

Sermon Notes for February 22, 2009

The Vision Of Christ Covenant Series

Our Vision Of Ministry

Ephesians 4:1-13

Introduction

A. A View Of The WORLD Of The Ministry

1. **Wanted: Minister for Growing Church - A real challenge for the right man!**
 Applicant must offer experience as shop worker . . . office manager . . . educator (all levels, including college) . . . artist . . . salesman . . . diplomat . . . writer . . . theologian . . . politician . . . Boy Scout leader . . . children's worker . . . minor league athlete . . . psychologist . . . vocational counselor . . . psychiatrist . . . funeral director . . . wedding consultant . . . master of ceremonies . . . circus clown . . . missionary . . . social worker. Applicant should be everyone's friend, **but cannot have close friends**. Helpful but not essential: experience as a butcher . . . baker . . . cowboy . . . Western Union messenger. Must know all about problems of birth, marriage, and death; also conversant with latest theories and practices in areas like pediatrics, economics, and nuclear science. Right man will hold firm views on every topic, **but is careful not to upset people who disagree**. Must be forthright but flexible; **return criticism and backbiting with Christian love and forgiveness**. Should have outgoing, friendly disposition at all times. Should be captivating speaker **but should not get upset if people can't remember what he spoke about only a week ago**. He should be an intent listener. **Will pretend that he enjoys listening to people talk**. Education must be beyond Ph.D requirements, **but always concealed in homespun modesty and folksy talk**. Able to sound learned at times but most of the time **talks and acts like good-old-Joe**. Familiar with literature read by average congregation. Must be willing to work long hours, subject to call any time day or night but not receive any overtime pay ever. Must be adaptable to sudden interruptions. Will spend at least 25 hours preparing a sermon **that people will forget in less than 1 hour** and must spend an additional 10 hours reading books and magazines. Applicant's wife must be both stunning and plain, smartly attired but conservative in appearance, gracious and able to get along with everyone, **especially women**. Must be willing to work in church kitchen, teach classes, baby-sit, never listen to gossip, and never become discouraged. Applicant's children must be exemplary in conduct and character; well-behaved, yet basically no different from other children; decently dressed. Opportunity for applicant to live close to work. Home provided; open door hospitality enforced. **Must be ever mindful that the house doesn't belong to him**. Directly responsible for views and conduct to all church members and visitors, not confined to direction or support from any one person. Salary not commensurate with experience, education, or need. All replies kept confidential. **Anyone applying will undergo a full investigation to determine sanity**.
2. **One church did a survey** to determine how many hours their Pastor should work.
 - a. questionnaire sent out with duties and appropriate hours for each duty.
 - b. in the end, it was determined that their Pastor should work 200 hours a week.

3. In **1989**, the Southern Baptist Convention paid out some **64.2 million dollars** in medical claims for Pastors, with the number 2 cause for claims being stress-related illnesses.
4. Ask yourself and others honestly, and they will tell you that the Pastor should do all the work of the church.
 - a. this is actually a “Catholic” view – listen to a **1906 Papal Encyclical, “As for the masses, they have no other right than of letting themselves be led, and of following their Pastor, as a docile flock.”**
 - b. **LET ME REMIND YOU THAT WE ARE PROTESTANTS** and that one of the key points of the PROTESTANT REFORMATION WAS THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS!
 1. THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN IS A PRIEST.
I Peter 2:9 – “But **you** are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”
 2. so . . . are we Protestants or not?

