

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/1/91
Ephesians 4:7-12 "The Master Plan for Ministry at WBC"

Intro (of service): Theme--Ministry in the church

Intro (of message):

Review: 4:1 "Therefore"--Major transition in Ephesians

From Doctrine to duty; from riches to responsibilities; position to practice

We learned 2 important truths. One, Our Beliefs must affect our Walk (1).
And two, Our Beliefs must affect our Relationships (2-6). The theme of vv 1-6
is Unity.

We asked 2 questions about unity. What makes unity possible? Five Traits
(2-3). What makes unity essential? Seven Truths (4-6).

Last week: Unity (1-6)

This week: Ministry (7-12)

Next week: Maturity (13-16)

These 3 are inseparable. A church must have unity if it is to have a successful
ministry. But ministry is not the goal, but the means to achieve the goal. The
goal is maturity.

Q: What's involved in ministry?

Ephesians 4:7-12 is "The Master Plan for Ministry at WBC".

Illust: Master Plans. . .

Proposition: In Ephesians 4:7-12, Paul teaches us about 2 components of
ministry.

I. Ministry involves Gifts (7-11).

A. Christ gave Grace-gifts to the Church (7-10).

1. Their Diversity (7)

2. Their Distribution (8-10)

B. Christ gave Speaking gifts to the Church (11).

II. Ministry involves Growth (12).

A. Leaders equip.

B. Saints minister.

C. The Church grows.

I. Ministry involves Gifts (7-11).

V 7 "But. . ."

Unity does not mean uniformity. Christians are not clones. While it is
our God-given obligation to protect the unity of the church (see vv 1-6), that
doesn't mean we must try to squeeze everybody into the same mold. In fact, vv
7-16 teach us that there is diversity in the church. What kind of diversity?
Diversity in the area of gifts.

Look at what Christ did for us in v 7. . .

A. Christ gave Grace-gifts to the Church (7-10).

V 7 "But unto everyone of us is given grace. . ."

Christ gave grace-gifts to His church.

Q: Who received this grace-gift? "Everyone of us"--Every Christian!

Q: What is this grace-gift?

--not saving grace here (that's 2:8-9)

--this is serving grace; Christ gave each of us grace for service.

Listen to Paul as he testifies to his own indebtedness to the gift of serving
grace:

3:2, 7, 8

What did Paul say? I am in the ministry because of grace. By God's grace, I am
saved. By God's grace, I serve. Because of serving grace, I am privileged to
preach the good news to lost people.

Now in 4:7 he informs us, "Wait. I'm not the only one who has received
grace for service! To EVERY ONE of us is given grace! That includes you
Christians in Ephesus!" That includes us in W'burg.

1. Their Diversity (7)

V 7 "according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (NIV "as Christ apportioned it")

We'll see more on the diversity of these grace gifts in v 11. But for now, let's notice a couple of observations about grace gifts:

--elsewhere called "Spiritual gifts"

Rom 12:5-6 "So we being many are one body. . . Having then gifts differing"

I Cor 12:1 "Now concerning spiritual gifts, I would not have you ignorant"

Notice carefully. Eph 4 says Christ gave these grace gifts to us. I Cor 12 says they are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Which is correct? Both. Christ gave them. The Spirit distributed them.

Q: How many are there? The NT records around 20 (but flexible!)

--two categories of Gifts

I Pt 4:10-11 "As every man has received the gift, even so minister. . ."

There are speaking gifts. There are serving gifts.

Eph 4 makes it clear. Every believer has received a grace gift.

Note: Tapes available from our study on "Gifts" 2 years ago

Illust:

How and when? Vv 8-10 (we'll see "why" in vv 11 ff)

2. Their Distribution (8-10)

Q: When did Christ give us these grace gifts? Notice. . .

Vv 8-10 "Wherefore He says, When He ascended up on high. . ."

Paul quotes Psm 68:18 as an illustration of how Christ distributed these grace gifts. Ps 68 is a Psalm of deliverance. In it, David praises God because the LORD has delivered him from his fierce enemy. God brought victory to Israel (see 68:1, 17).

