

**THE CHURCH ON OFFENSE IN
CONFLICTED DAYS
FALL/WINTER 2020/2021
“THE STRATEGIC USE OF THE GIFTS OF GOD”
JANUARY 20, 2021**

EPHESIANS 4:12-16 and other selected support Scriptures

I. PAUL'S PREPARATION OF THE EPHESIANS

- A. He held back nothing that was PROFITABLE v. 20*
- B. He testified that the gospel was about REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD and FAITH TOWARD THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. That means that they would have to change their mind about who the Sovereign One was and put their trust in the Son of the Sovereign One, the Lord Jesus Christ v. 27*
- C. He testified of the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD v. 24*
- D. The main focus of his preaching was PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM OF GOD. v.25*
- E. He declared to them the WHOLE COUNSEL (WILL, PURPOSE, INTENT, DESIRE) OF GOD.*

He trusted God with them, encouraging them to guard themselves against the FALSE TEACHERS and FALSE TEACHING that was going to come.

TONIGHT: we examine the strategic plan of God in giving gifts to men as Pastor Al shared with us last week. God did not leave us as orphans believing in an absentee Savior. He gave us a mission and a purpose that is practically impossible seeing we have to rescue captives from the jaws of the adversary and his principalities and powers! But He promised He would not leave us alone to be His children or do this divine mission! But gave spiritual gifts to chosen men prep us for ministry. He then gifted us (1 Cor 12) with spiritual gifts (charismata) authorizing us to represent Him, the King of kings, and empowering us by His Spirit to conduct His divine ministry until He comes!

II. THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUALLY GIFTED APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, AND PASTOR/TEACHERS

- A. “...for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry...”*
 - 1. Equipping - a word which means “complete furnishing”; “to bring to a condition of fitness”*
 - a. It is not just a class offered as a part of the educational ministry of the church. It is a prep school, vocational school*

or a boot camp; it is a supervised mentoring where the one being prepped is taught and then given the opportunity to do the ministry until he/she can do it on his/her own. It is experiential, “hands-on” training to perfection. OJT for sharpening skills.

- b. It is specific to “ministry” which in this case is “diakonias,” table serving. This is the origin of our word deacon. This training is for serving in any capacity needed to meet the needs of the body or those with whom the body is given contact.*
 - 2. The saints - the ones set apart by God; those who have been called by God and know it.*
 - 3. The work - Grk. Word ergon: work, deed, task; in most of its 60 occurrences it is found in service to someone or something; doing something useful or kind to the one on the receiving end; it requires energy expended and the sacrifice of time and resources; “work” defines the energy expended doing the actual deed while “ministry” describes the intention or reason for doing the work*
 - 4. The ministry - Grk. Word diakonias: “to wait at table”; “to aid, support, distribute, serve”; “to perform a priestly duty”. This is the means to be used with one another or upon any with a need. As you can see it covers mostly physical needs of the person but you will see in one of its uses the work of performing a priestly duty would take in the invaluable, indispensable work of mediation through counseling and intercessory prayer. Ministry is a means to an end; it is not an end in itself*
- B. “..for the edifying of the body of Christ...”*
- 1. The goal of ministry is building up the body of Christ*
 - 2. Edifying - Grk. Word oikodomen from a word meaning “to build” “to erect” “to build up again” “to restore” “strengthen the foundation” “add to by building” and came to mean in human terms “to encourage” “to say or do things that would cause the individual to become stronger, more effective, to increase and abound”. This is the goal of ministry! Ministry may mean nothing more than the satisfaction that one did something for another unless it has the additional value of building up or making stronger the body of Christ.*
 - 3. The body of Christ*

