

A Victorious Church

Getting on the Same Page Part 3

Ephesians 4:11-12

January 19th, 2008

Scripture

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

We will just cover these two verses this morning and will finish tonight with verses 13-16. If you have been here the last couple of weeks you know that HBC believes that the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. We believe we are primarily here to do one of three things: to exalt Jesus as our Savior, to equip the saints of God, and to evangelize the sinners in our community and surrounding region until ultimately, we take the gospel to the ends of the world.

These 2 verses teach us 3 things. They teach us that God has given gifts of leadership to the Church, and it is the responsibility of those gifted leaders to equip the saints. So as the pastor/teacher, to keep the main thing the main thing, my primary purpose is to ¹equip the saints for the work of ministry. The ²saints do the work of ministry, it is not my or the staff's responsibility to do all of the ministering in this church. It has actually been ordained by God that the saints in the church do the actual work of ministry. Then this passage teaches that it is the ³work of ministry that edifies, or builds up the body of Christ. As we get ready to embark on our study of Romans, I want us to be on the same page heading in. We have a lot of folks who have been in this church for a long time, and a lot who

have just come into this church. So when churches come to this place in their history, if they are not careful, it is easy for a church to become divided or to splinter. They can have a lot of different people, believing a lot of different things, and there not be a unifying factor in the body. At HBC, we want you to be on the same page with us. And that is to believe that the pastor should keep the main thing the main thing. As a saint, you are here to do the work of ministry. Then we want to make sure that all of our ministries are building up the body of Christ. We have taken 2 sermons to talk about the pastor equipping the saints. We know this means the pastor is to get this army ready for war, and get this ship ready to sail. But who are the saints? That is you and I. That is each of us who have turned from a life of sin and put our faith and trust in Jesus. The Bible says "the old things have become old, behold all things become new, and we are a new creature in Christ." We are not just an old sinner who is saved by God's grace, now we are a saint of God. That word saint means we have been set apart from self to salvation. We have been set apart from sin, not to live selfishly, but to live a life in service to the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Are we all on the same page at this point?

Work of Ministry by the Saints

This morning, let us look at verse 12 afresh and understand these 2 statements. ¹Saints do the work of ministry, and it is ²ministry that edifies the body of Christ. Do you see that word ^a**work**? In the Greek language it literally means "the result of labor". 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6 teaches that in the body of Christ there are different gifts, different ministries, and different energizing's. That word in verse 6 is where we get our English word **energy** from. As we assemble this morning as the body of Christ, you must understand this as a saint of God. Do you realize that if we were to speak about the Church in economic terms, you, as a saint of God, are the labor force of this church? The Bible says that not only has God given you a special gift, and a special ministry, He has actually given you a special energy. What you bring to the church is a certain amount of energy that has been divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. The membership

should never look at each other and wonder why they are not doing as much as, or doing more than the next person. But we should be wondering if we are living up to the energizing by which God energizes us for ministry. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 talked about laboring more than anyone, and then he stopped and said "it is not I but the grace of God who dwells in me". Paul believed that in his flesh he was doing more than any other apostle. But then he had to stop and say it really is not me, but the grace of God in me doing it. How are you doing as a saint? Do you feel like you are part of the labor force at HBC? Do you feel like when this church gets ready to get things done for the glory of God, you are one of the people who make it happen? I want you to think about that because that is why you are here. You are here to be the hands, the feet, the knees, the elbows, the wrists, and the ankles. You are here to help us be who God wants us to be. Without you there will be no ministry. There will be no energizing in this church.

Work of Ministry Edifies the Body

Now, it is work of ministry that builds up the Church. The saints of HBC are the labor force of our ministry. This word **ministry** is an interesting word. It is the same word in the Greek that we get our English word **deacon** from. We have several great deacons here, and those men all have "dirty feet" in common. What?? Yes...at the root of this word, is where we also get our English word **servant** from. In the biblical world a servant did not wear shoes, he went barefooted. There were 2 seasons in the Middle Eastern culture; rainy and dry. During the rainy season, the servants who were running around waiting on people had muddy feet. In the dry season they had dusty feet. I affectionately call our deacons the "dirty footed ones". If you ask those guys they will tell you they have no authority in this church. They have never met together one time and told me what I should be doing as pastor. These guys are your servants, and they are a model for the rest of us. In reality, each one of us, as a saint, should be involved in the ministry of this body. So to play off of this word deacon here at HBC, ministry is that place where you roll up your sleeves

and britches legs and get dirty. Ministry is work, it does not just happen. You, in your individuality, and as we come together in our wholeness, make up the labor force of this church. So each of us here should have a ministry point where we are connected to someone. And in our connectedness with someone, that is where we get dirty. Honestly, do you have a place? You see, some of us come to HBC to worship and watch. We are going to applaud everything HBC does because it looks like a really good church. We just come to enjoy the benefits, and worship God, and just observe what HBC does because it seems to be working. There is another group that comes to work while they worship because they understand that as part of this body that ministry will not be done without them. Which camp are you in?

