

EDIFICATION WORK OF THE CHURCH

Eph.4:8-16

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The church, in both the universal and the local sense, is the result of God's eternal purpose, the purpose of the ages, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, made known by the preaching of the gospel of Christ, revealed to and preached by the Apostles of Jesus Christ, according to Eph.3:1-12, where the Apostle Paul affirmed:
 - a. That God by the Holy Spirit had now revealed to him and the rest of the apostles of Christ the mystery, which before, or in the preceding ages, had not been made known to the sons of men, that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.
 - b. That through his inspired preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles, he, by the grace of God, was to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from all ages had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.
 - c. That this was to the intent that now, in order that now, to the end that, or denoting the purpose or the result that now, also unto the principalities and powers (angelic beings, or spiritual potentates, or the rulers and authorities) in heaven might be known by the church the manifold (much, diverse) wisdom of God.
 - d. That this manifold wisdom of God made known to all men and to the rulers and authorities in heaven was "according to the eternal purpose which he (God) purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."
2. While the term "church" is used in the N.T. in both the universal and the local sense:
 - a. The church in its universal sense is only a spiritual relationship and not an organization with an earthly headquarters, or work, or specific mission assigned.
 - b. The church in its local sense is not only a spiritual relationship but an organic body, or an organization:

- (1) With elders, deacons and saints making up its membership, Phil.1:1; Ac.14:21-23.
 - (2) With a divinely ordained work or mission to fulfill.
3. Moreover, local churches were the medium through which the work of the church was done in N.T. times; so it is still the medium through which it is to be done today!
4. In this lesson we are interested only in the edification work of the church, which we shall develop by a series of questions.

II. DISCUSSION

A. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WORK?

1. By work we mean work or employment in the spiritual sense in the spiritual realm, working the works of God; such as:
 - a. Jno.6:29, "...This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."
 - b. Ac.13:2, "...Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."
 - c. Phil.2:12, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
 - d. Phil.2:30, of Epaphroditus, Paul said, "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."
 - e. Col.1:10, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleading, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."
 - f. This leads us to our next question –

B. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EDIFICATION?

1. As a noun it denotes the act of building; used figuratively in the N.T. in the sense of edification, to promotion of spiritual growth (lit. the things of building up). – Vine, II, 17,18.
2. As a verb, usually signifies to build, whether literally, or figuratively; is used metaphorically, in the sense of edifying, promoting the spiritual growth and development of the character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting such spiritual progress as the result of patient labor. – Vine, II, 18.

3. We are discussing educating, instructing, training spiritually – resulting in spiritual growth.

C. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE EDIFICATION WORK OF THE CHURCH?

1. By “the church” we mean the local church, the local body of baptized believers who have joined themselves together for the work and worship ordained by God; such as referred to in Ac.9:26-28; 11:22-26; 14:21-23; Phil.1:1.
2. By “the edification work of the church,” we mean the work of edification, building up, educating, instructing, training, promoting the spiritual growth, spiritual development, and spiritual progress of the members of the local church in the faith of Jesus Christ.

D. WHAT DOES EPH.4:8-16 DECLARE OR REQUIRE CONCERNING THE EDIFICATION WORK OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?

1. That Jesus Christ set apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (elders, bishops), and teachers in the church for the express purpose of perfecting, fitting, or equipping (implying a process leading to consummation); that is, this was done with a view to fully preparing the members of the church in order that they could perform the work of edification, Vv.8-12.
2. That the local church is to be a self-edifying body of saints, V.16.

E. WHO IS HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WORK OF EDIFICATION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH?

1. Without a doubt, its members are, as Eph.4:8-16 teach.
2. Other passages attest, Rom.14:19; 1Th.5:11; Ac.20:28-32; 1Pet.5:2; 2Tim.2:15; 2Pet.1:5-11.

F. WHY IS THE EDIFICATION WORK OF THE CHURCH IMPORTANT?

1. First of all, because the Lord commanded it!

2. Because all things done in the work of the church are to be done unto edification, 1Cor.14:26.
3. Because even the spiritual gifts, when in force in the early church, including speaking in tongues, were to be utilized only when and if they edified the church when assembled.
 - a. 1Cor.12:7, speaking of the diversities of spiritual gifts, says they were “given to every man to *profit withal*.” (KJV).
 - b. Thayer, 597: “**Profit**,” “with a reference to the subject, to bear together or at the same time;...to collect or contribute in order to help, hence to help, be profitable” – “to profit withal”
 - c. Thayer, 30: “**Withal**,” “together with; at the same time.”
 - d. Williams translation: “To each of us is given a special illumination for the common good.”
 - e. They were designed to be utilized in the assembly of the saints for the advantage or profit or the edification of the whole church; any other use therein was forbidden. – not for private use or profit or benefit, etc.
 - f. The following passages in 1Cor.14 attest: Vv.5,6,12,18,19,26
 - g. The importance of the edification work of the church is hereby obvious!
3. Because of the soul-damaging effect upon those who fail to be edified, 1Cor.3:1-3; 2Cor.13:5; Heb.2:1-3; 3:12; 5:11-14.
4. Because if all members of the local church were as some members are, the doors to the meeting house would never be opened except sometimes on Sunday mornings; for no one would ever be present at any other time to edify or to be edified! Think of the dire spiritual consequences of this!

G. WHY DO SO MANY PROFESSED BELIEVERS NEGLECT THE EDIFICATION WORK OF THE CHURCH? Could it be because:

1. They do not know what the N.T. says about it?
2. They do not believe what the N.T. says about it?
3. They think the Lord didn't mean what he said when he said what he did about the edification work of the church?
4. They do not think they have any responsibility in the matter of the edification work of the church?
5. They think the edification work of the church is unimportant?

6. They think the work of edification applies to some members of the church, but not to others, and that they are of the group to which it doesn't apply?
7. They just don't care one way or the other; that they, as professed believers, are so indifferent about the work of the local church that it just doesn't matter to them?

III. CONCLUSION

1. My two final questions:
 - a. Why is the edification work of the local church so neglected by so many of its members?
 - b. Do you think those who so neglect it will be called upon by the Lord in judgment to give an account for their neglect?
2. I appeal to one and all to make an honest, sincere effort to improve the attendance record here on Sunday night and Wednesday night for the sake of the edification work of this church and that of the spiritual growth of its members!