- a. *Notice the Grk. Word, somatos, used here is the word for the actual body of a living thing especially. A body is a living organism that is highly organized with a host of processes going on simultaneously to keep the organism alive and functioning for any thing needed to be done. It is comprised of many parts which work interdependently to perform the functions for which it was designed by God in the first place.*
 - b. *For us to be engaged as the believers God had planned we must look at our fellow believers as parts of an organic, living body. We must come to understand what Christ has created the body for in the first place. The energizing source of the body, that which keeps it alive, is Christ Himself working through the indwelling Spirit in every believer of that body. Sick cells or body parts are non-functioning body parts and the body is sick as well. We are so organically tied together there is no way for the whole body to keep from feeling and knowing that.*
 - c. *So the pastor/teachers working with the foundation laid down by the apostles, prophets and evangelists (the corpus of the New Testament and the “traditions” that have come down from them) demonstrate and mentor gifted folk how to do ministry work so the whole body is healthy and functioning for its intended purpose of making disciples of Christ from the whole world.*
- C. *But the edifying of the body is not an end either. There is a model the mature church is supposed to resemble as it is perfected or matured. Verse 13 describes this image of the church that is Spirit-filled, obedient and enjoying the ministry of serving others.*
1. *“...Till we all...” No one left out here. The church is a body of parts that all contribute to the maturity. No slackers and no domineering personalities*
 2. *“...come into the unity...” God seems to enjoy making diverse things a part of each other to create a whole. He Himself is a unity, a tri-unity. He created the whole cosmos to be a unity. The free-willing humans and angels can add an element of intrigue to that formula. But the Spirit of God working through obedient, faithful, humble souls creates a unity that makes anything that happened at the Tower of Babel look insignificant. This is not normal human unity that is going to*

get together to accomplish something; this is a unity authored by God and found in Him alone.

3. *“...of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God...” Jesus had both faith and knowledge that is beyond normal human intellect since He was in union with the Father. Jesus lived by faith or He could not be a righteous man. He was fully righteous. His faith is found as a character trait of God. His knowledge, though growing as a human, was complete or in union with the mind of the Father as He trusted His Father. This kind of knowledge comes through humility, trust and submission to the Father. The same happens for us as we submit ourselves to this divinely-ordained process of maturation.*
 4. *“...to a perfect man...” Perfect here meaning completed or mature. The very thing for which God has created this infant church. He is growing a church through each member’s trust and humble submission to Christ!*
 5. *“...to a measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” There are a lot of “heroes” in our faith. They are not the measure of maturity. Their biographies are worth the reading to see how God uses men/women in the process of perfection but those biographies are not the equivalent of the Word of God. This word talks about a fruit coming into its season of ripeness. We will know we are ripe when the whole church is “mistaken” for Jesus!*
- D. *But even this maturity or perfection is not a look in the mirror for admiration of the handsome appearance. It is practical in a fallen world. To not know that the whole world is hostile to Christ and to His bride, the church, is to be beyond naïve! The goal of maturity or perfection to be like Christ is*
1. *“...that we should no longer be children...” Continuing the imagery of human growth to adulthood, he points out that childhood, though a vital stage in the process, is not a permanent condition. We have to move on. As we receive the training in ministry, we move on to greater responsibility with greater authority and greater power until we are looking like Christ, resting in Him rather than putting out some effort to do so. The early disciplines have become mature practices that are almost automatic. We were trained that way by Christ. We are not independent learners; we are guided by the Spirit*

of God and by Christ, personally! He works through our human teachers but they are conduit of Christ not replacement of Christ. Like He did His disciples when He was here, first the listen and learn, then they do what He tells them, they join in doing what He is doing under His guidance, then He authorizes and empowers them to do those things without His immediate supervision. Finally, they are on their own in an interdependent ministry with the Holy Spirit.

2. *“...no longer tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine...” Sailing ship illustration here with the winds being seen as the driving force tossing around a ship with no rudder and an uncontrolled sail.*
3. *“...by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...” More of the hostility of the world revealing there is a conscious effort to trick us up and make us look ridiculous and without thought. In a world that delights in its intellectual prowess, displayed in the bouquet of multiple words that form it, the straightforward preacher of the simple gospel will be made to look like a buffoon. Our image of maturity is not the warrior/poet of the Greeks but the glorious Christ of the heavens, the Lord of all.*
4. *“...but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head...” Don't lose your mind trying to become the world's image of intelligent. Before God, they are the emperor who had no clothes! Before the fools they seek to impress, they are held in pretentious honor! We are to be those who do not use crafty trickery to fool people into the gospel's salvation. We speak to them the truth as it is in Jesus' gospel. That is fully clothed and in our right mind!*
5. *“...- Christ- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Christ is the source that supplies what each part of the body needs and it their use of what is supplied that supplies the mortar that holds it all together.*