

Building Up the Church

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[0 : 00] Good morning again. On Sunday evenings we have been in the book of Ephesians in our time of Bible study. And this morning we're going to be in Ephesians chapter number 4 and verses 11 through 15.

And we know how easy it is for us to grow discouraged, become discouraged, to need to be built up, especially as the Bible writes and as churches have life cycles and because the local church is made up of individuals, we know that we need to be able to work together.

And it's easy sometimes for the church to get sidetracked, to get splintered, sometimes over inconsequential matters. And I believe that's why Apostle Paul, when he was writing the letter to the Ephesian church, because he was wanting the Bible Christ to grow together, to be built up together, to serve together, and to get along together as they were doing so, we often need to be built up. When we go out to the workforce, when we go out just to the world around us, it's so easy for us to get down, to get discouraged because of all that's going on, sometimes financial, sometimes relationship, and don't listen to the news if you don't want to get discouraged because that is enough in and of itself to discourage us.

But as we're going to see this morning, God has given to the local church gifted believers, gifted leaders to encourage, to edify, to build up the local church, so that everyone, the local church, can accomplish the work of the ministry.

[1 : 51] So let's look this morning at our text in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11 up to verse 16. So this morning, beginning in verse 11, the Bible says, And he himself, God gave some to be apostles, some prophets.

In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul was listing a list of spiritual gifts, and here he kind of gives a commentary on gifted people that were given to the church, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work, or so the saints can do the work of the ministry, for the edifying, or building up of the body of Christ.

Purpose? Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the acknowledgement of the Son of God, to a perfect or a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but rather speaking the truth in love, that the body of Christ and the local church may grow up in all things into him, who is the head of Christ, and from whom the whole body, the invisible church, firstly, everyone who has trusted Christ as their Savior, from the whole body, from whom the whole body joined and knit together, by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working, by which every part doesn't share, causes growth of the body, for the edifying of itself in love.

And so as we see the Apostle Paul writing to these Ephesian believers, and for those of you who have been studying with us on Sunday evenings, have been realizing that the Apostle Paul's theme is love, is for the body of Christ, for believers to treat one another in love, and to serve one another in love, because we have all been bought by the blood of Christ, because we all belong to the same family, and God has shown his grace toward us, we should be showing grace toward others.

And we see this little word here, edification, for the edification of the saints, in verse number 12, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

[4 : 42] That's an important little word, edifying, for building up. The goal is to build up the body of Christ, and as we think about the local church, we are to be consistently and constantly encouraging one another to grow in Christ, and to be able to serve God together as a family.

The purpose of the gift of believers that he talks about in verse number 11 is to equip the believers, that's all of us together, for the work of the ministry, so as to give everyone within the local church

the stability, doctrinally, and practically, and in turn, so that everyone, that everything we do, everything we do, leads to mutual edification.

We are to be mutually edifying. We are to be mutually building one another up in the body of Christ. So we always think about, what am I doing?

What am I saying? Is it going to build up someone, or is it going to tear them down? And Paul talks about speaking the truth in love a little bit later, and if we think about it, before we act, or before we speak, and I know that we're all guilty of this at times, we just speak our mind, and sometimes it's a little bit too harsh, sometimes it's a little bit too abrupt, and we don't stop and think, and sometimes I don't stop and think, will this, it may be true, but maybe the way it's said won't build someone up, because it may be not said in love, maybe it's said out of frustration, and so we have to be careful that what we do, we do in order to build up the body of Christ.

So church leaders, pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, anyone that God has given, we have the list that we have here, some apostles, prophets, apostles by the way, there were 12 apostles that were literally chosen by Jesus, and then we have Paul, who was, who replaced Judas, and that was chosen by, by the church, or by the leaders, excuse me, and then there were other, who had the gift of apostleship, in the early church, who weren't part of the 12, literally all apostles lives, is someone who declares, truth, or speaks, to the authority, of God, and then there were prophets, prophets.

