

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians

by Oliver B. Greene

Copyright @ 1963

The Gospel Hour, Inc., Greenville, South Carolina

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN -

THE PURPOSE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE APPOINTED SERVANTS

Ephesians 4, verses 12-16

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of CHRIST: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even CHRIST: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

I would like to point out three things in verses 12 and 13. GOD appoints these different servants (or ministers) for:

1. The perfecting of the saints
2. The work of the ministry
3. The edifying of the Body of CHRIST

This is to continue until **"we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."** In other words, GOD calls, appoints, commissions and sends ministers into the local assembly for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of CHRIST, uniting all believers in the faith. GOD does not send in men who will divide the church by setting forth some new doctrine, man-made dogma, or an idea that is hatched up by some committee at the headquarters of a religious denomination. GOD sends spiritually-minded ministers who are able to lead the people of GOD into the deeper things of the Spirit in order that the body of the local church may grow into a full grown spiritual man in CHRIST JESUS - which is what we should be.

The Lord calls and sends gifted men (as in Acts 11:22-26; 13:1-2; 16:6-7). The ministry of pastors, teachers and evangelists is not according to human choosing or sending. If the church is a New Testament church the HOLY SPIRIT appoints men to the ministry or places of service there. The HOLY SPIRIT may direct some young man to a needy community where there is no Bible church, to organize and pastor a Bible-believing church there.

Many young men would be led to places of service if they would look to the HOLY SPIRIT for leadership, instead of to the denomination or to the home church. Too many times in this day young ministers wait for the denomination to provide a place for them to preach. GOD's ministers do not pick out the place they would like to go - and then go there; a Spirit-led minister is not permitted to choose his own place of service. (Read Acts 16:7-8.)

Paul begs the Ephesians not to be like children, tossed to and fro, carried around with every wind of doctrine and by the sleight of men who lie in wait to deceive by cunning craftiness. This is good sound advice and is badly needed in our churches today. The average church has entirely too many spiritual babies still being bottle-fed. Paul told the Corinthians they should be eating meat - but were still feeding on milk because they were carnal. They were divided, they were criticizing, they were back-biting. One declared, "Apollos baptized me," another said, "Cephas baptized me."

They were fighting among themselves, therefore they had no time left in which to fight the devil. Paul rebuked them for this - and rightly so. He admonished the Ephesians to grow up . . . not to remain spiritual babies, not be children tossed about by every wind of doctrine.

Believers should study the Word of GOD, hear the man of GOD, discover the doctrine of the Bible, stand on it, live by it, die by it if necessary - and do not allow deceivers to get into the assembly . . . wolves in sheep's clothing to lead the lambs astray. A good shepherd takes care of the lambs and the sheep in his fold.

The average pastor who is driven away from his church has no one but himself to blame.

Beloved, if a pastor is called of GOD and ordained of GOD, he is the undershepherd of Almighty GOD. GOD furnishes the shells with which to shell the woods. GOD furnishes the tools and the ammunition. If a preacher allows heresy and false doctrine to creep into his church, it is his own fault. If he is alert, if he brings in the right Bible teachers, the right missionaries and the right evangelists . . . men who will preach pure, sound doctrine . . . the church will not be led about with every "**wind of doctrine.**"

The gross ignorance concerning doctrine in the average church is sad beyond human knowledge. The average church member does not know what he believes; and what little he does believe, he does not know why he believes it. I say this in love: Many churches do not have three people in their entire membership who could take the Word of GOD and instruct a sinner how to be saved! Brethren, that should not be! GOD pity the pastor who does not ground his people in the doctrine of the Word of GOD.

Paul believed in Dynamics, Discipline, and Doctrine. He had three "D's" . . . he was not just D.O. He was Dynamic, he believed in Discipline - and he preached sound Doctrine. If a dear minister hopes to keep his church the kind of church that would please the Lord, he must himself preach sound doctrine, teach the people, train them, and lead them. He must be extremely careful whom he brings in to minister to the people. When a pastor leaves his pulpit he must be extremely cautious about who fills that pulpit in his absence. In one hour, a false prophet can sow seed that will bring shame upon the church for months and months to come.

It is sad today that many times in the church some dear soul who seems to have been stable and grounded in the faith is swept off his feet by some new religious idea that sweeps through town. That ought not to be. GOD's minister does not change his message with the times. A Christian who is established on the Rock CHRIST JESUS will not be confused, confounded, nor led astray by false doctrine. Is there Scripture to prove that?

Yes:

"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone (JESUS is the Rock), elect, precious: AND HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM SHALL NOT BE CONFOUNDED" (I Peter 2:6). That verse of Scripture needs no comment. JESUS is the Rock, and if we are standing on the sure foundation, the spiritual Rock of Gibraltar, the Lord JESUS CHRIST, we will not be confused, confounded, nor driven about by divers winds of doctrine. GOD pity these wind-cloud Christians.