Getting Dirty

I do not know how you are in your life, but generally in my closet I have a set of clothes that I wear when I go to watch something, and a set that I wear when I go to do something. If I am going to get dirty there are certain clothes that I put on and I expect to get a little sweaty. I do not mind getting a little dirt on my shoes or pants. As a matter of fact, I know when I put them on that I am doing it for the very reason of being employed in doing something where I will get dirty. But when I go to the other section of my closet and put the other set of clothes on, I am not going to work a bit. I am going to go somewhere and watch something. They are my entertaining clothes. I have nice shoes and a matching belt. The jeans are snazzy, and there are several nice shirts. When I wear these do not ask me to change a tire, or fix the popcorn, or referee. I will take a seat and I am there for only one purpose, and that is to be entertained. I want to watch what is going on, and it will be all about me being entertained for a little while.

Are the clothes you wear to church your entertainment clothes, or are they your employment clothes? Some of us really need to change the way we dress when we come to church. We need to quit thinking about *going* to

church and realize we are *part* of the Church. Without you the Church is not who the Church is supposed to be! I am part of the body of Christ. Why am I here? I am here to serve. I am here to take the gift that God has given me and find a place where I will get dirty serving God. With whatever energizing that God has given me, whether high energy or low energy, whether super-efficient or not, I will bring my energy to the body! I will be the best body part I can be because we will learn that until we all arrive there, this body will never be the presence of Christ that we can be in this community. Do you come to church for you and for what you and your family are getting out of it? Or do you come to this body because you believe this is a body that God is using in this community? Do you believe it is through this body, along with other bodies, that He is going to accomplish His purpose? Are here because you want this body to be who God wants us to be, and that is the presence of Christ in this community in our entirety? I am not asking what you think in your mind, I am asking what your actions say.

Spiritually Overweight

We have a wrong mentality in the Church. We go to Church to be fed. I do believe when you go to Church you should get fed. I believe it is my responsibility as the pastor to be the master chef. I believe I should spend the majority of my time in God's Word so that when you come on Sunday morning you sit down to filet mignon most of the week. We have enough bologna being served in churches, amen. Have any of you moms ever served bologna at home? Sometimes you have to because by the time you take care of the snotty noses, and get the kids to ball practice, get home from work, and take care of the husband, sometimes that is all there is time for. So do not knock the man of God who is only serving bologna when he does not have time to get in the kitchen and prepare a home cooked meal. We do not want bologna here at HBC. We are always telling people to step up to the plate, but I want to tell us here at HBC to step away from the plate. Some of us have been sitting down at the table of the Lord for so long and feeding our bellies, and feeding our spirit without

getting up from the table and doing anything, that we have become spiritually lazy. We have become spiritually overweight. When you pack enough of that weight around, over enough time, you do not live up to what you should be doing in the body of Christ.

Do not misunderstand what I am saying and confuse it with legalism. Legalism says you do to become. I do not believe you should ever do a thing in the Church to become something. I believe you do what you do because of who you are in Christ. But we are living in a culture, in a nation, where we can turn on the TV and pipe in the best preachers in the land. We can turn on the radio every day and listen to the best preachers in the land. We can listen on our iPhones, and iPods, CD's, and DVD's. And for the 1st time we can go to Lifeway and other bookstores and buy books about being a Christian. For the 1st time in society, there is a group of people who believe you can be a saint, by yourself, without a body. That is heresy, flat out heresy! As a matter of fact, I challenge you to look up the word saints in the New Testament, and you will not find it in the singular form "saint", you will always find it in the plural form. So you had better decide that there is something around you that is bigger than you and your family, and that is the body of Christ. Our society does not believe that anymore. It looks at the body from the perspective of me and my family only, rather than the perspective of the body. The perspective of the body says "where do I fit in? Where do I find my place of ministry so that I can help this body accomplish what it is supposed to accomplish?" If I only live up to who I am in my individuality, they will talk about me in this community. But if HBC lives up to its fullness, they will talk about the Church and not me. Who had you rather them be talking about, the Church or Bro Ricky? Do you want them to be talking about the Church or you? We want them to be talking about the Church because they will discover who our head is, the Lord Jesus Christ. HBC will never be the presence of Christ in this community in our fullness without you! You are vital. So get your entertainment clothes off and put your employment clothes on.