B. A View Of The WORD Of The Ministry.

1. Although we ARE Protestants, it has been only in the last 40-50 years that we have begun to act like it.
 - a. In **1972**, a book called **Body Life**, written by **Pastor Ray Stedman**, of Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, CA “introduced” to the world:
 1. that God had given to the church certain spiritual gifts that the church should “use” – it was a “revolutionary idea.”
 2. **Stedman said: “Whenever anyone, by faith in Jesus Christ, passed from the power of Satan into the Kingdom of God’s love, he was immediately taught that the Holy Spirit of God had not only imparted to him the life of Jesus Christ, but had also equipped him with a spiritual gift or gifts which he was then responsible to discover and exercise.”**
 - b. until that time VERY FEW CHURCHES taught or structured their churches in the area of spiritual gifts.
 - c. even today, you are hard pressed to find churches that attempt to help people find their spiritual gifts.
 - d. most people that join our church do not know what their spiritual gifts are.
 - e. most people have been put in the wrong ministries.
2. In my life, it wasn’t until 1976 that my eyes were opened to the true calling of a Pastor.
 - a. while I was in seminary I had purchased a Harper Study Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
 - b. as I was reading in **Ephesians 4:11-12**, I came across in verse 12 that read the Pastor-Teacher was “**to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.**”
 1. I WAS STUNNED!
 2. do you realize what this meant IF IT WERE TRUE?
 - a. as a Pastor, I didn’t have to do all of the work in the church.

- b. instead, I was an “equipper,” “coach,” a “trainer.”
- 3. as Pastor, my overarching goal is that we be a true, Biblical church – let’s see how God wants His church to function.

I. The PAST Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. Spiritual Gifts INITIALLY Given.

Vs. 7-8 – “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. **This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."**

1. The **historical** meaning.
 - a. Paul quotes **Psalm 68:18** which shows God returning to Mount Sinai.
 - b. before God returns to Mount Sinai, He overcomes His enemies.
 - c. and as with any other conquering King, he received the spoils from the war.
 1. very often the conquering king dragged the defeated foes back to his Kingdom.
 2. all the way, throwing the “spoils” to those who greeted his entrance into the city.
2. The **heavenly** meaning.
 - a. in Ephesians, Paul is speaking of Jesus as the conquering King.
 - b. as Jesus “descended” to this earth, He came to go to war –
 1. Jesus would come from heaven to this earth to wage war against Satan.
 2. and while there would be a battle, the battle would be decided on the cross
 - a. as He died for the sins of man.
 - b. as He conquered death and was resurrected.
 - c. and triumphantly returned to heaven with the victory.
 3. but, as any other conquering King would do, there would be the “spoils of war.”
 - a. here, Jesus would drag those conquered with Him.
 - b. all the while throwing the “spoils” to the church.
 1. **IN THIS CASE, THE SPOILS WOULD BE SPIRITUAL GIFTS.**
 2. **IMAGINE THIS:**
 - a. obviously, one of the reasons that Jesus came was to die on the cross for our sins.
 - b. but ANOTHER reason that Jesus came to this earth was to “give gifts to men.”
 - c. **DON’T MISS THIS!**
 1. He came to give us these “gifts.”
 2. when you refuse to use your gifts, you:
 - a. refuse His grace
 - b. and make light of His coming to this earth!

B. Spiritual Gifts INDIVIDUALLY Given.

1. We are given a **particular** gift.
 - a. notice that Paul says, “**But to each one of us** has been given.”
 1. this is in contrast to the first six verses in Ephesians 4.
 - a. Paul has been talking about the entire church – the body of Christ.
 - b. and that we are all united
 2. however, now Paul uses the words “but, to each one of us”
 - a. the word “but” shows that Paul is speaking not to the body of Christ, but to individuals within the body of Christ.
 - b. notice “to each one of us”
 - b. Paul desires to speak to us as individual Christians.
 1. **that, as believers in Jesus, EACH OF US HAS AT LEAST ONE SPIRITUAL GIFT.**
 2. that we are not to look to depend on others to do ministry for us, but that God has given to ME a special, spiritual talent.
 3. let me take a moment to “define” a spiritual gift
 - a. a spiritual gift is a spiritual talent that God gives to you the day that you became a Christian.
 - b. the purpose of a spiritual gift is to “use” this gift for the ministry of the church on this earth.
 - c. it is not a physical talent such as being musical, smart or athletic – these are skills that you are physically born with and can develop.
 - d. instead, a spiritual gift is a gift “given to you by God.”
2. We are given a **powerful** gift.
 - a. it is VERY interesting how Paul “describes” the gifts that Jesus gives us – “but to each one of us, **grace** has been given.”
 1. this word grace is the Greek word **charis** –
 2. what Paul means here is:
 - a. the **perspective** of grace – our **education in grace**
 1. BECAUSE of the grace of Christ’s coming and death on the cross
 2. we should serve others.
 3. **CONSIDER WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU!**
 - a. how can you NOT grace others?
 - b. in fact, if you are not “gracing” others, you need to wonder if you are a Christian at all.
 - c. because, to “grace others” is the first evidence that you are born again.
 - d. when asked what the church is for, **89%** of respondents replied: “to meet my needs.”

