

TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS

Eph.4:11-16

Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The work divinely assigned to the local church is three-fold: the work of evangelism; the work of benevolence; the work of edification.
2. The work of edification is the burden of this lesson.
3. Our assigned topic is: Teaching Them To Observe All Things.
4. Our primary topic is: Eph.4:11-16.
5. The “them” of our topic refers to the Lord’s disciples. Our topic necessarily implies they are to “observe all things.” But in order for them to observe all things, they must first be taught what the “all things” are.
6. Then, of course, someone is responsible for teaching them. That is what we shall emphasize in our discussion.

II. DISCUSSION

A. EPH.4:11-16 IS THE BASIC TEXT DELINEATING THE PATTERN FOR THIS ALL IMPORTANT EDIFICATION WORK.

1. According to Eph.4:8, when Jesus Christ “ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”
2. According to Eph.4:11, “he gave some to be apostles; and some to be prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Cf. 1Cor.11:27,28.
3. According to Eph.4:12, he gave these gifts, or set them in the church, for definite purposes, involving the saints individually and the church as a whole, or collectively. They were:
 - a. “For the perfecting of the saints”
 - (1) “For” in this expression is from “pros,” not “eis”; and means “with a view to” – i.e., “with a view to the perfecting of the saints” Cf. 2Cor.13:9.
 - (2) “Perfecting” is from a word which means “training, instructing, fitting or adapting.”
 - (3) Thus these gifts were given for the purpose of perfecting, completely equipping or preparing the saints through teaching them the whole counsel of God. Cf. Mt.28:19,20; Ac.20:26,27
 - (4) Cf. making a ship sea-worthy or being properly equipped or prepared to perform at sea.
 - (5) **All** the saints are to be perfected, equipped, prepared.
 - (6) The purpose for perfecting them is specified in the two following expressions.

- b. “For (“eis” – unto, in order to) the work of the ministry” or the service of Christ they are required to render.
 - (1) As a result of being thus perfected, they would be able to minister.
 - (2) They would be able to perform all service required.
 - (3) **All** the saints are to be equipped and engaged in the service
 - c. “For” (“eis” – unto, in order to) the edifying (building up) of the body.”
 - d. Therefore, no one group alone ministers or edifies the body, for that work has been assigned to each and every member of the body according to v.12.
4. Furthermore, Eph.4:15,16 confirms the fact that each member of the body is to perform his or her part of the work for which they are to be perfected or fully equipped, according to v.12.
5. According to Eph.4:14-16, the results of the perfecting or completely equipping the saints is doctrinal stability and scriptural work performed, for:
- a. They are no longer children in spiritual development, or babes in Christ, having need of milk and not of strong meat, v.14a. See 1Cor.3:1-3; Heb.5:12-14.
 - b. They are no longer subject to be deceived and led astray by the sleight of men in cunning craftiness, teaching false doctrines, v.14b. See Ac.20:28-31; Rom.16:17,18.
 - c. They are able to hold to and speak the truth in love, effectively working to the edifying of the body, vv.15,16.
6. Thus, the **TRUTH** is the **MEANS** whereby the body of Christ is edified, and each member of the body is responsible for his or her part in the work, v.15. Cf. Ac.20:32; Tit.2:11-14; 1Pet.2:2.
- a. In 1Cor.12:12-27 Paul, by analogy, compares the church to the human body, emphasizing that each member of the body of Christ, like those of the human body, has an important function, is useful and needed for the spiritual welfare of the whole body.
 - b. Then in Eph.4:11-16, especially vv.15,16, he emphasizes the same important function of each member in the edification work of the church.

B. EDIFICATION, OR TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS, IS THE OBLIGATION OF ONE AND ALL

1. It is the obligation of the evangelists, 1Tim.1:3,4; 4:6,11-16; 6:17-20; 2Tim.2:1,2,14,24-26; 4:1-5; Tit.1:5; 2:15; 3:1.

2. It is the obligation of the elders of the local church, Ac.20:28-32; 1Tim.3:2 (“apt to teach”); Tit.1:9-11; Heb.13:17 (“for they watch for your souls”).
 - a. Elders are to do more than know what the truth is.
 - b. Do more than simply be able to see that the truth is taught, as some have claimed.
 - c. They are to both be “apt to teach” and to teach the saints!
3. It is the obligation of all the members of the body, Gal.6:1,2; Eph.6:10-20; Phil.2:1-4; 1Th.5:11-14; 2Tim.2:1,2; 2:15; Heb.3:12-14; 10:22-24; Jas.5:19,20; Jude 21-23.
 - a. Saints are not simply spectators.
 - b. They are to be full participators!

C. COLLECTIVELY, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS IS THE OBLIGATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH UNDER THE OVERSIGHT OF ITS OWN ELDERS

1. The local church under the oversight of its own elders may accomplish this
 - a. By means of Bible classes both public and private for general Bible study.
 - b. By special classes both public and private to teach special subject matter pertaining to some particular need in the work of the church.
 - c. By means of what we call “Gospel meetings” using preachers from outside the local church.
2. The local church has no divine authority to discharge this work through “another organization” – i.e., though an organization separate and apart from, or other than the local church; such as:
 - a. A Missionary Society.
 - b. An Edification Society.
 - c. A Sunday School Society.
 - d. A Bible College, even when operated by brethren.
3. Though the Scriptures do not specify the **HOW**, they do specify the **WHO**, and the **WHAT**.
 - a. The **WHO** specified is the local church under the oversight of its own elders.
 - b. The **WHAT** specified, i.e., what is to be taught, is the **word of God**.
 - c. The **HOW**, or the means or methods of doing the teaching, is not specified; the church has a choice as to means or methods of doing the teaching.
 - d. But the specific **WHO** cannot with God’s approval substitute either for the **WHO** or the **WHAT**!
 - e. Though it may buy the services of human organizations in the performance of its divinely ordained work, it can never, with divine

approval, build, maintain or support such human organizations through which to do its work. (Illustrate)

- f. Moreover, when another **WHO** is set up – a human **WHO** – it must still use the same means and methods available to the original divine **WHO**.
4. There is no organization either larger than, smaller than, or other than, the local church authorized by the Lord to do the work of the local church.
5. The local church and it alone is so charged. Moreover, it is able to do any and all work divinely assigned to it!

III. CONCLUSION

1. The all-importance of teaching them to observe all things should be obvious to every member of the body.
2. When teaching them to observe all things is neglected or when members of the body neglect or refuse to receive the teaching:
 - a. They remain babes in Christ beyond the time when spiritual maturity is required of them, which is a state unacceptable to the Lord, 1Cor.3:1-3; Heb. 5:12-14.
 - b. Sinful practices and contrary doctrines prevail which bring condemnation that threaten the very identify of the local church. Examples:
 - (1) 1Cor.5, the fornicator among them; their failure to mourn the sin; the purity of the whole church affected.
 - (2) 1Cor.6, going to law with brethren before unbelievers.
 - (3) 1Cor.12-14, improper use of spiritual gifts and the absence of charity one toward another.
 - (4) 1Cor.15, false teaching on the resurrection.
 - (5) Rom.14, unjust condemnation of one another in matters of liberty.
 - (6) Ac.20:28-31; Rom.16:17,18, division and offenses caused by contrary doctrines taught by brethren who are slaves to their own base desires.
 - c. Can eventually lead to the Lord doing what he threatened to do to the church at Ephesus if they did not repent: “or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place,” Rev.2:5.