[7 : 25] Now not every prophet in scripture, was a foreteller, meaning, there were many prophets, the Old Testament, that God used, to speak about that, which was to come, but there were other, who had others, who had the gift of prophecy, who simply, spoke for God, and in the early portion, of the New Testament, when the Bible was not completed yet, God was still speaking, to his people, and so, that was what he has given, these foundational gifts, then some evangelists, which is exactly what it says, to spread the gospel, some individuals, have been uniquely gifted, to be able to, have a profound effect, when they share the gospel, that's, that's just who they are, that's what they do, they've been gifted by God, to evangelize, and then some, pastors and teachers, because of the, the construction, of the Greek language, that would be one person, pastor, and teacher, and why, for the equivalent of the saints, for the work, of the ministry, to minister the work of God, to others, so that, in turn, they can grow, and get activated, and involved, in serving others, ready to be involved, in ministering to others, we see that in 2 Timothy, 2, 2, where,

Paul tells Timothy, and you need to choose others, so that, they too, can continue on, what I have entrusted, to you, and so Timothy, was to choose others, to choose others, that could be entrusted, the ministry of the gospel, the ministry of the word, so they too, could, share, and spread the work, with the rest, the body of Christ, so what's the goal, of all this, building up, or, it's to the edifying, of the body of Christ, we see that, in verse number 16, so, this shows, this tells us, that every believer, in the body of Christ, is to have ministry, or to perform, ministry, when all ministry is, it's serving others, ministry is helping others, ministry is serving, so God has given, gifted leaders, to, through the word, and through practical means, to help, the local church, to grow in the word, to grow in love, to be more like Christ, so that everyone, within the local church, could be doing, the work of the ministry, so according to the New Testament, the church doesn't, choose, a pastor in pain, to do the work,

God chooses, God has given, gifted leaders, so the gifted leaders, can, build up, and teach, and train, the church, to do the work, of the ministry, and so we do it, all together, and so, that's what the apostle Paul, is talking about here, as he is, showing in this letter, to the Ephesians, all saints, are gifted, not a single one of us, can say, well pastor, I don't know that I can do that, because I'm just, I'm just not that gifted, if you trusted Christ, as your savior, and you have the Holy Spirit, living in you, I'm here to tell you, that you're gifted, you have been gifted, by the Holy Spirit, it might be a gift of service, it might be a gift of speaking, it might be, a gift of exhortation, it might be a gift of mercy, it might be, a gift of administration, but whatever it is, we have been gifted, to serve, and to use, that gift, in the body of Christ, so we need everyone, now someone, some of you may think, well you know what, not every portion of our body, is as important, than the other, well I don't know, let me see, which portion of your body, would you like us to amputate, or take out, right, and so the point is, not a single one of us, is any less important, than any other member, of the body of Christ, so the church, is the body of Christ, what can we do, to build out the church, so for the next few moments, we're going to look, in these few verses, to see, how we can work together, to build out the church, the first thing, that we can do, is put away, our differences, now the reality is, you put two people, in a room, and you're going to have, two different sets of icons, and sometimes, they will be

conflicting, but as long as, it's not things that are, important life and death stuff, you know we just have to, as a pastor, that I served on here, back in the early 80's, you say you know what, we just have to agree to disagree, and still love one another, how many times, do you always agree, with even your family, that doesn't always happen, but we know, that we've agreed to love, one another, no matter what, so let's take a look, at verse number 13, so Paul says, we've been given, these gifted leaders, and to edify, the body of Christ, for how long, well till we all come, to the unity of faith, till we all realize, we're pulling on the same, we're pulling the same wagon, we're one team, we're pulling together, in the same direction, for one purpose, to show, and to make disciples, share the gospel, and to be more Christ-like, more like Jesus, every single day, unity, is vital, for a church to thrive, unity of purpose, is so vital, for a church, to be able, to not only grow, numerically, but to grow spiritually, to grow relationally, now, sometimes, we confuse, unity, with, sameness, unity, doesn't mean, we're all the same, there is diversity, in the body of Christ, there's a diversity, of ideas, there's a diversity, of ethnicity, there's a diversity, of backgrounds, there is so much, diversity, in the body of Christ, in fact, go back to the, early New Testament, there were masters, and slaves, in the same, in the same, church gathering, they were creditors, and debtors, so, we're all together, in this, those in the other room,

