

# Acts 12 - Building of the Body of Christ

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon explores the concept of the body of Christ as an organic body that grows and matures through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, with the Apostle Paul playing a key role as a master builder.*

**Duration:** 1:11:06

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 13:1-3, Ephesians 4:11-12, Revelation 10:1-2, Revelation 22:17

**Topics:** "Church Growth", "Body Of Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of the church in taking care of children and the weak. He shares a personal story of a dear sister who offered rest to a busy preacher, illustrating the love and support within the church. The speaker then highlights the purpose of preaching the gospel, which is to establish assemblies in every place where the gospel is heard. He emphasizes the building of the body of Christ and the role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers as gifts from God to the church for its perfection.

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## Transcript

This is Sunday evening, March the 4th, 1973, in Richmond, Virginia. Ministry is being given through Brother Stephen Kahn. The Lord reigneth.

Blessed be the name of our God. Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice. Let men sing of one's religion.

Let the Lord reigneth. The Lord reigneth. Blessed be the name of our God.

Thank God for another opportunity of... Chapter 13. Acts chapter 13, verse 1. Now there were in Antioch, in the church which was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas and Silion, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manium, foster brother of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Then having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go. They therefore having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down. Chapter 14, verse 21.

And having announced the glad tidings to that city, and having made many disciples, they returned to Lystraia and Iconium, and Antioch, establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to abide in the

faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. And having chosen them elders in each church, having prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord on whom they had believed. In the last chapter of the book of Acts, Acts chapter 28, the last two verses, 30 and 31.

And he remained, that is Paul, remained two whole years in his own hide lodging, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all freedom, unhindered. Ephesians chapter 4, we begin with verse 11. And he, that is our risen Lord, has given some apostles and some prophets, and some evangelists and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the faith, with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ.

In order that we may be no longer bathed, tossed and carried about, by every wane of that teaching which is in the flesh of man, in unprincipled cunning, with a view to systematize error, but holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ, from whom the whole body is seated together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part, work for itself, the increase of the body to itself, building up in love. That's all we'll read. We mentioned in the past that our Lord Jesus releases his light on the cross.

His light is like the new one. And this light needs to be contained in a new wine skin, because you just cannot put this new wine into the old wine skin. It will break the old wine skin, and the wine will be wasted.

For unto the life of our Lord Jesus is being released. He is looking for a new wine skin. And this new wine skin, which is to contain the new wine, is none other but the body of Christ, that is, the Church.

It is not Judaism, it is not any of the isms, but it is a living organism, the body of Christ. Because this new vessel is an organic body, therefore we find its history seems to be, in a sense, following the same order or principle as this human body of ours. After a life comes to this world, it will first go through a period of childhood.

As we say, our period of childhood is a most happy period, because during that period there is nothing but enjoyment, enjoying what our parents have prepared for us. There is no problem, because every problem is taken care of by our parents. There is no responsibility, because our parents bear the whole responsibility.

It is a time of real enjoyment, a happy time. Everyone who looks back to his or her childhood feels very happy about that time. And then we mentioned, after the period of childhood, one will enter into the stage of adolescence, and you'll find what a change it is.

It becomes a most difficult period, difficult not only for himself, but difficult for all the people who are around him. It is a period of questioning, of doubting, of searching, of conflict, of struggle, of trying to find a meaning of life. A most difficult period, and yet a most important time.

Why? Because the future is actually determined by this period. It is a formative period. Whether this life will blossom into manhood or womanhood, or whether it will be a failure, a total failure, depends very largely on this period of adolescence.

And after that period, you enter into the last phase, adulthood. There you'll find it is a continuous growth into full maturity, to fulfill the meaning of life. Now this is roughly the growth of an organic life.

Now the body of Christ being an organic body, in a sense its growth is similar to the growth of our personal life. So from that viewpoint, we say the Book of Acts, you can read the Book of Acts from that viewpoint. The Risen Lord continues to do and to teach on earth, in and through this organic body of Christ.

And we will be very much interested, and we should, to know how this body grows and matures, that it may be a fit vessel for this new life. This body of Christ is born on the day of Pentecost. I think everybody agrees to that.

On the day of Pentecost, the hundred and twenty people who assembled in that upper room, praying with one accord, and suddenly they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, into one body, into one body. And then you'll find the first five chapters in the Book of Acts, in a sense describe the happy childhood of this body of Christ. In those five chapters you'll find nothing but real enjoyment in the Lord.

