

Last week we started a series from the book of Ephesians entitled, “Marks of a True Christian.” This is the second lesson in the series of four that I call “*Building Up The Body*.” We will begin with a quick review, and then move to some new material. We all need to know the difference between the real and the fake. In Christianity, we want the real thing, not the fake. We commented that Sitting in McDonald’s for a few hours won’t make you a hamburger and likewise sitting in church pew won’t make you a Christian. You must take some action. You don’t just talk the talk; you want to walk the walk.

We suggested that there are at least two approaches to the subject of who is a true Christian. The first we called the doctrinal approach, meaning that it is concerned with doctrines that embrace such matters as salvation, the church, etc. and the second approach is the practical approach. This approach deals with practical application. In Chapters 1-3 Paul deals with the doctrinal matters of the church and in Chapters 4-6 Paul deals with the practical application of Christianity. This is the area we are concentrating on today.

We began last week with Eph. 4:1-3. ***(Eph 4:1) I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***

God loves us and He calls us to be his children. This calling challenges us to live a life worthy of that calling. Paul sets forth some specific principles for the Christian.

- The Christian is to be humble, exhibiting lowliness of mind.
- The Christian is to exhibit gentleness. The world may view this as weakness, but God views it as strength.
- The Christian is to be patient. He is not to be one with a “short” temper.
- The church is to exhibit unity of the spirit; the bond of peace and we suggested that peace is the glue that keeps us together in the church.

Now we will take up some new concepts that build on the unity found in the first section. In the first few verses of Ephesians 4, there is a constant emphasis on unity through singularity—one Lord one Faith, one Baptism, etc. In the second section, there is emphasis on unity through diversity. We are all different with different capabilities, but when we perform our individual roles, we contribute to the unity of the church.

Now to our text for today. In this section, Paul talks about “*The Body of Christ*” and we as individual Christians make up the one body. ***Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*** We are all part of the body of Christ. The body is a key concept in Paul’s writings. He often likens the church to a body, which tells us a lot about the church.

In 1 Cor. 12, we learn about the variety of gifts given by the Holy Spirit to Christians of the early church. There Paul gives us explicit details on the one body with various members having different roles. ***1 Corinthians 12:12 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.*** Each of us working together build up the body of Christ. This thought is also found in ***Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*** In the body of Christ, we are all to be body builders.

V8 in our text quotes from Psalms 68 with a slight variation. Paul changed the last phrase from “*received gifts from men*” to “*gave gifts to men.*” ***Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.***

Psalms 68:18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; ...

The imagery is of a king who has gone to war and returned victorious. He parades through the streets with his prisoners behind him and he demands that the defeated king give him many gifts. However, in the NT Jesus won the victory over death and ascended back to the throne of heaven. Yet as King of kings and Lord of lords, instead

of demanding gifts, he gave gifts to man. There are specifically five groups of people mentioned in Eph 4 as recipients of the Lord's gifts.

(Eph. 4:11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: In 1 Cor. 12 and Romans 12, the gifts were miraculous gifts given by the Holy Spirit to men. Here the gifts are given by Jesus and these gifts were the selection of people to perform various ministries in the church. He gave some to be apostles, prophets, etc. (slide-emp) The objective of these ministries was to build up the body; i.e. (1) for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ.

- Apostles – men chosen by Jesus and were eyewitnesses to his resurrection. They had special inspiration and their authority was supreme and when they died, no one took their place.
- Prophets – inspired preachers who both preached and wrote God's word. Once the inspired word was written, there was no more need for prophets and they ceased to be.
- Evangelists – men like Philip (Acts 21:8) and Timothy (2 Tim 4:5) who were preachers of the word. These men helped spread the gospel to the world. Evangelist differed from the prophets in that they did not receive to word by inspiration, but rather had to learn it from those who were inspired.
- Pastors – shepherds, overseers of the flock i.e. elders. This is the only time the term "*pastor*" is found in the NT. These are men given the oversight of a local congregation.
- Teachers – some group teacher's with pastors but these are men who teach the gospel to others. Christianity has to be taught. People cannot obey what they do not know and once they obey, there continues the need to be taught.

In the original language, there is no comma after the word "saints" in v 12. We see that the purpose of these gifts was to train Christians "*for the work of ministering.*" Christians are saved to serve. An important role was to teach Christians how to serve in order to build up the church. That need to build up the body of Christ continues today.

Ephesians 4:13 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:

To pull vs 12-13 together, we learn that these gifts were to (1) build up the church for the perfecting of the saints. (2) They were to fulfill a purpose of edifying the body until we all reach unity in the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, thus attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. There are no apostles or prophets today for they have fulfilled their need; their work is done. But the needs for “*the perfecting of the saints and edifying of the body of Christ*” are still needed today. So today we still need their preaches, teachers and pastors to teach Christians the importance of building up the church. Christians must be taught the need to serve and as they serve, the church grows and the body of Christ is built up.

In the church, everyone must work at building up the body of Christ. If you buy a membership into a fitness center, they will have available a trainer that will coach and help you get into shape. They help build up your body by using different techniques. There are at least three ways that we as individual members can build up the body of Christ.

No. 1 we build up the body when we build each other up individually. When individuals are built up, to that end is the spiritual body built up. ***Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:***

No. 2 we build up the body when we build up the congregation. We build up the body of Christ when we help the local church to function properly. ***Acts 5:14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.***

The third way, we build up the body when we evangelize and bring in new members. Helping spread the gospel locally and ministering to the needs of others is building up the body of Christ. Notice the results of Philip’s preaching. ***Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***

Let’s conclude the lesson with some questions.

Let's all take stock for a moment and consider the question—are you contributing in any way to the growth and development of the church? Some people seem to think that the church exists to serve them. Yes, the church should meet our needs, but the words of Jesus still ring true, ***“the son of man came not to be served, but to serve.”*** I am not asking, *“Are the leaders of the church doing their jobs?”* I am asking, *“What are you doing to build up the body of Christ?”*

If you haven't been helping—it's time to start! I might refine the question a little....

What mundane things can you do to help individuals or the church? It doesn't have to be something great and glorious. It can be as simple as taking a cup of soup to someone who needs it, making a phone call, mowing someone's yard, listening to the needs of a friend.

But we might also ask the question What special talents do I have that I can offer to build up the body of Christ? God doesn't give us talents just for our own glory. If you have some great talent—thank God for it and put it to use in helping others. In doing so, you are helping to build up the body of Christ.

Are YOU a Christian – a true Christian? Invitation