

24-0407a Transcript

24-0407a - *Equipping the Saints*, Scott Reynolds

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and Roger Raines

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Equipping the Saints

Scripture Readings

1st Reader: Mike Mathis

(0:03) Our scripture reading this morning will be from Ephesians 4 verses 11 through 14. (0:15) Ephesians 4 11 through 14. And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, (0:29) and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, (0:38) for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Here we all come to the unity of the faith (0:48) and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature (0:59) of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried (1:09) about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful (1:20) plotting. That ends the reading.(1:21)

2nd Reader: Roger Raines

(1:29) Good morning. Ephesians chapter 4 verses 15 and 16. (1:37) But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow it up in all aspects into him who is the head, (1:47) even Christ, from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by whatever joint (1:57) supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body (2:06) for the building of the self and love. This concludes this reading.(2:13)

Sermon

Preacher: Scott Reynolds

(2:18) Good morning. It's good to see our visitors. All right.

I've been thinking about the recent (2:26) past here at Westside since COVID, and sometimes before also, reflecting on that time, and while (2:33) our numbers have gone down about half since COVID, we have experienced some good teaching here. (2:40) I look at the list of class materials for Sunday and Wednesday and all the sermons since 2020, (2:48) that we have on our website, and say, we have a lot to offer. We are continuing to learn (2:56) more about the truth presented in the scriptures.

Just a quick glimpse of our education, (3:04) in no way exhaustive, of our webpage shows the many lessons and sermons taught. (3:11) Going to go through a list. The elementary teachings.

We had a study of Romans, a study (3:18) of Peter, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. We talked about types and anti-types, and Jesus (3:25) saying, I will build my church, and the building and builder metaphor used in the scriptures. (3:32) We had a study of Hebrews, the angel of the Lord, the Sermon on the Mount, Christian apologetics, (3:39) the sons of thunder, the cursed fig tree, the blessings of obedience, and the curses of (3:46) disobedience.

Do not sell your inheritance, working out our salvation. Ezekiel 18, the soul who sins (3:54) dies, the church Jesus built. Forgiveness and remission of sins, the atoning sacrifice, (4:01) Jacob, Hebrews, a faith to endure, Balaam's folly, Satan's toolbox, Cain and Abel, (4:09) know that Jesus was resurrected, David and Saul, David and Goliath, David and Jonathan, (4:17) David and Absalom, and David and Solomon.

We talked about the seven woes, Jesus is the (4:24) tabernacle, the parable of the marriage feast, the Lamb of God, spiritual surveillance, (4:29) Moses' bronze serpent, the trip to the afterlife, the Lamb of God, the great I Am, (4:37) mystery of redemption, and expanse in the midst. No one knows the day or the hour. (4:45) We talked about mercy, and the parable of the mustard seed, the rock of ages, (4:50) as sharpens iron, the master of storms, there, a balm in Gilead, Paul goes to Corinth, (5:00) I am the light of the world, Christ is my banner, I faith Moses, the amazing spider silk, Psalm 23, (5:10) the resurrection and the life, I am the door, perfect peace, spiritual warfare, (5:16) the seven threats of our time, victory in Jesus, the rise of the scoffer, I am the good shepherd, (5:24) I am the way, satisfied with the Lord, God is so good, rise of malevolent compassion, (5:33) I am the true vine, loss of the noble male, lessons from King Saul, massive earthly power, (5:41) what do you rely on, rise of demonic worldview, there is none like our God, who is on the Lord's (5:49) side, we fear not death, the attack upon the biblical family, God is merciful, understanding (5:56) our times, the father of lights, precious promises, do people rise from the dead and keep moving (6:05) forward? And soon we'll be going over Del Tackett's, "The Truth Project" and "The Engagement Project."

(6:12) We've studied a lot and we've presented a lot. We know a lot. We have a lot to offer the lost.

(6:19) We have all the pieces. More accurately, we've always had all the pieces in the scriptures. (6:26) We just needed to discover and put the pieces together that will help us carry out the work (6:32) of God, that God has for us to do.

And with this in mind, I would like us to look at Ephesians 4, (6:41) verses 11 through 16, and for context, I'm going to read it all together (6:50) before we actually begin. So, Ephesians 4, 11 through 16, and this is Eric Johnson's, (6:59) my favorite guitar player. He did an interview, this is Ad Lib, by the way.

He did an interview (7:05) and he used the word amalgamation. And I said, what? I had to look it up. Well, amalgam, (7:12) an amalgam, is a blending or mixing of metals.

Like in dentistry, they use mercury and mix it (7:23) with other metals and that's what they use for fillings. That's an amalgam. And the product of (7:29) that is an amalgamation, the fillings and amalgamation.

So anyway, I never thought I would (7:36) use the word, but I'm using it here because this reading that I'll be doing is Ephesians 4, 11 (7:43) through 6, but it's from the New King James, the English Standard, New American Standard, and NIV. (7:50) I mixed them together. This is the result, an amalgamation of Ephesians 4, 11 through 16.