Acts chapter one, verse four, excuse me, verse 14, they were all, in one accord, like it says, in Acts, Acts chapter two, verse one, everyone there, on the day of Pentecost, as they were filled, with the Holy Spirit, they were in, one, accord, so they were, in unity, they had the same purpose, all of a sudden, they realized, that we now have, the same Holy Spirit, we have the same power, and we have the same purpose, and we're working, together, we see that, power flows, through the United Church, power flows, it's just like, when you take, water through a hose, if you poke, a whole lot of holes, in a hose, not as much, of the volume, is going to come out, the other end, and so there will not be, as much pressure, in the hose, there will not be, as much power, because it's leaking, and what happens, when our church, is not unified, in purpose, and we're all, going at cross purposes, what we're doing, is we're kind of, sapping, the strength, and the power, from, what we're doing, so, power flows, through, a, united church, so, what enables us, to get along, with people, who are, a little bit, different from us, called grace, because grace, allows God, to forgive us, grace, allows, God, to, put up with us, if you will, because God, has shown his grace, to us, God, has provided for us, what we can never do, on our own, what enables us, to forgive someone, power of God, and, grace, because we have been, so gifted by grace, we can then, share that grace, with others, and forgive, and serve, and share, together, so, first of all, we need to be, unified together, God has given, these gifted individuals, to the local church, so that we can all, be unified, till we all, come, verse 13, to the unity, the faith, and to the knowledge, of the son of God, so first of all, put away our differences, when it, as it relates to, things that, are not, we have cardinal doctrines, you know, someone may say, well, you know, it's okay for me, to have a different belief, when it comes to, who Jesus is, I don't think so, because the Bible, is very clear, of who Jesus is, there were false teachers, that were creeping into, the local church, that were saying,

[16:19] Jesus didn't have a body, or Jesus wasn't, the son of God, you know, those are differences, that we cannot, put up with, the apostle Paul, are very, very clear on that, we cannot, put up with, disagreeing, on things, that are so important, that they are the foundation, of Christianity, but there are other things, that, we can still get along, and still have, a difference, so, put away our differences, the second thing, that we can do, to, build out the church, is, not focus on, who's in charge, not focus on, anything else, but focus on Jesus, you see, there are, there are often times, when, we may focus on, certain things, well, we're, we're focused on, do we do this, in a lot of churches, it's the color of the carpet, we don't have the carpet in here, so we don't have to worry about that, but, then people, begin to focus on things, that are not that important, but what, if we, what if we begin to focus, on Jesus, verse 13, as we just, read, till we all come, with the unity of faith, and to knowledge of whom, the son of God, to a perfect man, or to a, mature, believer, and to the measure, of the stature, of the fullness, of,

Christ, here's the thing, people that fail us, Christ, never fails, if we keep our eyes, on Jesus, remember, building up the church, what if, someone, else, in the body of Christ, says, something to you, that, may have hurt, what are we, what are we, initially prone to do, prone to react, sometimes we react in common, then we have, a relationship, fracture, but, what if, now we can't help, our first response, our first response is, maybe to be hurt, but what if we then, rather than focus, on that individual, and what they did to us, what would we then, turn our attention to Jesus, Jesus, you love

me, you, have promised, never to leave me, never to forsake me, or, I will do, by your grace, whatever, whatever it takes, to repair this relationship, or what if that relationship, cannot be repaired, what if the other person, refuses, if we keep our focus, on Jesus, shouldn't that be enough, and I'll give you this, it hurts, but if we think about, if we keep our focus, on Christ, we can accomplish, and we can, go with, and with so many more things, if we keep our eyes, on him, this is really, the true secret, of consistent,