How these people were together, persevered in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in prayer and in the breaking of bread. How they shared with one another, how they loved one another, and how the Lord added to them day by day. And the power of the Lord was manifest in their midst.

Happy times. But from chapter 6 to chapter 15, you'll find this body of Christ seemed to enter into a period of difficulty. Many problems arose.

And these problems needed to be solved. If they were not solved, then we do not know what will happen to this body. It was the formative period of this body of Christ.

Doubt, questions, problems, old things had to be shed off, new things had to be revealed, understood, entered into a great period of conflict. So thank God during that period, God raised up certain people, used by Him for the formation of this body of Christ according to the heavenly pattern. And altogether we mention six of them.

Stephen, the pioneer of the heavenly way. Philip, to whom the gospel was preached to the Samaritans. Paul, the master builder.

Peter, the one whom God used to open the way of the gospel to the Gentiles. Barnabas, who served as a bridge. And finally, James.

And when you come to the 15th chapter of the book of Acts, you can almost sigh a sigh of relief that the major problems concerning this new vessel, the body of Christ, had all been solved. It was not to be a part of Judaism. It was a new vessel.

Something completely new out of heaven. A fifth vessel for the Master's mission. Then from chapter 16 onwards to chapter 28, and as a matter of fact it goes on and on, because everyone who studies the book of Acts knows that the book of Acts has no ending.

It has no ending because it goes on. It will go on until this body is fully grown. And then our Lord will come back to claim it as His bride.

For tonight I think I would like to fellowship with your dear brothers and sisters in a very general way as to the maturing of the body of Christ. Because that is what these chapters really mean. Or we may put it in another way, the building of the body of Christ.

The body of Christ is on earth. The body of Christ has taken a form. And now it is a matter of building it up so that it may enter into full maturity.

And you know, in the building up of this body of Christ it seems as if one vessel was a very chosen vessel. And this vessel of course was the Apostle Paul. As a matter of fact, from chapter 1 to chapter 12 you see mainly the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

But after chapter 13 onward to chapter 28 you find it is mainly a record of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Here you find a new vessel has come into view. And Paul was a specially chosen vessel for the building of this body of Christ.

He himself told us in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 that he is a master builder, or a wise architect or some people would rather call him a faithful foreman because actually he was building under the chief architect which is Christ himself. He was actually serving under Christ like a foreman. But it is a matter of how you understand these terms.

Anyway, you know that Paul himself said he is a master builder. He was used by God in a very special way for the building of the body of Christ that is the Church. And you know, in a sense, God's calling is very wonderful.

Why? Because Paul, so far as his earthly occupation was concerned you know every Jewish boy when they grow up they are trained not only with knowledge of all kinds but every Jewish boy is trained also with an occupation. And it so happened that Paul while he was studying as a Pharisee trained in the word of God at the same time he was trained to be a tent maker. And as a tent maker he was to take materials dye them and then made them into tents.

Now that was Paul's earthly occupation. And in a very marvellous way you find that there is a definite similarity between Paul's earthly occupation and his heavenly occupation. To maintain his livelihood he made tents.

Why did he make tents? Why were tents for? They were for people to dwell, to live. And then God called him to be the master builder to build the tabernacle of God to build the temple of God for God to dwell with his own people. It is most marvellous to see that even in choosing the earthly occupation God had a hand in it.

If you have ever read one book by our dear brother me What Shall This Man Do? I think you can realise in this book it shows how even in earthly occupation God had a foreknowledge of everything. Paul was a master builder. A wise occupant.

Why? Because when he built he laid a good foundation. He said he had laid a good foundation. And this good foundation is none other it cannot be other than Christ Jesus himself.

But it is important how we build upon it. Whether we build with gold, silver and precious stones or we build with wood, straw and soot. On that day everything will be manifested.

This man Paul was apprehended by God in a very special way. God shattered his Judaism completely. God delivered him completely out of the traditions of the Father to which he was bound very firmly.

He was a free agent in God's hands. And God was able to give him that heavenly vision. He was to know the mystery of the Christ.

And he was faithful to what the Lord had revealed to him. And because of that we find he became a chosen vessel for the building of the body. But it is very interesting to note that while God was using him in such a mighty way if you inquire into his inward sentiment you will find before he met the Lord he was the Pharisee.

