

God's Plan for Building the Church (Part II: Purposes for the Church)

January 17, 2003

- *What New Years Resolutions have you recently made or what are your short-term goals/goals for this year?*

Ephesians 4:7-16

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this [expression], "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 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. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects] into Him who is the head, [even] Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

REVIEW: GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE CHURCH

After identifying the characteristics of the worthy walk and emphasizing the unity of believers, Paul moves on to discuss God's plan for building the church in verses 7-16. As we looked at last week, Paul began in verses 7-11 by addressing God's provision for the church.

- *According to verses 7-11 What gifts were given to the church?*
- *What kind of grace is emphasized in verse 7?*
- *What gifts might be included in the phrase "He gave gifts to men?"*
- *What gifted men did God give the church for its early foundational stages and what were their responsibilities?*
- *What gifted men has God given to the church for its equipping and edification today?*

GOD'S PURPOSES FOR THE CHURCH

Now in verses 12-16 he highlights God's purposes or goals for the church.

- *According to verses 12-13 what are the specific purposes or goals of God's provision for the church?*

Equipping for service:

God has gifted the church both individually and corporately, "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service.*"

- ***Who are the "saints" mentioned here in verse 12?***
- ***What do you think it means to equip someone?***

The term *equip* is a rare medical word meaning "to complete," "to restore," or "to prepare." The term is used for the setting of bones. It emphasizes renewal or restoration.

- ***What do the following New Testament passages indicate regarding the usage of this term?***

Matthew 4:21

Hebrews 11:3-

Galatians 6:1-

2 Corinthians 13:11-

The usage of this term emphasizes a restoring or repairing, a preparing or shaping, or a bringing to completion. It really points out the path of progress to being fit or complete.

- ***What tools does the Lord provide us with in order to equip others?***
- ***What is the point of being equipped?***

Building up the Body:

God has not only gifted the church for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, but also "*for the building up of the body of Christ.*"

- ***What picture comes to your mind when you imagine the building up of the body?***

The image of a body builder is the image that usually comes to the mind when picturing the building up of the body. The Greek term used here literally refers to the building of a house, and was used figuratively of any kind of construction. Here Paul is specifically speaking of spiritual construction that is the spiritual edification and development of the church.

- ***How is the body of Christ built up?***

Acts 20:32-

1 Peter 2:2-

APPLICATION:

- *What role or responsibility do you have in equipping others?*
- *To what extent are you preparing yourself to minister to fellow believers?*