Christian, living, is focusing on Jesus, remember Peter, when he got out of the boat, to walk to Jesus, and things got a little bit, a little bit scary, a little bit sketchy, with the waves, and the wind, and all of this, what, led to Peter, losing his footing, and beginning to sink, he took his eyes, off of Jesus, and I think we may, be able to say, the same thing happens, to a local church, when we take our eyes, off of Jesus, and we put them on people, we put them on programs, or we put them on, whatever, we begin to lose our footing, we begin to be on shaky ground, and all of a sudden, we begin to be sinking, we lose our power, we lose our strength, we lose our unity, and then that's when, bad things begin to happen, then we need to do, focus back in Christ, and let him, do what, he, wants us to do, well there are, I believe, three life changing words, that are given to us, in the book of Hebrews, here it is,

Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 2, what are those three words, come on, tell them this morning, looking unto Jesus, Jesus, the writer of the Hebrews, of the book of Hebrews, I believe, understood, the importance, of, keeping, our eyes, on, Christ, and as we look at, we just came off of, in Hebrews 11, this, great call of faith, all of these, people who had so much faith, in Christ, it didn't matter, that they were being, tortured, that they were being, cut in half, that they were being, drawn apart, because of their faith, they chose, to continue to follow, him, because of, they were looking, upon Jesus, not upon their circumstances, and not focusing, on the pain, but focusing, upon him, these words, I believe, eliminate, all excuses, for failure, we can say, well, so and so, well, that doesn't matter, about so and so, what matters is, what would Christ, want us to do, keep our eyes, on him, well, you know what,

I can't, well, what's the reality, if we, through the power, of the Holy Spirit, look at Jesus, and trust him, for the power, and the strength, to give, the power, and the strength, to unify together, and work together, then, we have no excuse, for not being able, to accomplish, nothing, because, it's really, God doing, what he wants, through, us, and also, go hiding behind, hypocrites, aloud, why do so many people, what's the excuse, so many people have, for not serving Jesus, oh, all those hypocrites, so, you know, I don't know about, that Christianity stuff, because, all those hypocrites, there, well, the reality is, we're all hypocrites, about something, at some time, one or another, the only perfect, person, who ever, walked the face, of the earth, was Jesus Christ, and so, if we keep, our eyes on Jesus, we're able to realize, that he empowers us, and, even though, we are not perfect, we follow someone, who is, and his Holy Spirit, is able to, build us up, help us to grow, even more, like him,

[22 : 43] Christ is perfect, one needs us, on the higher ground, our relationship, with Christ, literally, is revealed, in how we live, you want to know, if someone follows Jesus, follow them, for a week, and listen to them, for a week, and really, I think, it was an indication, of how closely, we follow Jesus, remember, we're not perfect, every moment, of every day, or, there are some moments, in every day, where we're, maybe, serving ourselves, and so we, we go in and out, of serving Christ, and serving ourselves, the closer we are, to Christ, I believe, the more identified, we will be with him, and the more closely, we will be, united with him, and we'll be serving him, you know, so, he is, the one, so keep our eyes, upon Jesus, the writer, Hebrews said, looking unto Jesus, when things, start falling apart, around us, what's the remedy, look to Jesus, trust him, and when we're, building each other up, look to Jesus, and don't focus, on someone else, don't focus on, that other person, who may not be doing, they may not be, pulling their, pulling their, part of the load, or, they may not be, doing whatever it is, that we feel, they should be doing, needed, with Jesus, looking unto Jesus, the second thing is, we see, that the apostle Paul, is teaching it, getting back, to, the basics,

I may have this wrong, but I believe, it was Vince Lombardi, the famous coach, football coach, who, wanted to, get his team, to gel together, and to win, football games, and he brought them, back to basics, as a matter of fact, so basic, it was said, that during one of, one of their, their team trainings, he had a football, in his hand, and he said, gentlemen, this is a football, that's basic, right, well, there are, I believe, reasons why, the apostle Paul, is saying, in verse number 14, he says, that we

should, no longer be children, tossed to and fro, carried about, with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness, of deceitful plotting, here's the thing, there are many efforts, to build up a church, that's plowndering, there are a lot of, other ideas, floating around, that, are just, simply, not, biblical, and so,