(7:58) And he himself gave some to the apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some shepherds, (8:05) that's from the ESV, and teachers for equipping the saints for the work of service, (8:11) New American Standard, for building up the body of Christ until we all come to the unity of the (8:20) faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to become mature, NIV says, to the measure of the (8:28) stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried (8:34) about by every wind of doctrine and by the trickery of men in cunning craftiness or of (8:42) deceitful schemes, English Standard, but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way (8:50) and to him who is the head and to Christ, English Standard, from whom the whole body joined and (8:58) held together by what every joint supplies when each part is working properly, making the body (9:09) grow so that it builds itself up in love. So we're looking at Ephesians 4, 11 through 13 first, (9:20) and let's begin with verse 11. And he gave some to the apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, (9:27) the shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service or ministry, (9:34) other translations say.

So the saints have a purpose, and they need to be prepared. Notice (9:44) that God gave us leaders to equip the saints. The apostles and prophets and evangelists, (9:51) shepherds and teachers, have a responsibility to equip the saints for the purpose that God intends.

(9:59) It is necessary that the saints be prepared to perform that purpose. And the whole of the (10:06) church leadership positions, all of them, have been designed and are given to the church to (10:13) carry out this preparing or equipping of the saints. But for? For the work of service, (10:24) New American Standard.

I like the New American Standard because it uses the word service, (10:29) other translations say ministry, the work of ministry, David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd (10:35) and their commentary on the book of Ephesians say, preaching is the prominent idea connected (10:42) with the work of ministry at the present day. The preacher is the minister. And David Lipscomb (10:50) and J.W. Shepherd continue, there are two different words used in the Greek to designate (10:56) the work of serving and the work of preaching the gospel.

The term used here, translated (11:04) ministering in the authorized version of the American Standard, is the one which designates (11:11) work of service or ministering to the wants of the afflicted, first of the household of faith (11:19) and secondly of all the suffering mortals of the earth. Now let me ask you, does it make sense (11:28) that God would supply the various church leader positions, one of which is the evangelist, (11:37) the preacher, to prepare the saints to all become evangelists? Is it the saints, is it the (11:49) member's job to go out and proclaim the gospel? He gave some to be evangelists. Is that what he (11:57) wants, all of us preaching the word? Makes sense.

But why would he have all the leadership, (12:04) one of which is an evangelist, to teach us all to be evangelists? Keep that in mind. (12:12) And the leadership is to equip the saints for building up the body of Christ. The saints (12:18) will do the building up of the body of Christ, Ephesians 5.23 and Colossians 1.18. The leadership (12:27) equips them to do that.

What might the equipping be? And once equipped, what might the saints be (12:35) doing to build up the body of Christ? And I think there's a good passage that directly addresses (12:41) these questions. Paul, using the building metaphor, tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3, 9-13, (12:51) For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of (12:58) God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, someone else is building upon (13:08) it.

Let each take care how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than that which (13:16) is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, (13:24) precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will disclose it, (13:33) because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (13:40) So Paul, an apostle, laid a foundation for the Corinthians upon which they could build.

(13:48) They were not at liberty to build a new or another foundation, but they could build on top of that (13:54) already existing foundation. Whatever they would build would be tested. Paul, again, gives us some (14:02) insight when he tells the Ephesians about Jesus in Ephesians 2, verses 17-22.

(14:13) And he, Jesus, came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near, (14:21) for through him we have both access in one spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer (14:29) strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of (14:37) God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the (14:46) cornerstone in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the (14:54) Lord. In him, you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

So (15:04) the apostles and the prophets laid the foundation for the saints, which is what we were told in our (15:13) verses in Ephesians chapter 4. And today it would be the evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (15:20) laying that, equipping us, laying that foundation with Jesus being the cornerstone to whom the whole (15:28) structure is aligned. If the whole structure is aligned to Jesus, then we better know something (15:35) about Jesus. We need to know a lot about Jesus or we'll be out of alignment.

Let me suggest that (15:43) most of our studies deal with the foundational part of building God's house, his temple. Even (15:52) our studies into the solid food for the mature, little of what we've done so far, to me at least, (15:59) seems to address our building on top of that foundation given by the apostles, by the way, (16:08) including Jesus himself. Hebrews 3.1 tells us that Jesus is our apostle of our confession (16:19) and the prophets.

However, I think, and yes, this is my opinion, I think that the truth project (16:26) of building the Christian worldview from the scriptures to live by, and the engagement (16:32) project also from the scriptures for how we may engage a culture of those who have a depraved mind, (16:39) both our efforts to build upon the foundation we've been given. And hopefully as we move (16:45) into these studies, we can move on to building up the body of Christ. And this instruction to equip (16:53) the saints for the work of service and building up the church is to continue, verse 13 says, (17:00) until we all attain to the unity of the faith.

Henry Halley, in his handbook on the Bible, (17:10) comments on these ideas, in Ephesians here, on the church being one body and of the unity of faith. (17:21) He says, the church is nearly 2,000 years old. And then this, by the way, this is (17:33) AD 2024.

Jesus died probably around age 33. He was not born in year one, (17:46) AD one. It's a figure that he was born around 4 BC, which would make AD 26 in the first century (17:58) his birth year.

