

Sermon Notes & References  
Equipping the Saints  
Ephesians 4:11-13  
August 15, 2010

A. Introduction

- 1. theme for August<sup>A</sup>
- 2. today: God's people gather together in order that every member should be built up to carry out the ministry God has for him or her, so that each as a part of Christ's body contributes to its being built up in love.
- 3. gifts<sup>B</sup>
- 4. Spiritual gifts<sup>C</sup>

B. The Equipping Gifts ..... Ephesians 4:11

- 1. 1 Corinthians 12-14, on spiritual gifts: reading 12:1-11
- 2. every member ministry<sup>D</sup>

- 3. apostles, prophets<sup>E</sup>
- 4. evangelists; pastors and teachers

C. The Gifts' Purpose

- 1. Equipped Saints<sup>F</sup> ..... Ephesians 4:12a
  - a. what does it mean to be equipped?
- 2. Exerting Saints<sup>G</sup> ..... Ephesians 4:12b
  - a. at what are they to be exerting themselves?
- 3. Edified Saints<sup>H</sup> ..... Ephesians 4:12c-13; also verse 16
  - a. what is the meaning of edified?

D. Conclusion: God's ultimate purpose in this is ...

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<sup>A</sup> Hebrews 10:25  
<sup>B</sup> Galatians 1:15-16, Jeremiah 1:5-7, Psalm 139:13-14, Ephesians 1:4  
<sup>C</sup> 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6  
<sup>D</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:7, Romans 12:6

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<sup>E</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:28-29, Ephesians 2:19-20  
<sup>F</sup> Ephesians 1:1, Galatians 6:1, Matthew 4:21  
<sup>G</sup> Titus 2:13-14  
<sup>H</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

A. Introduction

1. the theme verse for the August messages is, '[not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging \*one another\*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.](#)' (Hebrews 10:25) – in this series thus far we have been considering why this assembling together is so important, looking the purpose of doing so
  - a. the first week we looked at that foremost and foundational truth, that God's people gather together in order that they might better know the Lord Jesus Christ and that they might make Him known to others
  - b. last week we saw that God's people gather together to encourage the leaders of its various ministries, specifically encouraging them to be examples of the servant leadership of Jesus Christ Himself
  - c. today the message is that *God's people gather together in order that every member should be built up to carry out the ministry God has for him or her, so that each as a part of Christ's body contributes to its being built up in love.*
  - d. this message begins a transition to the second half of this series, to look at the ways God uses assembling together to accomplish these His purposes.
  - e. one of these ways is that He gives gifts to the church
2. what springs to mind when we hear the word 'gifts'?
  - a. probably Christmas, a birthday, or maybe an anniversary
  - b. to mark events we usually give presents, things all wrapped up in fancy paper and bows
  - c. in fact, in today's materialistic society, that may be as far as most people's thoughts travel – gifts are just things
  - d. but the word also carries with it the idea of the special talents and abilities that a person may have
  - e. believers recognize that all the talents and abilities with which they are born are gifts from God
  - f. Saul, that blaspheming enemy of the church, who became Paul, the apostle, had this to say about himself: '[But when God, who had set me apart \*even\* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him...](#)' (Galatians 1:15-16a).
  - g. Paul, Jeremiah, the writer of Psalm 139, every one of the elect of God, share in common the fact that

God's care for them began before their salvation, even before their birth

3. but, the Bible also speaks of specific spiritual gifts

- a. for Timothy, these came at his ordination – 1 Timothy 4: 14 *Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery (or, elders).* 2 Timothy 1:6 *For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*
- b. such spiritual gifts then are to be differentiated from our human abilities and talents–: *One person told a pastor he thought he couldn't accomplish anything for God because he only had one talent. The pastor said, 'Don't be discouraged, God can use it. What is your talent, anyway?' 'My talent to be able to criticise people.' 'In that case,' the pastor said, 'you'd better do what the servant did - bury it!'<sup>-(2)}</sup>.* – no spiritual gifts should ever be buried; maybe some of our talents should be!
- c. spiritual gifts are the equipment God gives to the church to accomplish His purpose in the church; so let us look at...