So what happened? 68:18-19 "Thou hast ascended on high. . . gifts for men. . . Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us with benefits."

Here's the scene in Ps 68. The enemy was defeated. The victorious armies marched into Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. They led captivity captive. They also carried the booty taken in war. This would be dedicated to the LORD in the Temple, and then distributed to the people.

Paul says that scene illustrates what Christ did. Three things in v 8:

1) He ascended on high (to heaven)(after first descending, 9-10)

2) He led captivity captive (See Col 2:14-15)

3) He gave gifts to men--grace gifts. Spiritual gifts.

Q: When did we receive our grace-gifts, our spiritual gifts?

A: Legally and positionally, 2000 years ago when Christ ascended to heaven. It's a historic fact. The gift was given before we were even born! But practically, when do we receive these gifts? When we're saved (2:8). When we're born again (Jn 3). When we're baptized into the Body (I Cor 12:13). When we're redeemed (I Pt 1:18).

Illust:

Key: Jesus Christ is the Loving Savior, yes. He's the Good Shepherd (Jn 10). But listen. He's also the MIGHTY KING, the CONQUEROR!

Q: Have you bowed to His authority yet?

Illust:

Tran: Ministry involves Gifts. In fact, ministry would be impossible without spiritual gifts. In vv 7-10 Paul explains that Christ gave Grace-gifts to the Church. To every believer. Then he becomes specific.

B. Christ gave Speaking gifts to the Church (11).

V 11 "And He gave some. . ."

Paul is continuing the same thought he began in v 7. Notice the repeated use of the verb "give" (7, 8, and now in 11). "He gave." Christ gave His Church gifts. Grace gifts. Now in v 11, Paul highlights one category of grace gifts. Christ gave Speaking gifts to His Church. 4 are listed--Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastor/Teachers. What do these have in common? They are all speaking gifts. Christ gave these men to His Church to communicate His Word.

Remember. There are other gifts besides those mentioned in Eph 4, namely serving gifts. Why does Paul focus only on the Speaking gifts here? If the

people with the Speaking gifts will practice their gifts, the people with the Serving gifts will exercise theirs.

Illust:

Q: What Speaking Gifts (or Gifted Men) did Christ give to His Church?

Q: And why did Christ give them? Paul identifies 4. . .

1. Apostles--one sent with a commission; To be an apostle. . .
 - a. Appointed by Christ
 - b. Must have seen Christ after His resurrection
 - c. Must have a message that is infallible, authoritative, and inspired by God; the apostles revealed, preached, and wrote down the inspired truth that became the foundation of the early church

2. Prophets--spokesmen for God in the early church; necessary in the transition time before the NT written (from 30-100 AD); they too had direct revelation from God; Through the prophets, God revealed to the early church specific and practical and contemporary truth for how to live.

Q: Do these gifts exist today? Not in the strict sense in which they existed in Paul's day. Not as those who reveal new truth. There's no need for that. Why not? We have all the revealed truth we need in the Scriptures!

II Pt 1:3

3. Evangelists--What did they do? Not sure. Some feel they took the gospel to unreached areas, evangelized, and planted new churches. Some feel they were responsible to train Christians in local churches how to evangelize (by example and by word)

One thing is for sure--They gave the church an outward focus.

4. Pastor/teachers--refer to one gift, the idea of a teaching shepherd; The Pastor/teacher begins where the evangelist left off. His task is to feed and lead the Church. As a shepherd, to protect the flock of God.

Key: All 4 speaking gifts have one thing in common--the Word of God. Christ gave them to His church to communicate the Word of God.

There's one important difference. Whereas the Apostles and Prophets received their messages directly from God, not so the pastor/teacher. He receives His message from studying, meditation, and preparation.

Illust:

Tran: There's the first component for our Ministry Master Plan at WBC. Ministry involves Gifts.

Q: What happens when the church uses its gifts? Component #2. . .