We are in 2024, 2,000, 1,998 years from Jesus, two years short of 2,000 years. (18:15) Well, anyway, the church is nearly 2,000 years old. And in this respect, it is still in its (18:22) childhood state.

It has, Henry Halley is talking, still, it has not yet in its visible manifestation (18:31) as a whole known unity. Paul's unceasing fight was against fractional elements in local churches. (18:42) And the Jew-Gentile dissension.

Then came the bitter controversies of the second (18:49) through fourth centuries. Then the imperial church, when Constantine took over the church, (18:56) made it the state religion in Rome, with its outward resemblance of unity under state authority, (19:03) but poisonous blight of its spiritual life. Then the papal hierarchy, with its unity of authority (19:11) that robbed men of their rights of conscience and drove the Bible out of circulation.

Then, (19:18) 400 years ago, the Protestant break for freedom. And naturally, Henry says, when men began to (19:26) think for themselves again, after the long night of papal bondage, they would see things somewhat (19:35) differently. And it was inevitable that the Protestant movement would go down the years (19:41) in different streams.

So we still have a divided Christendom. Whether there will ever be in this (19:50) world, be an outward organic unity of the visible church, we do not know. The selfishness and pride (19:58) of men are against it.

But there always have been, and still is, a unity in the invisible church (20:04) of God's true saints, which somehow, sometime, somewhere, will come to full fruition in answer (20:14) to Christ's own prayer of John 17, and manifest itself as a full-grown body of Christ that's (20:23) mentioned here in Ephesians 4. And equipping the saints continues until the saints attain (20:32) a knowledge of the Son of God. We've already mentioned how important having a knowledge (20:37) of the Son of God is, since he is the cornerstone on which the whole foundation is built upon. (20:44) And that is until we become a mature manhood.

Christianity is a process. We are to continue (20:53) growing up, it will say in verse 15 of this chapter, and every way into the image of Jesus (21:01) and maturing must take place to the measure of the... How much? To the measure of the stature (21:08) of the fullness of Christ. The whole point of us becoming Christians is for us to be transformed (21:16) from the world by the renewal of our mind, Romans 12.2, and conform to the image of Christ, (21:23) Romans 8.29, and we should look like Jesus until we mature to the full measure of the stature (21:31) of Christ.

In other words, this instruction continues to be needed and probably won't (21:37) be accomplished until Jesus returns and the faith becomes sight. So it will be a constant work for us. (21:46) What is the purpose of this instruction? Why should we do it? Ephesians 4, 14 through 16, (21:53) so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about (22:00) by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes, and so that we (22:08) may not be children.

We need to mature as Christians. We cannot continue to be infants, (22:13) children in the faith. It means we must put some effort into our faith, and that's not for us to be (22:20) righteous.

We have no righteousness of our own, Romans 3.10, Philippians 3.9. Our righteousness, (22:31) we are righteous because God gave us the righteousness of Jesus, Romans 3.22, (22:38) when we became Christians. So we know we need to mature because it will keep us from being (22:49) tossed to and fro by the waves, like driftwood, I think about when I read that, and carried about (22:56) by every wind of doctrine. Just look at all the ideas that we see in all the media, (23:06) contradictory.

Back in the 70s, it was global cooling, now it's global warming, (23:14) carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, and the craftiness and deceitful schemes. (23:24) Just watch the news a little bit, and you'll know who not to listen to, (23:28) because they just say things that aren't true. And that is, we need to become mature Christians.

(23:37) We'll keep us from becoming influenced by our culture and its worldview, as we saw through (23:43) the seven threat series that we studied. And a glimpse of what this solution might look like (23:49) is Ephesians 4, 15-16. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way (24:04) into him who is the head, and to Christ, from which the whole body, joined and held together (24:11) by every joint with which it is equipped, and when each part is working properly, (24:19) makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.

So the result of the leadership putting (24:29) forth effort into equipping the saints for the work of service and building up the church, (24:35) and the saints actually doing the work of service and building up the church, for which they have (24:41) been equipped, will bring about—that's the promise being made—will bring about the maturing (24:48) of the saints and the growth of the church. So speaking the truth in love, our motivation (24:57) won't be, what's the least I can do to squeak into heaven and still enjoy the pleasures of the world? (25:06) In fact, our motivation will change from focusing on ourselves—you know, when you want to know (25:13) how little you can do and still go to heaven, you know who you're thinking about? Thinking (25:18) about yourself. That's it.

That attitude by itself is probably—will disqualify. But anyway, (25:29) in fact, our motivation will change from focusing on ourselves to focusing on doing (25:35) good for others. If we are to grow up in every way into Jesus, we will begin to conform to the (25:42) image of Christ.

We will begin to look like Jesus because, after all, Jesus is the head. (25:51) From him, the whole body is joined and held together by every joint. It requires us also, (25:59) which is equipped.

The leaders have been actively equipping the saints and each part, (26:06) individuals, working properly, and for what purpose? There's the promise. The result is, (26:14) makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. The equipping of the saints.

We're going (26:22) to extend the invitation now, so if you are subject to it, come while we stand and sing.