B. The Equipping Gifts . . . . . Ephesians 4:11

- 1. *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*
  - a. other translations are *'he gave some apostles, and some...'* and *'He gave some to be apostles, some to be...'*
  - b. but however put, the meaning is the same: all these are people whom God gave to the church for His purposes
- 2. 1 Corinthians 12-14 is an extended passage on spiritual gifts
  - a. the Corinthian church had an unhealthy and undue regard for some of the more ostentatious gifts
  - b. by Paul, the Holy Spirit wrote these chapters to correct that prideful attitude leading to their strife. He included the love chapter to show that Christian love was the necessary accompaniment for any gift to function rightly
  - c. « let's read that section's introduction 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11 »
  - d. because the Corinthians were concerned with the external show of those gifts, Paul describes them

in external terms

- e. is there any entitlement to a specific gift? ... any reason for pride? Let's reread that last verse. 'But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.' (1 Corinthians 12:11)
- f. no, there's no entitlement; no basis for pride: we can't earn or choose these gifts; the Holy Spirit decides who and what

3. in contrast to Corinthians, here in Ephesians, the spiritual gifts

- a. rather than being described in terms of ability are defined in terms of the people that God gives to the church, and the roles they fulfil that the church may be built up in love
- b. Paul has already said that every member of the church has been gifted to fulfil that purpose for the church

(A) 1 Corinthians 12:7, 'But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'

(B) Ephesians 4:7, 'But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. – John Piper comments on this verse 'that all of you are gifted with a measure of grace, and all of you are in some measure lacking the improvement of grace. The one proves that you are vitally needed by the church, and the other proves that the church is vitally needed by you.'

(C) We find the same message in Romans 12:6, 'Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith...'

c. but back to Ephesians 4:11

(A) all these listed are involved in declaring God's word

(B) Martin Luther made this comment: 'Among all the gifts of God, the gift of His Holy Word is the most excellent, and, if we take away the Word, what do we else but take away the Sun out of the world? For what is the world without the Word; but even hell and the very kingdom of Satan, although there be in it never so many wise men – learned, wealthy, and mighty? For what can all these do without the Word? which alone bringeth life and comfort to the soul, peace and quietness to the conscience; which alone keepeth us in the favour of God; ...'

d. the way the gifts of people are listed emphasizes this

4. 'Some as apostles, and some as prophets'

- a. prophet: '*before speaker*' – one who fore-tells, but also one who tells forth, as the message of the Gospel of Christ
- b. apostle: '*one sent away*' – can be used of those sent by the church as missionaries (for instance, Barnabas), and even of every believer as sent by God into the world
- c. but normally in the NT and especially as coupled together in this fashion, they have a more particular meaning
  - (A) a meaning reflected in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29: 'And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?' – being also used this way in
  - (B) Ephesians 2:19-20, 'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,'
  - (C) apostles were Jesus' disciples as commissioned after His death and resurrection, to whom was added Paul
  - (D) prophets spoke with authority God's truth, as confirmed by the foretelling of events, until the NT was written
- d. so these men were foundational gifts to the church from God,<sup>-(3)</sup> providing the word of truth, writing the NT; as Stott says, '*as the foundation upon which the church is built, the apostles and prophets have no successors, for the foundation was laid and finished centuries ago and we cannot tamper with it in any way today.*'<sup>-(4)</sup>

5. 'some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers'

- a. the word of God having been provided by the apostles and prophets, then these men are the propagation gifts<sup>-(5)</sup> to the church, that the church may achieve its God-given purpose
- b. their role is to spread the gospel, proclaim the invitation to unbelievers to come to Christ and find salvation, and then, nurture such believers that they grow and flourish

c. the following verses describe how this is to take place

### C. The Gifts' Purpose

1. Equipped Saints . . . . . 4:12a

a. 'for the equipping of the saints ...'

b. first, what does Paul mean by saints?

- (A) saints is a term for angels; is that the meaning here? But how could the apostles and prophets, let alone pastors and teachers in any way equip angels?
- (B) is he talking about some group of men or women now dead but recognized as having lived holy lives? But how could such people now be improved in any way?
- (C) no, the meaning is found in the opening words of this letter to the church at Ephesus, 1:1, 'Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ...*'
- (D) saints are simply believers gathering together as the people of God in a local, Christian church

c. what does 'equipping the saints' involve?

- (A) other translations have this as 'perfecting' or 'preparing'
- (B) the Greek word means 'to put something into its proper or fit condition.' Elsewhere in the NT it is used of restoring a Christian who has sinned (Galatians 6:1) and of James and John mending nets (Matthew 4:21)
- (C) ***Illustration of bicycles needing repairs to be useful***
- (D) when a person come to Jesus Christ, admitting that they are a sinner and asking for salvation from their sin,
  - (1) sin's filth is removed so we can enter God's presence
  - (2) sin's guilt and its punishment is set aside
  - (3) but sin's damage remains; the old self fighting God
  - (4) we are badly in need of repair to be useful to God
  - (5) to repair believers, to sanctify them so they can be used of God, the Holy Spirit of God gives these men

d. that is what 'equipping the saints' means; but for what?

