of God are fulfilled in Him, that they are “Yes and Amen” in Him, to the glory of God.

He will teach them to observe, all that Christ has commanded them. And He will remind them constantly that Christ is with them to help them to obey Him.

It is important to realize that the pastor's gift of preaching and teaching, is meant by Christ to edify or build up the whole body of Christ. That is, although he is a gift to a particular church, and has a particular ministry to them, to build them up by His preaching and teaching, that his gift is for the whole body of Christ, His Universal Church. Since this is so, if he is writing pastor, his gift may be useful to the Church in all generations to come until the end of the world, if his writings or recordings of his messages are preserved. He may actually be able to build many people up in many places of the world and help people who are in various denominational and non-denominational settings to better understand the word, if God blesses his ministry in this way.

The pastor who will be lastingly useful in building up many Christians will be the man who will speak and explain many things related to Christ and His Person, Christ and His kingdom and glory, and Christ and His sovereignty both in salvation and sanctification. He will open up many things that are said about Christ in the writings of the apostles. He knows that the preaching of Christ and Him crucified will bring people to Christ. He will edify many by showing in his preaching how absolutely essential it is to have Christ richly dwelling in your heart by faith. Ephesians 3: 17-19 – “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

The pastor will equip them in this good way, by preaching Christ Himself, first and foremostly. 2nd Corinthians 4: 5 and 6 – “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.” “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Now, the object of every pastor ought not to be to become great in the eyes of men through the use of His gift, but rather that in the use of his gift he will magnify what the grace of Christ has done for him personally. He will continually be directing the attention of his hearers to the glory of Christ. If he does this, their faith in Christ will be built and strengthened, and God glorified.

In Philippians 1: 15-21, Paul is writing from prison, and he says – “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.” “What then?” “Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.” “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”

So, we see here that Paul is using his gift wisely here, in relation to the way that he speaks of himself. The whole emphasis is upon Christ and the way that He is preached by men, while he was in prison. He knew that he was appointed for the defense of the gospel, but he wanted the Philippians to see the importance of preaching Christ out of love, and not out of envy or strife, or some other base motive. He rejoiced that Christ was being preached, and he knew that that would turn out for his deliverance from prison, when those who he wrote to, would pray for him. And the “supply of the Spirit of Jesus” would be what would sustain him and help him to continue to preach Christ wherever he was, and that Christ would be magnified in his body; that is, the things that he did with his body in word and deed promoting the truth and glory of Christ. And in life or death, Christ would be magnified in him.

3rd – Christ has given His pastor-teachers their gift so that we all might come to the unity of the faith.

“Til we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, in the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ.” This phrase “Til we all come to the unity of the faith” has a 3-fold application. There is an individual and a corporate and a universal application, I believe. On the individual and local church level, it is that each of us who are Christians must strive for a better and better understanding in regard to our knowledge of the Son of God according to the word of God. We must pray and listen carefully to the preaching. We must apply the truth to our lives. We must press on together as a church toward the perfection which is found in Christ alone.

We strive toward that perfection in living our life to Him and having fellowship together in the local church. In doing this, we must remind ourselves that we have a personal responsibility to the local church, the body of Christ to which we belong, to preserve the unity of the faith in the bond of peace. That is, that we will in an on-going sense, hold to a mutually agreeable Confession of Faith. We will not compromise it for those who are willing to water down the gospel, or not fully investigate the claims of truth which are found in the doctrinal statements of the word of God.

At the same time, on the level of the Universal Church, we will do our best in our attempts to relate to believers in other churches, to strive to come the unity of faith in relation to to them, in terms of our promoting the knowledge of the Son of God. We may not be able to agree with each other at some points, but we should all together, as one body, strive to confess Him as He really is; that is, that He is fully God and fully Man, two natures in one blessed Person. We should be able to hold to the truth that salvation is by grace through faith, and that it is not of ourselves, but that it is the gift of God.

We should all be able to acknowledge that it takes the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus to live the Christian life and to grow in holiness and righteousness and truth, and the wisdom that we will need to live out all of the commandments of God, and grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. But this is what we will consciously try to do. The pastor of the local church should promote this holy attitude toward other believers and other Christian churches which believe that the Bible is the word of God. He knows that Christ is the only perfect man. And he will preach that it is to the measure of Christ’s stature that we will strive, not only individually, but corporately as a church.

When we are united in this pursuit, of consciously striving to be perfect as He is perfect, and holy as He is holy, we will find that we will be coming closer to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, in our own church. We pray that this will also be true of churches around the world. We will pray that in generations to come, the Universal visible Church will grow up and make progress in discernment of doctrine and holy practice, to the stature of the fullness of Christ. Over the generations of church history, this has taken place, but it will take place in a greater sense in time to come in the time of the Millennium; the Latter-Day Glory of the Church.

For it says in Isaiah 52: 7-10 – “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” “Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings back Zion.” May it be so, to the glory of God.