

The Purpose of West Hampden Baptist Church: The Edification of the Saint

Ephesians 4:11-16 (Part I)

Pastor Michael Lynn / West Hampden Baptist Church

March 19, 2023 a.m.

Introduction: The Book of Ephesians can be divided into 2 sections: Chapters 1-3 give us doctrine (the wealth of the believer – his riches in Christ) & chapters 4-6 give us duty (the walk of the believer- his responsibilities for Christ). Wiersbe suggests that chapters 4-6 develop the walk of the believer in unity (4:1-16), purity (4:17-5:17), harmony (5:18-6:9), & victory (6:10-24). We come this morning to chapter 4 where we see the church under orders to walk in unity. The chapter begins with the aim of the church under orders (“*That ye walk worthy ...*” by desiring God’s holiness, by declaring God’s greatness, & by demonstrating God’s likeness). Paul then gives us the appearance of the church, the anchor of the church, as well as the abilities of the church (spiritual gifts) & the achievement of the church. All too many believers today have unlimited wealth at their disposal, but yet live as spiritual paupers. If the Spirit of God is going to be able to work through us (as His Body) in order to exhort the sinner, enlighten the saint, & exalt the Son (see John 16:7-15), we need to walk in unity.

This morning we will look to see how such unity is maintained & then next week see how maturity is attained. Note here in verses 11-12 the giving of gifts & the goal of those given. Believers are to be equipped in order to exercise the ministry that the Body of Christ might be edified & that the Person of Christ might be exalted.

I. Unity is maintained by the **equipping** of the saints

- A. A definition - “*perfecting*” – “to put in order again” >
 - 1. **Secular** usage (Classical Greek):
 - a. To refit a ship (mend the sails; repair any leaks; replenish the supplies).
 - b. To reset a bone (relieve the pain & make useful again).
 - 2. **Scriptural** references:
 - a. To repair a net - Matthew 4:21 & Mark 1:19, “*...mending their nets...*”
 - b. To restore a brother - Galatians 6:1, “*...restore such an one...*”
 - 3. **Spiritual** application:
 - a. Believers need to be fit in order to perform the ministry required of them.
 - b. Believers mature as they submit to God’s Word & grow in conformity to God’s Son.
- B. A declaration - Luke 6:40 (To reflect the Master; “*perfect*” – same root word in Eph. 4:12) >
 - 1. The pupil is constrained by the master (“fully taught” or “perfectly trained”).
 - 2. The pupil is conformed to the Master (see Acts 4:13).
- C. A demonstration >
 - 1. “The exercise of these Christ-given gifts (:11) was intended to coordinate & equip all believers for the work of the ministry” (Kent). [No longer apostles (appointed by the Lord Jesus) today nor prophets in the sense of those receiving Divine revelation today from God?]
 - 2. These saints, once dislocated & disjointed because of sin, are to be reset & repaired in order to serve.

II. Unity is maintained by the **exercising** of the ministry

- A. An explanation (of terms) >
 - 1. “*Work*” - ergon - ‘to toil, labor - The ministry is exhausting (hard) work.
 - 2. “*Ministry*” - diakonia – “one who attends as a servant” (used of menial service in Luke 10:40 & Acts 6:2) – The ministry is everybody’s work. Illustrate: “Somebody, Anybody...”
- Application: Don’t call yourself a servant if you are not willing to be treated like one!

B. An evaluation (of talents) >

1. "Every believer, regardless of background, ability, or status, has a service to perform in the cause of Christ on earth" (Kent).
2. Each member has his gift of grace (:7) in order to minister for the work of Christ (See Romans 12:3-9, I Corinthians 12:4-11 & I Peter 4:7-11).

Note: Distinguish between "spiritual gifts" & natural abilities. Natural abilities are those given by God at birth, such as mechanics, art, athletics, or music. Every believer is given at least one spiritual gift, regardless of any natural abilities he may or not have. "A spiritual ability is a God-given ability to serve God & other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified & believers are edified" (Wiersbe). They are not toys to play with but tools to build with. Nor are they weapons with which to fight (if not exercised in love).

C. An expectation (of "temples" - cf. I Corinthians 6:19-20) >

1. Our bodies are vessels (temples), indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to be used to glorify God.
2. The pastor-teacher & evangelist are called upon to equip the saints who are then called upon to exercise the ministry. See I Peter 4:10-11. Are you a good steward of your spiritual gift(s)? Do you know what it is? Are you trying to find out what it is?

III. Unity is maintained by the edifying of the body of Christ

A. The definition (the **meaning** of "edifying") >

1. "To build up" - the process of erecting; to extend & increase.
2. "To strengthen" - an increase spiritually as well as numerically.

B. The determination (the **means** of edification) >

1. The Word of God - II Timothy 3:16-17 (& cf. Acts 20:32 with II Timothy 2:15).
2. The man of God - I Corinthians 14:3 -- "The spiritual advancement of the church is the ultimate design of the Christian pastorate. It labors to increase the members of the church, & to prompt & confirm their spiritual progress" (Eadie).
3. The church of God - Ephesians 4:29 -- The church will increase & be edified (built up) when each member exercises his spiritual gift as unto the Lord & in service to his fellow-members.

C. The demonstration (the **manner** of edification) >

1. Acts 9:31, "*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea & Galilee & Samaria & were edified; walking in the fear of the Lord, & in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*"
2. Ephesians 4:16 > "*fitly joined together*" - speaks of unity.
"*which every joint supplieth*" - speaks of diversity.
"*effectual working of every part*" - speaks of ability.

Conclusion: Have you ever suffered paralysis with some part of your body? Consider the sensation when an arm or leg has "fallen asleep." There is still unity, but not maturity – a lack of effectiveness is noted. What should the church under orders seek to maintain? Mature unity! Why did Christ give not only the gifts of certain church offices, but gifts to every member of the body? Verse 12 tells us that the offices of church leadership (evangelist & pastor-teacher) were given to equip the saints that the saints might perform the exercise of the ministry, in order that the entire body of Christ might be edified. Have you submitted yourself to the Lordship of Christ & therefore to those He has placed in authority over you? Are you willing to be taught, fully taught that you might be constrained by the Master in order to be conformed to the Master, Jesus Christ? Will you be found faithful in the exercise of the ministry, using whatever gifts or abilities Christ has bestowed upon you for His honor & glory? And are you seeking the good of the whole body, the edification of His Church, being built up, strengthened, & increasing? Spiritual unity is not something we manufacture, but that which we must protect & maintain. Mature unity is evidenced by Christ-likeness, stability, & truth spoken in love. Where do you see yourself in the church of Jesus Christ? Are you a part of His Church, born-again into the family of God? If so, will you submit, serve, & seek to edify His body?