

DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH, PT. 3; EPH. 4:12-13 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

LAST TIME, ~ WE BEGAN LOOKING AT EPH. 4:11-14, ~ IN WHICH PAUL NARROWS HIS topic of spiritual gifting down to talk about some specific leadership gifts, ~ ¶¶

▶▶or, ~ more specifically, ~ five groups of spiritually gifted leaders.

▷▷Zeroed in on vs. 11. ~ ~ "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers."

TODAY, ~ WE WILL LOOK AT VERSES 12-13.

IN THESE VERSES, ~ PAUL TELLS US THAT JESUS GAVE THESE FIVE GROUPS OF spiritually gifted leaders to the church for three purposes.

▶▶Briefly put, ~ they are 1st, ~ "to equip the saints for the work of ministry," ~ 2nd, ~ "for building up the body of Christ," ~ and 3rd, ~ to help believers achieve three goals.

▶▶Or, ~ TPID, ~ in verses 12-13, ~ Paul spells out the three primary duties of spiritually gifted leaders.

NOW LET'S TURN TO THE FIRST PURPOSE ~ OR THE FIRST PRIMARY DUTY.

IN VERSE 12a, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT JESUS GAVE TO THE CHURCH "the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, the shepherds ~ and teachers" in order for them "to equip the saints."

▶▶"equip" means "a preparation or training that fully qualifies someone for something."

▶▶The idea is seen in Paul's use of a synonym of this term in 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

▷▷"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, ~ for reproof, ~ for correction, ~ and for training in righteousness, ~ that the man of God may be complete, ~ equipped for every good work."

▶▶And from these verses in 2 Timothy, ~ we see that this equipping, ~ or training, ~ that Paul is talking about in Eph. 4:12a, ~ comes through the instruction of God's word.

▶▶So one of the purposes Jesus gave "the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers" to the church ~ is to prepare ~ or train ~ believers ~ through God's word, ~ so that they, ~ believers, ~ are fully qualified to do something. ¶¶ 1/9

AND THAT SOMETHING IN VERSE 12b. ~ FOR CONTEXT, ~ START AT VERSE 11.

"AND HE GAVE THE APOSTLES, ~ THE PROPHETS, ~ THE EVANGELISTS, ~ THE shepherds and teachers, ~ ^{12a} to equip the saints ^{12b} for the work of ministry."

▶▶ So one of the purposes Jesus gave "the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers" to the church is to prepare ~ or train ~ believers ~ through God's word, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ so that they, ~ believers, ~ are fully qualified to do "the work of ministry."

▶▶ Unfortunately, ~ some translations reflect 2 poor interpretive and translation choices.

▷▷ 1st, ~ the placement of a comma after "to equip the saints"

▷▷ 2nd, ~ Some put "the" before "ministry"

↪↪ Phrase "the ministry" in these translations ~ could make people think that Paul has some specific ministry or official ministry work in mind.

→→ But the Greek word Paul uses for "ministry" refers to a more general sense of service.

NIV FOR VERSES 11-12b HELPS US SEE WHAT PAUL'S GETTING AT HERE.

▶▶ "So Christ himself gave the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the pastors and teachers, ~ to equip his people for works of service."

▶▶ "works of service" points us back to Eph. 2:10. ~ There Paul wrote, ~ NIV ~ "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

▷▷ As we noted, ~ Paul may have been especially alluding here to the area of our spiritual gifting ~ and the specific ministry or ministries our gifting is for.

↪↪ I.e., ~ God has prepared specific works of ministry for us ~ and has gifted us to carry them out.

▶▶ But from what Paul says in 4:12b, ~ we see the implication that our gifts are not given to us fully developed. ~ We see this illustrated in Acts 18:24-28

▶▶ We see from what Paul says in Eph. 4:12b ~ that these five groups of spiritually gifted leaders have a hand in the development of our spiritual gifts. ¶¶ 2/9

▶▶ So, ~ in Eph. 4:12b, ~ Paul is saying that one of the purposes Jesus gave "the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers" to the church is to prepare ~ or train ~ believers ~ through God's word, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ so that we, ~ believers, ~ are fully qualified to exercise our gifts and carry out the works of service that God "prepared in advance for us to do."

▶▶ To simplify all that, ~ spiritually gifted leaders equip God's people to be better able to do the work God has for them.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR OPINION, ~ PASTORS AND ELDERS AND OTHER CHURCH leaders are not to do all the work in the church.

▶▶ Paul brings this out in Gal. 5:13b. ~ "but through love serve one another."

▶▶ And we see this illustrated in Acts 6:1-4.

▷▷ "Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, ~ a complaint by the Hellenists ~ [i.e., ~ the Greek-speaking believers] ~ arose against the Hebrews ~ [i.e., ~ the Hebrew speaking believers] ~ because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution ~ [i.e., ~ of food]. ~ ¶¶

↳↳² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ~ ¶¶

→→³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ~ ¶¶

↳↳⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

▷▷ Apostles not being uppity ~ This was a priority choice about observing their calling and their primary duties.