- b. the **power** of grace – our **energy of grace**
1. when Jesus came into our hearts, He brought with Him His grace.
 - a. His unconditional love for others
 - b. His unlimited mercy
 2. we need to realize that this grace is not only something that we “understand” but also something that we “use”
 - a. **Acts 6:8** – “Now Stephen, a man **full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs** among the people.”
 - b. **I Cor. 15:10** – “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his **grace to me was not without effect**. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the **grace of God that was with me.**”
 - c. **II Cor. 12:8-9** - Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you**, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
 - d. **I Tim. 1:14** – “The **grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly**, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”
 - e. **Heb. 13:9** – “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be **strengthened by grace**, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them.”
 3. God’s grace is the “spiritual energy” that gives us the supernatural desire to serve Him.
 - a. how can you “sense” the grace of God in your life and NOT want to grace others.
 - b. we have been “graced” therefore, we are called to “grace” others.
 - c. in fact, writer John Stott calls this “service grace.”

II. The PARTICIPANTS Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. The TYPICAL View Of Ministry.

1. The **historical** view.
 - a. **KJV** “For the **perfecting** of the saints, for the work of ministry”
 1. in the KJV, the word **perfect** is used –

- a. giving a sense that the Pastor's main role is to "perfect" or to "make perfect."
 - b. also, there is a **comma** after saints, thus dividing the perfecting "from" the saints.
 - c. **John Stott** - 'The second of these clauses', he wrote, 'must be taken as dependent on the first, and not . . . as **coordinate with it.**' In other words, the **first comma** ('the fatal comma') – which is '**without linguistic authority but with undoubted ecclesiological bias**' – **must be erased. If it is allowed to stand, we are faced with 'a saddening result', for then 'the verse then means that only the special ministers, not all the saints, are called to do "the work of ministry" and to cooperate in the "building of the body".'** This interpretation '**has an aristocratic, that is, a clerical and ecclesiastical flavour, it distinguishes the (mass of the) "saints" from the (superior class of the) officers of the church.'**
2. the word "perfect" has caused the church to misunderstand its philosophy of ministry for centuries.
- b. **NIV** – "to **prepare** God's servants for works of service"
 1. this word prepare is better than perfect, however it is not as clear as it should be
 2. this is yet a better translation
 - c. **RSV** – "to **equip** the saints for ministry"
 1. while the Revised Standard Version of the Bible was not translated by conservative scholars, they translated verse 11 extremely well.
 2. notice the words used:
 - a. **equip**
 1. it is clearer as to meaning
 2. immediately you get the sense of helping another to serve
 - b. the **saints**
 1. here, there is no doubt **who** is to do the ministry – the saints.
 2. the **comma found in the KJV** disconnects the ministry from the saints and leaves it squarely on the shoulders of the professional ministers.
 - c. **for the work of ministry**
 1. once again, the verse as translated by the RSV shows the goal of the saints.
 2. **THEY** are to "do" the work of ministry, not the "professionals."
2. The **hysterical** view.
 - a. as a result of misunderstanding the true meaning of the text, we have seen the expansion of the clergy, laity gap widen.