Unemployment

I want you to think about something. Boy our politicians are in an uproar now because of our economy. I have learned some things, like unemployment figures, and interest rates. Did you know they are worried about our economy because a little over 5 % of the labor force of the United States are now unemployed? As long as it is under 5% it seems to be ok, but the moment it gets over 5% it is bad. If our nation struggles when our workforce unemployment gets over 5%, how in the world is the Church making it? I do not have statistics or figures on this, but I can just look out among this body and say that way more than 5% of the people are spiritually unemployed. How many of you show up at the table of the Lord every week to be fed, but you are unemployed when it comes to the ministries of this church? It is pretty high. That is not good. There is a tendency to believe that if you go to a church that is a little bit bigger, you can sit behind someone and not be noticed and will not be needed. That is not true. Truthfully, I believe there must only be one reason why God has ordained for HBC to grow the way it is growing. It is because He must have something He really wants us to do, and we need a lot of people to get it done.

Interest Rates

Interest rates need to be really high in the Church. You see in the economy, if you want to boost it, you want low interest rates. But if you want to boost the economy of the Church, you raise interest rates. If you look at your life, one of the reasons you are unemployed in this church is because your interest rate of this church is not very high. I want to give you a test. How many times this past week did you think about the ministry of HBC? No interest at all...we are just wrapped up in our own little world, and we attend church because of us. That is absolutely from the pit of hell. Now I believe you should be getting something from church. It is called food, and it is for you to be spiritually fueled in order to live up to your responsibility in the body of Christ, so that in our entirety, we can

bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ. If you are going to drive a great distance to this church, you had better check out if you can pay the cost. We have a couple here who got saved through the campground ministry. They live on the other side of Mayfield and it takes them about 35 minutes to get here. They do not just come on Sunday morning. You will find them here during the week cleaning, and cooking. We have another couple that lives near Reidland and it takes about 25 minutes for them to get here. You will not find these families just showing up on Sunday morning. These are families who have found their place in the body of Christ and they are serving.

Finding a Job

Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Then why do we not take Him up on that? Why do we not just check this principle out and decide to be a giver this next year, and not just be a receiver? Then when the Word of God lets us down, let us close our doors and go do something else. Because this thing is either real or it is not! HBC is not a church built around a preacher or a pastor. The guy before me was here 17 years. I have been here almost 25. That means HBC has only had 2 pastors in the past 40 plus years. It is because HBC believes the pastoral ministry must equip the saints, and the saints must do the work of ministry. It is the work of ministry that must edify the body of Christ.

In your bulletin you will see the middle section it says there are several teachers, information booth workers, and volunteers for Story Hour needed. This is just the beginning. I have always been blessed with a job, but if I ever did not have one, I promise you on Monday morning I would be looking for a job. If you fired me today, (I hope you do not) I will be looking for a job this afternoon. I will not make an assumption that I can get a job like I have here. I do not believe there is a better job in the country like this one here. So I would go and ask for a job and not expect to be paid like I am paid here. I would moonlight on the side because I know I would not be paid the same as I am here, so I would need another

job too. Do you get the point? Where did we get it in our heads that once we have done something we cannot do anything else? Where did we get that because we got an education we have to start at the top? When you come to HBC, you may not start at the top. You may never get to the top at HBC. But your attitude should be that you are not coming to this church to sit in a chair. I am coming to take my place in the body of Christ so that when HBC is talked about in the community, I know that I am a part of that body. I am helping it to be who it is supposed to be. That means I will find a job. We have some people here that can help you find a job, a place of ministry, and a place where you can roll up your sleeves. There is no excuse for a person to sit in these chairs for as long as you have been attending and not be in ministry in this church. You need to find a place of ministry. You will never fully be who God intends you to be until you find your place in the body of Christ. This ministry junk on your own, by yourself, is not biblical! I would hate to think of some of the heretical doctrines I would be teaching if it was not for fellow teachers surrounding me that I am connected with. We have some good, in depth conversations. For you to grow the way God wants you to you need to find your place of service.

Get Connected

Now, the pastor equips the saints, the saints do the work of ministry, and ministry edifies the body. But we have it wrong today. We have a Church mentality that says if you are going to have a great church, you have to have a great pastor. That is not true. You do not have to have a great pastor to have a great church. You have to have a great ministry. But you will not have a great ministry unless the pastor/teacher is equipping the saints, and the saints are doing the work of ministry. We are adopting a pastor mentality in the Church. He is like a ball coach. I have seen some really bad teams, and they fire the coach, but he was not the problem. They had some really bad players! How would you like to be one of these poor high school coaches? No matter how good of a coach you are, you can only coach what you have got. Now I do want to say that you should