He was not only a Pharisee educated and joined the sect of Pharisees the strictest of the sect in Judaism. He was not only a son of Pharisees his father was a Pharisee. But he testified himself that he lived a Pharisee.

He was THE Pharisee. That great Pharisee. That was before he knew the Lord.

He thought he was somebody. Quite a big man in Judaism. He was far more advanced than his contemporaries.

He had achieved a lot. And on the road to Damascus that great Pharisee was smitten to the ground. He was reduced to nothing.

He surrendered his life to the Lord. And then the Lord began to use him. He began to preach the gospel.

And many were saved. Many were helped. And while God was using him in such a mighty way you will find his defense was I was in no way less than the greatest of the apostles.

He was not behind any apostles of the first degree. You know even among the apostles there are different magnitudes. Not all apostles are the same magnitude.

Some apostles seem to have greater magnitudes. For instance like Peter. Like John.

These people seem to be of greater magnitudes. Even of the twelve apostles. Some of the apostles we hardly heard about them.

They seem to be of a lesser degree or other apostles. But Paul himself in his defense to the church in Corinth he said I am in no way behind the apostles of the first magnitude. He was a great apostle.

Saved by God. Used by God in a mighty way. But as he continued on with the Lord when he wrote Ephesians you find Ephesians chapter 3 verse 8 Having been shown the mystery of Christ he began to say he was less than the least of all the saints.

That great apostle became less than the least of all the saints. He was not only the least of the saints but even less than the least of the saints. Why? Because of the greatness of the revelation.

And then finally if you ask how did he feel? He will tell you. In 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 15 I am the chief of this. Now that's the cycle.

He began as a great Pharisee. He was called to be one of the greatest apostles. But as he knew the Lord more and more he considered himself less than the least of the saints and finally he could only say I am the chief of this.

It is the mercy of God. Brothers and sisters anyone who is to be a chosen man for the building of the body of Christ must have this kind of inward sentiment in him or in her. As you read from chapter well actually you have to go back to chapter 13 because that's where it really started.

There in the church in Antioch were five prophets and teachers. These five prophets and teachers served the church in Antioch locally. And as they ministered unto the Lord they were fasting and praying.

Before they ministered to the church they first ministered to the Lord together in prayer, in fasting. In other words they were seeking the Lord's mind. And as they were waiting before the Lord the Holy Spirit said separate for me Barnabas and Paul for the work that I am saying.

And after they realized that the Holy Spirit had separated these two among them to be sent out for a special work they laid hands on them committed them to the Lord and they too were sent out by the Holy Spirit. As they were sent out they were apostles. Because from then on you find Barnabas and Paul were called apostles.

Why? Because they were sent out for a special work. They were not sent out by man. They were not even sent out by the church in Antioch.

They were not even sent out by their fellow workers. They were sent out by the Holy Spirit. Their fellow workers identified themselves with them.

The church backed them up. But it was God, it was the Lord himself who sent them out. They went out as apostles.

Now what was their work? In reading the book of Acts from chapter 13 on to chapter 28 Of course, we are told and we can see very clearly that altogether Paul seems to make four different trips. We call them missionary trips. Actually the word missionary is the modern word for the ancient word apostle because missionary means sent out, sent out one.

So altogether we find Paul was Paul went out in four different trips. During his first trip he went out with Barnabas. They left Antioch.

They first went to Cyprus an island off the coast because Cyprus was the native country of Barnabas. So after they visited Cyprus then they returned to the mainland. They came to Pisidia.

And there in Antioch God began to work. And because of persecution they proceeded on into Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and these places. And every place they went they preached the gospel.

And a number of people came to the Lord. After they had covered this area they came back. Revisited these places.

The brothers and sisters, those that were saved and they encouraged them. In other words, they were not just going out preaching the gospel and got people saved. People were born.

And then they loved them. No, they came back and nurtured them. And established them in the Lord.

Exalting them, encouraging them. And then they appointed elders among them. In other words they established churches in all these places.

And then they went back to Antioch. That was the first trip. Now if you notice you'll find during the second trip of course Paul and Barnabas were separated for certain reasons.

But here you'll find Paul went out with Silas and Timothy. And they revisited these places Antioch of Pisidia Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, these places. And after they had passed through the Phrygian and Galatian countries Paul had the desire to go to Asia.