1. **John Stott** – “What model of the church, then, should we keep in our minds? The **traditional model is that of the pyramid**, with the Pastor perched precariously on its pinnacle, like a **little pope in his own church**, while the laity are arrayed beneath him in **serried ranks of inferiority**. It is a **totally unbiblical image**, because the New Testament envisages not a single pastor with a **docile flock** but both a plural oversight and **an every-member ministry**. Not much better is the model of the **bus**, in which the Pastor does all the driving while the congregation are the **passengers slumbering** in peaceful security behind him.”
2. **John Stott** – “Here is **incontrovertible evidence** that the New Testament envisages ministry not as the prerogative of a clerical elite but as the privileged calling of all the people of God.”
3. **Ray Stedman** – “It may come as a **shocking surprise** to many of you that it was never God’s intention for Pastors to visit all the sick, comfort the bereaved, preach for the lost, or teach the newly converted.”
4. **Robert Barclay** – “The conventional modern distinction between the clergy and laity **simply does not occur in the New Testament at all.**”

B. The BIBLICAL View Of The Ministry.

1. The **foundation** of spiritual gifts.
 - a. Paul “proves” that Pastors are not to “do” the ministry by revealing the “true ministry structure” of the church –
 1. **Apostles**
 - a. three requirements to be an apostle
 1. saw the risen Christ
 2. was commissioned personally by the risen Christ
 3. had supernatural gifts from God
 - b. “**drew a crowd**”
 2. **Prophets**
 - a. not only “forthtold” the Scriptures in preaching and teaching
 - b. but – “foretold” what God was going to do before He did it
 - c. they “**explained to the crowd**”
 3. **Evangelists**
 - a. once “the crowd” was there, those so gifted **shared the gospel with “the crowd**” and brought them to Christ.
 - b. now, after the ministry of these three, there is “a crowd” or “potential church”
 4. **Pastor-Teacher**
 - a. those so gifted were called to take care of, pastor and **teach “the crowd**”
 - b. the Pastor-teacher would become the shepherd of a brand-new church

- b. I wonder how many churches approach their ministry based on this Biblical structure.
- 2. The **focus** of spiritual gifts.
 - a. **THIS** is the all-important question
 - b. A question that I want to answer TODAY!

III. The **PURPOSE** Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. To **EQUIP The Saints** – “to equip the saints for work of ministry”

1. **defined**

- a. the Greek word **katartismos**
- b. to furnish, prepare; complete
- c. to make fit; to restore to its original condition
- d. to set a broken bone
- e. to prepare a soldier for battle

2. **applied**

a. **spiritually**

- 1. the word equip suggests that **BEFORE a person can be equipped**, he must be “fit” or healed.
 - a. part of the Pastor-Teacher’s job is to restore a broken soul
 - b. to attempt to help a person “align” their life in the proper order
 - 1. chiropractic – “align the spine”
 - 2. Pastor – “align the soul”
- 2. after this, there is the clear sense that the Pastor-Teacher **EQUIPS** this believer for ministry
 - a. not just “repair nets to store,”
 - b. we “repair nets” to catch more fish!
 - c. set a broken bone to **USE!**

b. **practically**

- 1. **THIS IS THE CALLING OF THE PASTOR!**
 - a. he is an **equipper**
 - b. he is a **coach**
 - c. he is a **trainer**
- 2. **THIS IS HOW YOU EVALUATE A PASTOR!**
 - a. not by the number in his church
 - b. not by the budget of the church
 - c. but by the success of his equipping the body of believers given to Him by God for ministry
 - d. from the **Inspirational Bible** – “Most believers are convinced that it is the Pastor’s responsibility to bring people into the church as well as into the kingdom of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Scripture is clear on this point. **Pastors were given by God to the church to equip the people to do the work . . . Sermons are not God’s primary method for reaching people. People are His method for reaching people.** What kind of people? Men and women whose lives and life-styles have been deeply affected by the

truths of Scripture, people who have discovered the wonderful Spirit-filled life.”