expect a lot out of me as a pastor/teacher, because God has brought the cream of the crop to this church, and that is you. You have been personally recruited by the Holy Spirit of God to attend HBC. If you have not been recruited by Him to come to this church, you will not make it. The reason is because we have scholarship players here. You are not a walk-on for the Lord; you are not someone who did not cut it. You are someone that the Holy Spirit of God wanted on our team! You were chosen before the foundation of the world and God's Holy Spirit came into your life and gave you a new life. It is paid for and it will not cost you anything! Is that not salvation? But He saved us, not to sit, but to take our place with other saints, so that working together we will not be a selfish person, but selfless, putting the body ahead of ourselves. Together, as the body of Christ, as we move in the community, God will get the honor and glory! That is what we want because it is ministry that edifies that body.

Every time this church is not being built up it is when our ministries fail. Don Young told me and 2 other guys that preaching can get people to church, but it cannot keep people in church. You may start out coming because of the preaching or music, but you will not make it unless you find a connection point. You have to be a part of something, and know the contribution you are giving is making the body a better body. You have been ordained by God to be here. Now do you really believe you have been ordained to be here? Then your ministry in this church should edify us in our entirety.

Building a House

This word ^c **edify** or **build up** is actually is a construction word. It is a word that literally means "to build a house" and the Greek dictionary says "or to build things pertaining to a house". So think for a moment, your house did not just come into existence did it? If your house was built like mine, you probably did not want to be there when you called the lumber yard and they brought all of that material. When they brought my material they just raised the bed of the truck and the guy just drove out from under

it. All of my expensive lumber just crashed to the ground, but it was all banded together so it made it. My carpenters came out and cut the bands off and took the individual boards and cut and nailed them together. Each one of those boards got connected to another board that was connected to another board and so on. Those boards together became floors, and walls, and ceilings, and so on. In its entirety, I have a home. I would have a sad home if all of the pieces of lumber did not get connected together and do their part. HBC has been a great church because the core of this church ministers. But as we start to run a lot of people, that core has to get bigger, and that has to be you. You have to find your place where you get connected.

Building a Fire

Now that word also means "to build a fire". When I think of building a fire I always think of Granddaddy Bogard kneeling down in front of an old wood stove. He only had one heat source and it was in the living room. You had to get it really, really hot in that room to heat the whole house. My granddaddy was a master fire builder. I have seen him open that door and look into that fire early of a morning and all of those pieces of wood that he had put in the night before had burned down. He reached for his poker and poked all of those coals together, and when the coals that were about to go out were brought together they would re-ignite, and there would be a flame. Once those burned out coals all came back together, they would ignite back to life. He then would reach for 2 sticks of seasoned wood and put them on the fire 1st then he would reach for a green stick, a piece of wood that was young and still green. Then he would put it on top of those 2 others. He knew that when he put those seasoned sticks in they would ignite quickly. When they would get really hot, it would burn that creosote out of those green sticks, and when they got really hot they would start burning too. I noticed that fire burns with more intensity where the 3 pieces of wood touch each other.

After a while, if you let 2 sticks of wood burn, they will burn completely through at their connection point. If you leave those pieces of wood by themselves, not connected to another piece of wood, eventually it will burn out. You will only have a little piece of wood left. It looks pretty; it is burned, it has black marks all over it, and it is charred. I never saw granddaddy take that piece of wood and say it is a beautiful piece of wood; it did its job so good I am going to put it on the mantle. I am going to put a plaque under it and honor that piece of wood for burning 3 hours with the other pieces of wood. I never saw me granddaddy do that. That is what we want people to do to us. Some of you want to talk about what you did 20 years ago. You want to tell me how you used to serve. What I want to know is why do you not want to serve like you used to want to serve? I know, you got burned. How many of you have been burned in ministry? Is that not what is supposed to happen? Are you not supposed to get burnt? Are you not supposed to come to that point where you completely die to what you want, the way you want it, so that you can combine with someone else, and at that point of connection, you burn in your entirety, to where there is absolutely nothing left? Then what we need is for someone to come along, the Holy Spirit of God, through a pastor or a preacher and the Word of God, and take the divine poker of God's Word and poke you back in the fire! And tell you before you get into ministry that you are going to get burned again!

The part I liked best is when granddaddy would open the bottom door and pull out that ash pan. You could not even tell it was wood. Do not ever tell me to slow down in what I am doing because I have decided that when my life is over I do not want anyone to open the top door and find a little piece of me that is charred. I do not want to be put on a plaque somewhere for other generations to see. No, I want to come out of the bottom of the ash pan. I do not want there to be anything left! I do not want you to ever talk about Ricky Cunningham; I want you to talk about Ricky Cunningham's God...you are here for a purpose, let us get on the same page.

