

Notes: *Our Declaration of Dependence* (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Intro: In various ways, Paul is insisting throughout this letter that while God saves individuals through personal faith in Jesus Christ, he does not save individuals in isolation from other believers who make up his body. Personal faith is not a declaration of independence. It is a declaration of dependence on the community life of the body of Christ. Here we call attention to three ministries of the body which our spiritual lives are dependent upon.

#1: Dependence on the ministry of the Word. Christ gave to the church the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers (each office teaches the Word). It's as if Paul said that the ministry of God's Word is basic to the life of Christ's body. When the Word is preached faithfully the living voice of Jesus Christ is heard through the ministry of the Spirit (2:17; Rom. 10:4). The result? The ministry of the Word "equips" the saints for the work of ministry. The Greek verb for "to equip" was used in the medical world of antiquity for restoring or binding up broken limbs. In Matthew's gospel, it is used to describe the fishermen-disciples when they are getting their nets ready—cleaned and repaired—to catch fish. The "equipping" ministry of the Word shows us how: *The ministry of God's Word brings spiritual healing*. It restores lives to spiritual health and strength. Those who are healed by it in turn become healers to others. They bind up and perfect Christ's body by their useful service. *The ministry of God's Word creates a spiritual hospital*. The community of Jesus Christ where the Word is expounded in the power of the Spirit becomes a spiritual clinic for the sick and a gymnasium to build up spiritual strength and stamina. The goal of preaching and teaching is not merely education but transformation. It informs the mind in order to cleanse the affections, mold the will, and sanctify the whole person (Joh 17:17). Many of the Ephesians had known this ministry though Paul who had been their apostle, pastor, and teacher for more than two years. When opposition to this teaching arose in the local synagogue, he rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus and taught their daily (Acts 19:9-10). Interestingly, one family of Greek manuscripts says Paul taught "from the fifth hour to the tenth" or from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (see note in the ESV). This may be an explanatory note later inserted by a scribe but one reflecting an accurate tradition. In the 1st C. these were the "siesta" hours when little work was done. Thus in this way, Paul taught the Scriptures so that all the residents of Asia heard the Word of God. This may sound excessive to some, but church history shows that when God revives hearts he also gives them a healthy hunger for his Word (1 Pet 2:2). In chapter 6, Paul pictures the Christian as a soldier who must protect himself with the "full armor of God." But here we see the church is the hospital where soldiers of the Cross may receive healing to continue the good fight of faith.

#2: Dependence on the ministry of the saints. "gave...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." The first phrase states the purpose of the ministry of the Word—to equip the saints. The second phrase states the consequence of equipping the saints—the work of ministry. The third phrase states the overall result of the ministry of Word and saints—the body of Christ is built up. Every member ministry in the body of Christ is the NT ideal. All the saints have inherited Christ's riches (1:3-19). Each saint has received a gift for service (4:7; 1 Cor. 12:7). The whole body grows up into Christ "when each part is working properly" (vs. 16). *The purposes of every member ministry?* Two are given in vs. 13. First is unity in the faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. How we must be grounded in the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and the knowledge of all the riches Christ purchased for us by his blood (cf. Eph 1). Without this knowledge we remain spiritual children.

In danger of being blown by every wind of doctrine and deception. Sound doctrine promotes church unity by creating spiritual adults who possess discernment, sound judgment, and the ability to bear with their brothers and sisters with all humility, gentleness, and patience (4:2). God's truth recalibrates our minds and wills. We follow a Christ not created by our own imaginations (idolatry) but revealed by God. Second purpose: maturity. *The attitudes necessary for every member ministry?* Not despising other's gifts. Not neglecting our own.

#3: Dependence on the ministry of our Savior. Each believer is gifted differently. All believers must depend on the strength and sufficiency of our Savior. In the final two verses we see: *Must grow into the glory of Christ.* As each does its work, the church like a flower made up of roots, stem, branches, and leaves produces a flower. We grow and flower into the glory of Christ. *Must grow by the grace of Christ.* Each part of the body must work properly. Each part may work only as it is equipped by the head which is Christ. Why? Because God involves us in *his* work which only he can perform! Oswald Chambers: "God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power or the abandonment of reliance on it." Isaiah 41:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Eph 3:19.