

Marks of a Healthy Church

Ephesians 4: 11-16

In the preceding verses of chapter four, Paul has spoken about the unity that is necessary within the body of Christ in order for the church to be effective in daily life and service unto the Lord. Within this necessary unity, there is also beneficial diversity. Each believer is gifted in unique and special ways according to the sovereign plan of God. As the body of Christ comes to together in unity, her diversity enables fulfillment of the tasks individual congregations are called to perform. Such unified diversity seems like a paradox, but in reality, it is a thing of beauty.

In our text today, Paul continues to deal with this matter of unified diversity. It is essential in ministry, and apart from it, local churches will suffer from the body being unhealthy. Healthy churches must strive to promote unity and diversity at the same time. As we examine the [essential aspects](#) within the church, I want to consider the: [Marks of a Healthy Church](#).

I. The Ministry of the Church (11-12) – Paul spoke of the gracious provision of our Lord in equipping the church for ministry and providing for her spiritual health and prosperity. Consider:

A. The Leadership (11) – [And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.](#) As the Lord sovereignly designed the church, He provided leaders with various gifts to meet the variety of needs she faced. There is much we could discuss in this verse, but we lack the time to deal with it in a sufficient manner. For this study, suffice it to say that the Lord has provided those in positions of leadership to meet the needs of the church.

B. The Labor (12) – [For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.](#) Paul goes on to reveal the expectations for such unique and varied giftedness among the church. These individual gifts are provided for:

- **Perfecting of the Saints** – This has the idea of preparation of the saints. God uses various spiritual gifts within the leadership to prepare and equip the believers to serve within the church. Many churches have the idea that ministry is reserved solely for paid staff. That is certainly not biblical, but it isn't the church's fault entirely. Men of God are called to prepare those within the church to be used of God. We are called to make disciples who make disciples.
- **Work of Ministry** – Those in leadership are expected to prepare believers to carry out the work of ministry. The responsibility of laboring in the harvest is to be shared by all who make up

the body of Christ. If you are saved by grace, part of the church, you are expected to be engaged in the ministry efforts of the church. As we will discover, there is a work for all to perform.

➤ **Edifying of the Body of Christ** – The church is expected to encourage and support those within the body. She is responsible for her continued growth and prosperity. Granted, the Lord will provide the resources and abilities we need, but we are expected to engage in the work of building up the church and pursuing her continued growth!

II. The Maturity of the Church (13-15) – Here we find the purpose behind such collective efforts. As the church is equipped, maturing in the faith, and fulfilling her ministry, it affects the body as a whole. Notice:

A. Her Conformity (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.* This should be the goal of every pastor and every New Testament church. Paul speaks in essence of our sanctification, our conformity to the image of Christ. The church cannot rest until we all stand united in the faith, possessing an intimate knowledge of Christ, being mature in Him, and abiding in the fullness of His grace.

- We are currently making progress, but this is a never-ending process. There is always room for continued spiritual growth, and the need to disciple others in the faith.

B. Her Stability (14) – *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Paul was well aware of the relentless attacks upon the church and the dangers they presented. The believer is responsible to be settled in the faith – knowing what they believe and why they believe it. Hearing a message once in a while would not suffice. Pastors and evangelists could not be content to simply proclaim the truth they had embraced, but ensure the body embraced and understood those truths as well. The church was responsible to equip and train its members in sound, biblical doctrine.

- The winds of heresy and false doctrine continue to blow. The enemy seeks to infiltrate and corrupt every Bible believing church. We must be settled in the faith, and certain of doctrinal truth. Our world is filled with those who seek to present an alternative to the Gospel. Individually and corporately, we must be settled on the Word, and stand firmly upon it! Congregations divided on doctrine are easy targets for attack and defeat.

C. Her Fidelity (15) – *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.* Paul urged the Ephesian church to remain committed to the Gospel, willing to proclaim the truth in love. They were to stand upon the Word, in every area of life. They were not expected to compromise the truth, but always act with grace and compassion. Such commitment to sound doctrine would serve to mature them in the faith.

- We too must be united in sharing the truth. We live in a culture that denies the existence of absolute truth. They refuse to embrace anything that isn't consistent with their way of life. Those who stand upon the Word of God are often viewed as hostile and uneducated. The pressure to conform to the ideas and philosophies of the modern culture will continue to increase. We must remain sincere in the faith and committed to truth. As we share truth in a world that doesn't embrace genuine truth, we must do so with love and grace. An arrogant, condescending attitude will not reach anyone, but consistent truth, spoken in love can!

III. The Harmony within the Church (16) – *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.* Finally, Paul spoke of the necessity and benefit of unity among the church. United we can prosper; divided we will fall. Consider:

A. The Contribution – *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.* Paul paints a beautiful picture of unity within the church. The whole body comes together, fitly joined according to God's divine plan. Each part *supplies* or contributes to the work of ministry. Every member is present, in their place, contributing the individual gifts they have received. There is nothing lacking within the body. Every area of service has those who are gifted in that particular area, and they contribute the gifts and abilities they possess. The body is complete, and each member of the body helps ensure the health and prosperity of the body as a whole.

- God has gifted the body to fulfill her calling. If each member will share their gifts for the good of the body, and the work of the ministry, we can be successful in completing our mission.

B. The Infusion – *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.* Paul revealed our unity and individual contributions were dependent upon the working of the Lord through us. Just as the hand does not work independently from the arm, we cannot prosper in ministry apart from the working of the Spirit within us. As the Spirit works within us, developing our specific gifts, we share our gifts along with others, and the body functions as it should.

C. The Edification (16) – From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, **maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love**. As we labor together, each contributing for the good of the entire body, the body, as a whole, increases and is strengthened. Paul knew outside sources could aid and affect the contributions of each member for the good of the body, but the health of the body rested primarily in the contribution of its members.

- I know that ultimately, we are dependent upon the Lord for the grace and strength we need, but the health of this local body depends primarily upon the commitment of its members. Our contributions, or lack thereof, have a direct impact on the body. When we function as we should, the entire body benefits. We have the ability, through the working of the Spirit, to encourage and strengthen this local body. I want to contribute all I can to nurture and strengthen the congregation I am called to serve. It takes all of us working together, but we can grow together for our good and God's glory!

Conclusion: If you are saved by grace, you are gifted to serve within the body of Christ. All gifts are not the same, but all complement each other, and are necessary for a healthy body. Our individual spiritual condition affects the overall health of the church.

Are you aware of your spiritual gifts? Are you committed to using those to edify the church and reach those who have yet to be saved? Are you growing in your faith, and in turn, strengthening the church as a whole? If there are needs in your life, seek the Lord for strength and guidance. It has been said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The church is only as strong spiritually as those who make it up. We must be close to the Lord, standing together in unity to be effective in ministry.

If you are yet unsaved, respond to the call for salvation. Come to the Lord in faith and repentance, and be saved today!