

The Achievement of the Church under Orders

Ephesians 4:12

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August 21, 2024 p.m.

Introduction: Beginning in chapter 4 of Ephesians Paul describes the walk of believers who are under the orders of the Lord Jesus Christ. That walk is to be one of unity (4:1-16), purity (4:1--5:17), harmony (5:18-6:9), & victory (6:10-24). The believer's walk consists of knowing one's riches & fulfilling one's responsibilities. We have previously noted the **aim** of the church under orders (to desire God's holiness, to declare God's greatness, & to demonstrate God's likeness), the **appearance** of the church under orders (its attributes of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, & zealousness), the **anchor** of the church under orders (7 articles of faith or unities), & the **abilities** of the church under orders (spiritual gifts). This evening we will look to see the **achievement** of the church under orders, or what we might call the goal of the spiritual gifts (gifted men). Verse 12 tells how unity is to be maintained. 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 1:14, "*mending*"
- b. To restore a brother > Galatians 6:1, "*restore*"

3. Spiritual application:

- a. Believers need to be fit ("*ye which are spiritual*") in order to perform the ministry required of them; to see "repaired saints" (sins confessed, forgiven, & forsaken) & to see "restored saints" (restored to a place of usefulness in the body).
- 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).

Summary: Is there any evidence in your life that you have spent time with Jesus?

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)
2. These saints, once dislocated & disjointed because of sin, are to be reset & repaired in order to serve.

Application: Have you ever been "out of joint" or "out of place" because of sin or indifference & therefore unable to be used? Have you been restored to a place of usefulness?

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)

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" (Weirsbe). 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?