↳↳ They recognized that they should focus on what God called them to do.

→→ Others could take on this important ministry of "the daily distribution of food."

▶▶ One of the primary duties of those of us who preach and teach here at NHCC ~ is to equip our fellow believers to do works of service ~ that God prepared in advance for them to do. ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶ Again, ~ contrary to popular belief and opinion, ~ God didn't design Christianity to be a spectator sport, ~ in which the Q/UQ professional clergy does all the work.

▷▷ God intends and commands ~ **all** believers to be active participants in the church and has assigned a function in the body to each one of us.

▶▶ Those called and gifted to be leaders in the church, ~ such as pastors, ~ teachers, ~ evangelists, ~ prophets, ~ are not to neglect their primary duties, ~ for other, ~ albeit important, ~ things.

▶▶ Now I would like to draw your attention back to Acts 6. ~ The church followed the apostles' advice.

▷▷ In verses 5-6, ~ LEB ~ Luke writes, ~ "And the statement pleased the whole group, ~ and they chose Stephen (a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit), ~ and Philip, ~ and Prochorus, ~ and Nicanor, ~ and Timon, ~ and Parmenas, ~ and Nicolaus (a convert from Antioch), ~ whom they stood before the apostles. ~ And they prayed and placed their hands on them.

▷▷ Then Luke tells us the result of this correct prioritization, ~ which the leaders and the other believers followed.

↳ Verse 7, ~ LEB ~ "And ~ [para. as "So," ~ which brings out the result aspect] ~ [So] ~ the word of God kept spreading, ~ and the number of disciples in Jerusalem was increasing greatly, ~ and a large number of priests began obeying the faith."

IN VERSE 12c, ~ PAUL STATES THE 2nd PURPOSE FOR WHICH JESUS GAVE THESE five groups of spiritually gifted leaders to the church.

OR, ~ TPID, ~ THE SECOND PRIMARY DUTY OF THESE LEADERS. ~ CONTEXT, ~ VS. 11.

▶▶ "11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12a to equip the saints 12b for the work of ministry, 12c for building up the body of Christ."

▷▷ Jesus gave these five groups of spiritually gifted leaders to the church for the purpose of "building up" the church.

▶▶ The word for "building up" is a figure of speech for spiritual edification.

▷▷ I.e., ~ Jesus gave these five groups of spiritually gifted leaders to the church to strengthen and encourage believers ~ and also to help believers develop spiritually through the instruction and preaching of God's word. ↴ 4/9

▷▷ And based on the wider context of Eph. 4, ~ "building up the body of Christ" would also include these leaders making it a priority ~ to continually make every effort to preserve and protect the unity that the Holy Spirit has given us.

▶▶ Notice the phrase, ~ "building up." ~ This is the opposite of destroying or causing dissension.

▷▷ The work of these spiritually gifted leaders is always construction, ~ not destruction.

↳↳ Their duty is never to make trouble, ~ but always to do their best to see that trouble does not rear its ugly head.

→→ Their responsibility is always to strengthen, ~ and never weaken, ~ the church.

AT THIS POINT, ~ WE SHOULD INSERT A NOTE OF CLARIFICATION.

▶▶ The fact that one of the primary purposes of the five groups of spiritually gifted leaders is to edify believers ~ does not mean that edification of believers is solely their responsibility.

▶▶ Recall that when we talked about the gift of evangelism, ~ we said that even though there are believers especially gifted in evangelism, ~ it is incumbent upon all those who claim Jesus as Savior and Lord to share the gospel with the lost.

▶▶ The same is true when it comes to edifying our fellow believers. ~ It is not only for church leaders to do. ~ It is the responsibility of all believers.

▶▶ Elsewhere Paul makes this abundantly clear.

▷▷ E.g., ~ in Rom. 14:19, ~ LEB ~ "So then, ~ let us pursue what promotes peace and what edifies one another."

▷▷ In 1 Thess. 5:11, ~ "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, ~ just as you are doing."

▷▷ And in 1 Cor. 14:26, ~ speaking about orderly worship, ~ Paul writes, ~ "What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up ~ [or, ~ for edification]."

▶▶ So all believers, ~ leaders and non-leaders alike, ~ are tasked with the responsibility to build up the body of Christ.

▷▷ It is the work of all believers to build up the church and to not destroy it. ¶ 5/9

▷▷It is the duty of all believers to never make trouble, ~ but to always do our best to see that trouble does not rear its ugly head.

▷▷It is the responsibility of all believers to always strengthen, ~ and to never weaken, ~ the church.

▷▷All believers to "pursue what promotes peace and what edifies" ~ All of us are to "encourage one another and build one another up."

IN VERSE 13, ~ PAUL STATES THE 3^d PURPOSE FOR WHICH JESUS GAVE THESE five groups of spiritually gifted leaders to the church.

OR, ~ TPID, ~ THE THIRD PRIMARY DUTY OF THESE LEADERS. ~ AND I.E., ~ TO HELP believers achieve three goals.