I think what Paul is saying is, as we grow in Christ, as we learn, the fundamentals of the faith, as we learn, more about, who Jesus is, we will be, rooted, and grounded, in the law, as the apostle Paul, wrote somewhere else, that we will be, rooted, and grounded, in law, and so that we, will be, closer to Christ, but we'll also, know what we believe, and the point is, we need to know, what we believe, and why we believe, that's, where so many, young people, go astray, in colleges, and universities, because, maybe, atheistic, or, unbelieving, professors, begin to, cut down, or chip away, at their faith, and they say, we will be, rational, thinking, adults, like you, wouldn't believe, in nonsense, like, what, this taught, in churches, all across the country, and so, there are many, young people, who don't know, why they believe, that Jesus is God, they don't know, why they believe, that God created, everything, and so, if we're rooted, and grounded, in truth, and we know, what the Bible teaches, we know why, the Bible teaches it, which is, one of the reasons, why, we have Sunday school, one of the reasons, why, we get together, for Bible study, on Sunday evenings, because there's only, so much, that can be taught, in 20, 25 minutes, on a Sunday morning, where, when we come together, we can ask questions, we can, join together, and grow, and go deeper, in the Lord, I believe, that's when we are, able to, to be rooted, and to be grounded, in the Lord God, so please, avail yourself, for these, opportunities, that we have provided, that we are providing, to grow, when you get home, study, God's word, look at God's word, don't let, don't let your Bibles, collect dust, throughout the week, open them, read them, pray, back to God, what we need, in his word, that's how we, that's how we grow, so, we must build, on sound, doctrine, not on supposed, new revelations, all we need to do, is, go to the bookstore, and find some books, that supposedly, have some, brand new revelation, from God, the reality is, I believe, God has revealed, to us, through his, completed scripture, what he wants us, to know, should hear an amen, and so, someone might, we might be able, to encourage one another, we might be able, to build each other up, but for us to say,

God has, shown me, in a dream, some new, doctrine, by, supernatural revelation, and if it contradicts, God's, completed scripture, what are we to say, I don't believe, we are to test, the spirits, we are to test, what people say, with what, not, oh that sounds, that sounds really cool, that, and that what, often times, people get in trouble, when they say, God, that makes sense, what are the things, what, how deep, are the things of God, so deep, that there are a lot of things, that God has either taught us, or, that are true, that, our human minds, could never comprehend, and that's where Satan, comes in, he may, he takes truth, he twists it, just a bit, to make it make sense, to the natural mind, that's why, many of the cults, will come in, and say, let us explain, to you, what the Bible, really means, and then, it will make sense, to the natural mind, and it will pervert, and twist, the word of God, so that it makes sense, in relation to, the, the, the pervasive, worldview, at the time, so what we say, is, well, let me check, the Bible, let me check, and see what,

[30 : 02] God says, about it, and so Paul says, the more we grow, the deeper we grow, in knowing God's word, we won't be, tossed around like children, believing anything, and everything, tossed to and fro, carried about, I like the imagery, that he gives us, tossed about, with every wind, of doctrine, no new wind blows, and that's what, people believe, a few years ago, it was, a mid, a mid, mid trip rapture, and just, people come up, with different things, all the time, and say, well, no, Jesus is going to come back, and Jesus is going to come back, and, every wind of doctrine, by the trickery, of, men, see the winds, of false doctrine, every blow, if we're not careful, and here's where, we really need to be careful, here's what a lot of people do, they turn on the radio, and they listen to, preaching on the radio, but you have to be careful, who are you listening to, because there's so many things, on the radio, that I believe, are false doctrine, or, they'll turn on the TV, and they'll have, whatever,