B. To EDIFY The Saints.

Vs. 12 – “to prepare God's people for works of service, **so that the body of Christ may be built up.**”

1. The word built up refers to the building of a house.
2. Thus, the goal of the Pastor-teacher is actually a “spiritual contractor.”
 - a. to take the various spiritual gifts of the body – carpenter, electrician, brick mason and painter and get them to build a “spiritual house.”
 - b. the Pastor is the contractor and is not supposed to build the house – **HE IS TO TRAIN OTHERS TO BUILD IT!**
 - c. have you ever worked on a mission project building a house?
 1. **IT MUST BE A TEAM EFFORT.**
 2. but, as you build, you build **TOGETHER AS A TEAM.**
 3. Martin Lloyd Jones – a medical Doctor whom God called to preach – **“The point I am stressing is that there is nothing in the body, nothing even in a single smallest cell, not a hair, but has a function, a purpose.** It may appear to be very insignificant in and of itself; but it is in the body and it works with the other elements, and has its part to play. **A fatal tendency has come in to think and to say that the vast majority of people in the Church are meant to be entirely passive.** Many seem to think of the Church as just a building to which they come to sit and listen to sermons and addresses, and in which they do nothing. **This is a denial of the fundamental proposition that to every one of us is grace given in the Church and as parts of the body of Christ.** Every one of us has a function, and we are not meant to be entirely passive. **The whole secret of the working of the human body is that every part and particle has a particular function which it is meant to fulfill.”**

C. To EXALT The Lord Jesus.

Vs. 13 – “until we all **reach unity in the faith** and in the **knowledge of the Son of God** and **become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**”

1. to reach unity
 - a. each of us have individually been “graced” by God in Jesus.
 - b. you can’t help but sense a unity when you “grace others” together
 - c. that’s why an “educational model” in the church causes so many divisions
 1. those not serving are usually the loudest to complain
 2. those most involved in ministry are usually never heard from
 3. my theory for those leaving a church, **“There is a direct correlation between those people you have helped, counseled and served the most who will leave your church the quickest.”**

- d. we have all seen an evidence of this as we have “graced others”
 - 1. youth in Kentucky
 - 2. my mission trips – some of the most enjoyable memories that I have
- 2. to become mature
 - a. **PAUL IS CLEARLY SAYING THAT A PERSON CANNOT BECOME MATURE AS A CHRISTIAN IF HE DOES NOT SERVE IN THE BODY OR THROUGH THE BODY.**
 - 1. have you ever had a broken limb? What happened to that limb after you took off the cast? (my broken leg)
 - 2. instead, a person gets “sour”
 - a. like a “big, fat tomato”
 - b. as one has said, a sponge is supposed to soak up water, but then it must be squeezed, unless it becomes “sour.”
 - b. **SPIRITUAL MATURITY CANNOT BE REACHED APART FROM SERVING.**
 - 1. spiritual maturity cannot be achieved by only reading the Bible or other spiritual books.
 - 2. this is the “cycle”
 - a. we spend time with Jesus in prayer and through His Word – we are “graced”
 - b. we want to “grace others,” but when we do we become empty
 - c. thus, we must go back to Jesus for more grace and nourishment
- 3. to exhibit Christ
 - a. the end result of being “graced” by Jesus, equipped for ministry, knowing and serving Christ is that we will “look and act” like Jesus
 - b. these words “attain for the measure of the fullness of Christ” mean:
 - 1. that we become “like Him”
 - 2. that we “think like He thinks, love like He loves and serve like He serves.”
 - c. after all, WHAT DID JESUS HIMSELF DO WITH HIS LIFE?
 - 1. did He sit at home and read theological journals and books?
 - 2. did He spend His time making sure that He understood everything in the Bible BEFORE He served others?
 - 3. Jesus says:
 - a. **Matthew 20:28** – “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, **but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”
 - b. **LOOK AT THE CROSS** – THIS IS THE STATEMENT THAT JESUS MAKES TO US OF THE ESSENCE OF HIS LIFE!
 - c. HE “GRACED US.”