Jude refers to clouds driven by the wind, people who are twice dead, plucked up by the roots . . . church members, but with no stability, no grounded experience. They are tossed about, and change their religion and their doctrine every so often.

Earlier in this study I pointed out that there is a difference - and yet there is no difference - in the ministry of the pastor and the evangelist, the teacher and the evangelist. A pastor can be (and should be) a pastor AND a teacher, because no pastor can be an effective pastor unless he is capable of teaching . . . and teaching requires much study and prayer. An evangelist should be a teacher to some degree - because if we cannot teach the Word and make plain the plan of salvation, we cannot evangelize.

But the number one ministry of the evangelist is to edify and stir up, and cause the unsaved as well as the believers to think on their eternal destiny. When an evangelist comes into a church, he does not preach a new Gospel . . . he just preaches the same old Gospel in a different way, to stir up the saints and get them busy, to cause them to work. The pastor, the evangelist, the teacher, each and every minister in the New Testament church certainly works to the same end . . . the perfecting of the saints . . . the perfecting of the body . . . the completion of the church.

Certainly an evangelist should have in mind adding souls to the Body of CHRIST through the preaching of the Gospel; and the pastor should also desire through the teaching of the Gospel to add souls and to strengthen the babes in CHRIST and to feed the stronger Christians . . . those who are eating meat. The Christian experience is a day-by-day process. We are redeemed instantaneously - but we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

As new-born babes we are commanded to desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow. We are to study to show ourselves approved unto GOD, workmen that need not be ashamed. The sad condition of most Christians is that they are saved, and they bog down spiritually, never moving forward. They are spiritual dwarfs. They have spiritual anemia. They are undernourished, they do not grow. It is sad. It should not be.

We are to teach, preach, edify, stir up the people. We are to cause the sinner to be saved through the Gospel, and the Christian to grow through the milk, meat, bread and water of the Word. Sometimes I shudder when I think that one day I will stand before Almighty GOD to give an account for my labors in the body. I am redeemed by the Blood - but I will be rewarded according to my faithful labors; and I wonder if I have been faithful at all times? I wonder if I have done all that I could? GOD pity us if we are not faithful ministers of the Gospel!

We are to speak the truth in love - we are not to speak the truth with hatefulness or sarcasm, but in love.

Ministers are never to apologize for preaching the truth.

We (evangelists, pastors, teachers) should step into the pulpit and tell people **"except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD . . . If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him . . . except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish . . . he that... climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber . . . Jesus is the way, the truth and the life . . . no man cometh unto the Father but by Me (Jesus the Son) . . . there is... one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . . the wages of sin is death."** When we preach these things we need not apologize nor soft-pedal such truth. We need to preach it with positiveness, we need to be dogmatic . . . but we need to do it in love.

Verse 15 closes with the words, **" . . . into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."** Then verse 16 begins, **"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth . . ."**

The church of the living God, the church of which JESUS is the head, is a body made up of living organisms . . . individuals who are born again. We are not all eyes, we are not all hands, we are not all feet; but we are ALL members of one body. Paul explains to the Corinthian believers in these words:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." (Paul is using the natural body to illustrate the church. Certainly we know what the physical body is, how it is made up, and how necessary are all the members of it.) **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (all believers), whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body (the church) is not one member, but many."**

Paul then begins to point out the different members as compared to the human body: **"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him."**

(You will note here that it is GOD who places individuals in specific ministries in the church; and if we as individuals would be so surrendered to GOD that we would allow Him to place us

where He wants us, we would be happy and fruitful.)

"And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body (still speaking of the church). And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more THOSE MEMBERS OF THE BODY, WHICH SEEM TO BE MORE FEEBLE, ARE NECESSARY: AND THOSE MEMBERS OF THE BODY, WHICH WE THINK TO BE LESS HONOURABLE, UPON THESE WE BESTOW MORE ABUNDANT HONOUR; AND OUR UNCOMELY PARTS HAVE MORE ABUNDANT COMELINESS. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, ALL THE MEMBERS SUFFER WITH IT; OR ONE MEMBER BE HONoured, ALL THE MEMBERS REJOICE WITH IT. NOW YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR" (I Corinthians 12:12-27).

In these verses we clearly see that each and every born again child of GOD is a member of the one church of the living God . . . the Body of CHRIST. And regardless of how humble may be the ministry of each individual in that body, we are important. There are no unimportant parts in the New Testament church.

Your ministry may be very, very humble - but remember, GOD places more honor upon the humble. One of the greatest surprises of eternity will be at the judgment seat of CHRIST where believers will be rewarded for their stewardship. Those who seemingly would have received great rewards will many times be those who receive a very small reward, while some dear soul who was very insignificant on this earth will receive a great reward in Heaven, because GOD will reward for faithfulness - not for the size of the ministry (I Corinthians 3:11-15, II Corinthians 5:10).

To sum it all up, from the pastor to the janitor in the church, every person should be united, working toward one end: The perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body until the church is complete and we are caught out to meet JESUS in the clouds in the air (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

~ end of chapter 18 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