TV station going, and cable, and it'll be, who knows who, that is teaching, the flavor of the mind, so, we have to be careful, that we don't, believe it, people will say, well, you don't know the internet, so it must be, true, right, well, some preacher, had a Bible open, and he said it, so it must be, true, right, not necessarily, that's where we, we need to go back, to the word of God, to make sure, we understand, what, is, true, cunning, counterfeit characters, always waiting, to deceive, so how can we, counter, false doctrine, and build up the church, verse 15, we can speak, the truth, is, love, stick

with the truth, going back to basics, God, is, love, Jesus, is, God, Jesus died on the cross, in our place, the blood of Christ, is, what it takes, to be saved, all, we call upon the name of the Lord, shall, be, saved, right, basic, basic, scriptural,

God, is, we have to make sure, we understand, and when we speak with others, within the body of Christ, we do it, we don't do it, out spite, we don't, just simply do it, out of a reaction, verse 15, but, speaking the truth, in love, may grow up, in all things, into him, who is the head, Christ, so as we, build one another up, as we, focus on Jesus, and we get back, to basics, truth, we speak, in love, see, truth and love, and dynamic, combination, if we're speaking, truth, we have, a bedrock foundation, but if we speak it, also, in love, then we have, something that the, spirit can truly use, and apply it, to another person's, life, the gospel, is true, we need to, in love, speak the gospel, we also need to, if someone needs, correcting, we speak the truth, in love, if someone needs, encouraging, we can speak, the truth, in love, as well, love, that it finds, love, yields, if we, just remember, that everything, we do, needs to be done, in love, much of the theme, of the deeds, is, because this is what,

God has done for us, we in turn, should live, in such a way, that we, administer that same love, we administer that same grace, of the believers, in the body of Christ, and in so doing, we will get along, and we will, help each other, to the world, so in conclusion, the goal, of a local church, should be, the mutual education, of its members, it's one of the goals, that we, mutually, edify, build, each other up, you build me up, I build you up, it's part of the one another's, we love one another, we edify, we build up, one another, we serve, one another, this is what we do, in the local church, and the church, we have to remember this, the church is an, organ, inside, yes the church, also, for legal purposes, of a state, is an organization, but at its core, the church is an organization, meaning it's a living thing, it's not an institution, it's a living thing, we are the body, of, Christ, all grow, as each grows, think about that, we dislink, we all grow, as each grows, the church grows, spiritually, the church grows in America, as we, each, grow, and then, edifying, building up the local church, ultimately, I believe, results, in evangelizing, because when we're built up, when we're encouraged, when we're growing, we are going to be able, to fulfill, the great commission, to be able, to go out, because when we come back, we learn, we love, we build each other up, encourage one another, this is a safe place, so that we can be, built up, and built up, to go back out, and carry on, the work of the ministry, and, make disciples, all over, everywhere, so, building up the church,

[36 : 32] God has given, gifted people, gifted individuals, to the local church, to equip the saints, to do the work of the ministry, so that we can, build each other up, mutually, edify one another, until we want it, all of them together, and grow, into a pure, people, a pure, body, Christ, that Jesus, has been, this morning, as we close, think about that, think about, how will you, be a blessing, to someone, this week, how will you, be able to be, an encouragement, to somebody else, within this body, and beyond, this week, it might be, sending a card, a note of appreciation, if you know, an encouragement, sending an encouraging, email, get on the phone, call them, invite them out, for coffee, or for, whatever, whatever it is, that you prefer, and just say,

I appreciate you, and, find someone, maybe who, is a younger believer, and say, let's get together, and let's study, out more together, and let's, maybe we can, decide, to someone else, to do what we can do, to be a blessing, to someone else, let's pray, Father, we thank you, that you have, made provision, for us to grow, individually, and for us, to grow together, or help us, to be able to, to understand, the basics, truth, that you've provided us, that we may be able, to speak it, in love, and Lord, we thank you, for what you're going to do, through our body, in our body, as we, make a difference, in the lives, of others, this week, of greatness, in Jesus name, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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