2. Exerting Saints . . . . . 4:12b
- a. '(for the equipping of the saints) for the work of service ...'
  - b. the first and immediate object of our gathering together, and thus being equipped, perfected and repaired
    - (A) is not that we may sit like bumps on a log in our chairs
    - (B) basking in the sunshine of the God's working in our midst and savouring the moving wind of the Holy Spirit
    - (C) no: we have been saved and we are being sanctified for a purpose; a purpose that will require effort to pursue
    - (D) the purpose that we exert ourselves in the God's work
  - c. last Lord's day, as we considered the words of the Lord Jesus, we encountered a word meaning 'one who serves' three times; that word was *diakonos*, our English 'deacon', which is also sometimes translated as 'minister'
  - d. the word 'service' in this verse is *diakonia*, that is, the work that a deacon or minister does
  - e. you see, what the Bible is teaching here and elsewhere, is the principle of every member ministry – it is as if we were to list on our bulletins, 'Pastors: Carlos & Garth' and then below it, 'Ministers: every member of our congregation'
  - f. we are, as it has truly been said, 'Saved to serve'
  - g. this, then is the immediate object of the gifts given; this should be the objective of those who preach God's word, the same objective as '... our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.' (Titus 2:13a-14)
  - h. but what is the ultimate purpose; let us read on in Ephesians
3. Edified Saints . . . . . 4:12c-13, 16b
- a. <sup>12</sup> (for the equipping of the saints for the work of service) to the building up of the body of Christ; <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.' then, verse 16b that 'the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.'
  - b. the AV has, 'for the edifying of the body of Christ'

- (A) edifice is a ten-dollar word for a building, and 'edify' for the word 'build'; this verse gives us a picture of the church of God as a building; indeed, a temple for God
- (B) with the building that is being built here; it is carried out step by step, brick by brick, piece by piece
- (C) each step, brick or piece dovetails in with those next to it so that the whole becomes one structure, without gap and with no loose, leftover pieces lying around
- (D) if you have ever watched a mason laying bricks; or, a carpenter framing in a house or installing cupboards; or, a drywaller completing the inside walls; or, tile layer cutting and installing ceramic tile; then you realize how important is the preparing of the materials so that they fit just right and present a flawless finish
- (E) as we depend upon masons, carpenters, and so on, thus we depend upon the men that God gives to prepare us to achieve the building of His church
- (F) but the building is but one step
- c. then comes some goals that the Lord Jesus Christ has for each one of us as we are placed together in His church, some things that he desires that we should seek to attain
- d. first listed here is that 'we all attain to the unity of the faith'
  - (A) one of the greatest responsibilities of pastors is that the teaching in the local Christian church remain pure
  - (B) to this end, we pray that we with Paul may be able to say, 'Therefore, since we have this ministry, ... we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' (2 Corinthians 4:1-2 NKJV)
  - (C) because, the only true unity of the faith is that which is based upon following the teaching of the Word of God
- e. the second duly follows, 'the knowledge of the Son of God'
  - (A) the central theme of Scripture is Jesus Christ
  - (B) and it was for that reason we started this series with the message 'To know Christ and to make Him known'
  - (C) and we saw, looking at Romans 8:29, 'For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many



brethren', that the knowing of Jesus Christ is essential if we are to attain

- f. the third, purpose in His church; that it consist of maturing Christians, growing in Christ-likeness
  - (A) who represent Jesus Christ to the world in which we live
  - (B) our goal is following the path described in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18: 'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.'
- g. as the individual members of the church pursue this course, then each will contribute his or her share to the building up of the body of Christ as a whole in love.

D. Conclusion – this, then is why it is so important that God's people assemble together: that God achieve His purpose in equipping us as saints to the praise of His glory. May we, therefore, take on the mind of our Saviour God in this plan He has for us.

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. Kerux illustration #2163
3. From a message by Rev Chris Vogel, Cornerstone Presbyterian, Wisconsin; Kerux sermon #7139
4. *'God's New Society'* by John R. W. Stott, Intervarsity Press, 1979, page 191
5. Vogel, as above