IV. The PEOPLE Of Spiritual Gifts.

A. NOT EQUIPPING THE PERFECT.

1. Paul says that the task of the Pastor-Teacher is to equip the “**saints**” for the work of ministry.
 - a. you may say, “**Great, I’m not a saint. That lets me ‘off of the hook.’**”
 - b. well, let’s look at how Paul uses the word saint
 1. **I Cor. 1:2** – “To the church of God in Corinth, to those **sanctified** in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours.”
 - a. Chapter 5 – immorality
 - b. Chapter 6 – lawsuits with other believers
 - c. Chapter 7 – dealing with divorce in the church
 - d. Chapter 8 – eating food sacrificed to idols
 - e. Chapter 9 – they question his apostleship
 - f. Chapter 10-11 – abusing worship
 - g. Chapter 12-14 – abusing spiritual gifts
 2. Galatians 2:22-21 – Peter showed bigotry
 - c. the word saint simply means:
 1. those who are set apart from the world: the “called out ones”
 2. those whom God has called onto Himself
 3. and you are a “saint” not because of what you have done, but because of what Christ has done for you on the cross.
 4. thus, if you are a Christian, you are a saint, and you are called to serve.
 5. **Barclay** – “During the Crimean War, **Florence Nightingale** was passing one night down a hospital ward. She paused to bend over the bed of a sorely wounded soldier. As she looked down, the wounded lad looked up and said: “**You’re Christ to me.**” A saint has been defined as “**someone in whom Christ lives again.**” That is what the true Church member ought to be.”
2. Look elsewhere where Paul teaches the “goal” of the Christian life – **Ephesians 2:8-10.**
 - a. **salvation**
 - b. **sanctification**
 - c. **service**

B. BUT PERFECTING THE EQUIPPED.

1. THIS IS OUR GOAL.
 - a. to call people to Jesus
 - b. to equip them through their spiritual gifts
 - c. and to send them out into the world so that people can see “Jesus at work.”
2. This task is never over – as we will continue to equip you until you meet Jesus in glory.

Conclusion:

1. **What is our vision at Christ Covenant in ministry?**
 - a. that we rest and rely upon the **grace of God** in this church.
 1. that we preach grace
 2. that we share grace
 3. that we experience grace
 - b. that due to the grace of God, we **CANNOT RESTRAIN OURSELVES** from showing that grace to others.
 - c. that in order to “show grace” that we will each find out what our spiritual gift is and to use it.
 1. that **NOBODY** is sitting in the pew not serving
 2. because until you are serving, you are not being Christ like
 3. **John MacArthur – “Not to use our gifts is an affront to God’s wisdom, a rebuff of His love and grace and a loss to His church.”**
 4. how do **you** feel when you give someone a gift that they do **not** use?
 - d. and that everyone who is already here at Christ Covenant as well as those whom God brings will become so equipped.
2. **Is this your vision?**
 - a. if you are a Christian, graced by Jesus, **HOW CAN YOU NOT SERVE HIM?**
 - b. let us help you to do so.

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), **the world-famous violinist**, earned a fortune with his concerts and compositions, but he generously gave most of it away. So, when he discovered an exquisite violin on one of his trips, he wasn’t able to buy it. Later, having raised enough money to meet the asking price, he returned to the seller, hoping to purchase that beautiful instrument. But to his great dismay **it had been sold to a collector**. Kreisler made his way to the new owner’s home and offered to buy the violin. The collector said it had become his prized possession and he would not sell it. Keenly disappointed, Kreisler was about to leave when he had an idea. **“Could I play the instrument once more before it is consigned to silence?”** he asked. Permission was granted, and the great virtuoso filled the room with such heart-moving music that the collector’s emotions were deeply stirred. **“I have no right to keep that to myself,”** he exclaimed. **“It’s yours, Mr. Kreisler. Take it into the world, and let people hear it.”**

1. Describe the “typical” expectation that most churches have concerning the duties of a Pastor. Was “this view” typical of your church experience while growing up? What were the results” of such expectations in your church and your Pastor?

2. Why do “such expectations” of Pastors (as listed above) not make even “common sense?”

3. What do you believe that Ephesians 4:11-12 actually teaches about the Biblical responsibility of a Pastor? What words would you use to describe a Biblical Pastor?

4. How is a church and Pastor hindered with an unbiblical view of the Pastor and people and how is a church helped with a biblical view of the Pastor and people?

5. According to Paul, who is actually responsible for the ministry of a local church?

6. If the Reformation doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers is true, how would that affect your life as a Christian?