

Thursday, August 6, 2020 ▫ Read Ephesians 4:12–13

Questions from the Scripture text: Whom were the apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastor-teachers been given to equip (v12)? For what work? What were these gifts given also to build up? Who come to what unity by these works (v13)? To what knowledge do they come? To what kind of man? To what measure and stature?

Why must we have this thoroughly Scripture-founded, Scripture-formed, Scripture-filled, Scripture-facilitated ministry from v11?

Because we are in constant need of repair. That's what the word translated "equipping" (v12) really means: restoring again back to usefulness, like when the fishermen were repairing their nets and hooks.

The equipping ministry of the Word is like a soldier who keeps his body fit and meticulously maintains his weapons, because he's got a mission.

What is that mission? Ministry (service, v12—and, in this case, necessarily service in the truth) by which Christ builds up His body (v12). Elders' ministry in the Word, and our service to one another, aims especially at three things:

The unity of the faith (v13). Biblical unity is not peaceful interaction between those who disagree, but the reorientation of many different minds and values and preferences to the one mind and values and preferences of Christ. It is the unity of the faith. Unity that comes by passionate pursuit of agreement with Scripture, under the ministry of pastor-teachers upon whose ministries all the saints attend well so that they can reinforce it to one another.

A second thing that biblical ministry aims at is the knowledge of the Son of God (v13). Not merely "all the feels" about Jesus. It's Scripture-driven and theological. O, everything, *everything*, we learn of our Lord Jesus should and does inflame our hearts with passionate love to our glorious and dear Redeemer! But this is a love and a knowledge that is built brick by brick, sinew by sinew, by every new thing that we accurately and truly understand about the Lord Jesus. This is not a surprising response to the pastor-teachers' ministry in the Word of God, because our Lord Jesus says, "it is they [the Scriptures] that speak of Me."

A final thing that biblical ministry aims at is maturity ("a perfect man," v13). What is Christian maturity measured by? Christ (v13). How does one come by this maturity? Being filled with Christ (v13). Believers who want more of Jesus should be seeking their elders to pastor them more in the Word and to teach them more from the Word, then reinforcing that in which they are led and taught with one another. Here is a wonderful truth in this verse: this is Jesus's way not only of making us know Him more, but also of making us more like Him, by filling us with Himself!

So a biblical ministry is a Jesus ministry. And a Jesus ministry is: saints, who have been repaired/remedied from their own thoughts/values/preferences to be reoriented to those of Christ, by the ministry of pastor-teachers, now proceeding to reinforce one another in this reorientation. And Jesus Himself has been pleased to appoint this as the way by which we know Jesus more, become more like Jesus, and are even filled with Jesus. Praise Jesus!

What should pastor-teachers be doing? What will keep their congregations in good shape? Why is your own sermon-listening and Scripture meditation important to the building of the church? Why is it important for unity? What are some things that you have been learning about Jesus in the Bible recently? How have you reinforced it to others?

Suggested songs: ARP23B "The Lord's My Shepherd" or TPH23A "The Lord's My Shepherd"