II. Ministry involves Growth (12).

Notice why God gave Speaking gifts to the church. Look carefully at v 12.

V 12 "For the perfecting of the saints. . ."

Is v 12 saying--"God gave apostles. . . pastors to do the work of the ministry. . ." That is, it's the Pastors job to preach and teach the Word, to do evangelism, to do all the hospital calling, to administrate, to look after the widows and orphans, to train the children, to lead the youth ministries, to make all the financial decisions, etc."? Is it?

Q: What does v 12 say?

A: There are 3 phrases--"for. . . for. . . for"

Are these phrases parallel or sequential. If they are parallel, v 12 is saying, "God gave the church men with speaking gifts for 3 reasons: for perfecting, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body. If they are sequential, the meaning is this: God gave the church men with speaking gifts in order to perfect the saints, in order that they might do the work of the ministry, so that the church might be edified." The latter is true.

Illust: Acts 6:2 The apostles said, "It is not fitting that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. . ."

Q: How does a church grow? How did the Lord intend for His church to grow?

A: He gave us a Master plan for ministry which involves 3 steps.

A. Step #1: Leaders equip.

V 12 "for the perfecting of the saints" = "to equip fully"; to get something ready for action (eg--used of mending fishing nets; setting a bone)

What's the responsibility of pastor/teachers? To get the saints ready for action. How? II Tim 4:2 "Preach the Word."

That's step #1. Leaders equip. Then what?

B. Step #2: Saints minister.

V 12 "for the work of the ministry"

Listen. The local church is to be a "training place" where Christians come to be trained and equipped to go use their gifts in ministry. God never intended the church to be a place where the saints come to watch the professionals perform.

Problem: If a church falls apart when a Pastor leaves, the pastor has failed to equip the saints (so too a Youth Pastor, a SS teacher). A pastor's job is to equip the saints. Not to get a crowd. Not merely to fill the church. A man can fill a church by using personal charm and charisma. He can get people to come because he's a nice guy. The question is this. . .

Q: What happens when he leaves?!

If he has not equipped the saints to do the ministry, the church fizzles.

Key: Perhaps the real test for a person's ministry is NOT what happens when they are there, but what happens when they are GONE!

Illust:

Challenge: I have failed you as a Pastor if I have not equipped you to stand on your own 2 feet in active ministry. If you come to church simply to hear a man, with no ambition to practice what you're learning. . . Or if you come to church merely out of duty, or to put in your time, or to impress your friends with your religion, I have failed you. And the ministry of the church is in danger.

Illust: Leroy Eims tells the following fictitious story on a tape. The Marines were in a battle zone next to a dense forrest. They received orders from the top that the enemy was in the forest, holding hostages, and their job was to rescue them. The troops huddled around their sargent, patted him on the back, and sent him into the forrest, alone. And they sat down to rest. A week later he returned, worn out, battered from the battle. He shared accounts with them about hostages in the grasp of the enemy. The fighting was fierce. The need was great for backup. The next day, the sergeant headed into the forest, again alone. 7 days later he returned to the cheers of his men.

That could never happen in the Marines. But sadly, it happens all the time in churches across America.

Q: What happens when leaders equip, and saints minister?

C. Step #3: The Church grows.

V 12 "for the edifying of the Body of Christ" = build up

Key: Our ultimate goal in the church is edification, not ministry. Ministry is an intermediate goal, a means to an end.

Illust: Someone says, "Hey, I'm involved in ministry. . . What more could you want?"

Q: Are you building up the body?

Problem: Some active ministers tear down more than they build up. You say, "How can that be? Aren't they involved in the church? Yes. Well, don't they perform a needed ministry in the church? Yes. Do they please God in their ministry?" No. Why not?

I Cor 3:9-10 "Let every man take heed how he builds. . ."

Sum: There's God's Master Plan. Ministry involves gifts. And growth.

Q: Are you using your gifts for the Lord?

Q: Do you know the Lord?

Communion: I Corinthians 11

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