▶▶For context, ~ verse 11. ~ "11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ~ 77

▷▷[goals] ~ 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ~ to mature manhood, ~ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

IN VERSE 13a, ~ WE SEE THE FIRST GOAL THEY HELP US ACHIEVE IS "THE UNITY of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."

"THE FAITH" HERE IS THE SAME AS WE SAW IN EPH. 4:5b. ~ IT IS THE ONE SETTLED body of truth deposited by Christ in His church.

▶▶As we know, ~ Jude calls it "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

▷▷I.e., ~ the body of God's revealed truth that Scripture contains and the apostles preached.

▶▶Jesus gave "gave the apostles, ~ the prophets, the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers to help us become grounded and united in sound doctrine.

▷▷As we noted when we discussed preserving and protecting our unity, ~ to depart from the "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" ~ is to cause disunity and confusion within the body of Christ. 77 6/9

▶▶ The early church provides the model for us, ~ believers here at NHCC, ~ to follow.

▷▷ Acts 2:42a, ~ "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching."

↳↳ These early believers continually committed themselves to learning what the apostles taught them.

▷▷ It is incumbent upon all believers here at NHCC, ~ to follow the early church's lead.

▷▷ And it is incumbent upon those of us who teach and preach here at NHCC ~ to help every believer here attain and maintain unity in sound doctrine.

NOW, ~ I'D LIKE TO POINT OUT SOMETHING VERY INTERESTING HERE IN VERSE 13a.

▶▶ Paul says that the gifted leaders are to help us achieve "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." ~ I.e., ~ accurate knowledge about Jesus.

▷▷ What's interesting is that it's obvious that accurate knowledge about Jesus would be included in "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

▶▶ So there was really no need for Paul to say this ~ Unless he was making a point, ~ which I believe he was. ~ Paul was emphasizing the sound doctrine regarding Jesus.

▷▷ As important as knowing all of the "apostles' teaching" is, ~ accurate knowledge about Jesus is of the utmost importance.

▶▶ So, ~ for us who preach and teach here at NHCC, ~ there is to be a special focus on helping believers become grounded and united in the accurate knowledge about Jesus.

THE SECOND GOAL THE FIVE GROUPS OF SPIRITUALLY GIFTED LEADERS HELP US achieve is spiritual maturity.

"MATURITY" HERE REFERS TO BEING MATURE IN ONE'S BEHAVIOR.

▶▶ The question is, ~ "what kind of behavior is considered spiritually mature in Paul's eyes?"

▶▶ Well, ~ if you'll recall, ~ from Eph. 4:2 — 6:9, ~ Paul spells out in detail the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3.

▷▷ This is the type of behavior Paul's talking about, ~ the type of behavior that displays spiritual maturity. ↯↯ 7/9

▷▷ Jesus gave "gave the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers to the church to help us live lives that are honoring, ~ glorifying, ~ and pleasing to God.

↳↳ That's why, ~ for example, ~ it's important for me to guide us through Ephesians, ~ and for Wayne to teach Romans in Sunday School.

→→ Because it's through the careful study of the Bible that we learn what spiritual maturity looks like.

↳↳ The Bible provides a model for us to follow in order to grow spiritually mature.

↳↳ And it also provides a gauge by which we can measure our progress in spiritual maturity.

THE THIRD GOAL THE FIVE GROUPS OF SPIRITUALLY GIFTED LEADERS HELP US achieve is Christ-likeness.

THE WORDING OF THIS LAST PART OF VERSE 13 IS A LITTLE HARD TO UNDERSTAND.

▶▶ "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

▶▶ If you'll recall, ~ we saw similar language back in Eph. 3:19, ~ where Paul prayed that believers "may be filled with all the fullness of God."

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ we said there that Paul was praying that believers grow more and more like our heavenly Father.

▶▶ That may be somewhat of the same idea here in Eph. 4:13.

▷▷ To put it concisely, ~ Jesus gave spiritually gifted leaders to the church to help us grow more and more like Him.

↳↳ Through the instruction of God's word and the modeling of Christ-like behavior, ~ I say this because their walk must match their talk, ~ ¶¶

→→ through the instruction of God's word and the modeling of Christ-like behavior by spiritually gifted leaders, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ believers learn how to become more and more like our Savior. ¶¶ 8/9

CONCLUSION.

TO SUM UP THIS MORNING, ~ 77

▶▶ Jesus has given spiritually gifted leaders to the church to train believers through God's word ~ in order for us to the work in the church that God has for us.

▶▶ He has given these spiritual leaders to us for our encouragement, ~ strengthening, ~ and spiritual growth.

▶▶ And Jesus has given us these spiritually gifted leaders to help us become grounded and united in sound doctrine, ~ especially in the accurate knowledge of Jesus, ~ 77

▷▷ to help us become spiritually mature, ~ and to help us grow more and more like our Savior.

▶▶ My brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ when we really think about these words, ~ I think we can see that Jesus has done an awesome thing for us ~ in giving us these spiritually gifted leaders to help us.

▷▷ Now to Him, ~ our glorious Savior, ~ the Lord Jesus Christ, ~ be honor and glory forever and ever!

LET'S PRAY 9/9