That was on his left. He was facing west. And on the left was the great Roman province of Asia.

Very densely populated. A very important province. So Paul had the desire of going to Asia.

But the spirit of Christ forbade him to go. Then he looked to the north, upward and saw that Roman province a bit near. Another important province.

And he was thinking of going there. But the Holy Spirit forbade him to go. So he was not allowed to go to the south nor go to the north.

So he travelled on towards the west until he came to Tuas. And Tuas was a city by the Asian sea. He came to the sea coast.

To the seashore. And where should they go? And it was at that moment you remember God gave Paul a vision. A Macedonian was calling for help.

Come and help us. So the next morning when Paul shared his vision with the brethren they all decided that it was the Lord. The Lord was calling them to cross the Asian sea into Europe.

This was the first time that a gospel was sent from Asia to Europe. Now sometimes we think that the gospel began in Europe. But as a matter of history you find it began in Asia.

But here was the first time that a gospel was preached to Europe. So they crossed the Asian sea and they got to Philippi. And from Philippi they went on to Thessalonica.

And from there they went on to Athens and on to Corinth. And during the second missionary trip we find Corinth became as it were the central work of Paul during the second missionary trip. Now what were they doing? Wherever they went they preached the gospel.

But was that all? No. They established the believers. They established the churches in all these places.

They went back again to Antioch. And then the third time Paul again came out. And after he had passed through all these places Frigia and Galatian countries he at this time was led of God into Asia.

The province of Asia. He came to Athens. And he was there for three years.

That became the center of his labor until all Asia heard of the gospel. And what were they doing there? Not only preaching the gospel building up the faith but everywhere they were they established the churches. And of course after that he came to Jerusalem and then he was taken.

And the fourth missionary trip was actually a compulsory trip because they brought him to go. But thank God when we come to the end of the book of Acts we find that he was given liberty to rent his own house. And there he preached the kingdom of God to everyone that came to see him freely unhindered.

The gospel had come to the end of the world because Rome at that time was the center of the world and we may say it is also the end. Now that was the history of it. Now why does the Holy Spirit relate these historical facts to us? As we read the work of Paul the ministry of Paul in all these various places brothers and sisters do you see a divine principle behind the work? How do you build the body of Christ? I think people today are very much interested in this question.

The last five years especially everywhere you go you find God's people are talking about the body of Christ. Five years ago you rarely heard even the term the body of Christ. Some people might write about it but it was very rare.

But the last five years not only those who really love the Lord and are really searching and seeking the Lord back they were in a sense occupied with the body of Christ. Even people who have a very liberal concept of Christ see Christianity as a whole. They are also talking about the body of Christ.

Everybody seems to be interested in the body of Christ. How is this body of Christ built? How do you build this body of Christ? How is this body of Christ grown? Into full growth? I think this is what Acts from chapter 13 to chapter 28 is trying to tell us. It is not just Paul traveling here and there.

It is not just Paul preaching the gospel wherever he goes. You find the preaching the gospel is for a purpose. After he has preached the gospel you find invariably there is something that is established.

And that which is established is in every place where he is. Every place where the gospel was preached. It will leave behind it again and again in that as a land.

That is what you see here. Brother let me tell you a story. I don't know if you know our dear brother Boxing.

There are some books written by him on the paper. I know him personally. We are good friends.

This dear brother Boxing of India I use him because I think he illustrates something here. You see he came from a pretty wealthy family. His father was an industrialist.

He was a Sikh. And his mother was a most devoted Sikh believer. They have their own religion.

When our brother was studying in India he studied in mission school. But he would have nothing to do with Christ. And after he finished studies he wanted to go to England for further education.

And his mother helped him to get his father's permission to send him to England to study on one condition. That he would not change his religion. So he promised his mother.

He said I'll never change my religion. So he went to England to study. After he arrived in England he met some of his friends from India.

And his friends began to influence him. You know. He tried to be as Englishman as possible.

That was his plan. Everything that an Englishman could do he would do. Just to prove that he was not in any sense inferior.

And once there was a trip to Canada. He joined that trip. And one day on the boat there was a Sunday service.

It was held in the first class alone. He wanted to go to the first class alone. So he went to that service.

When he went to that service someone was preaching there but he said he couldn't remember anything of it. He didn't hear anything. But after the sermon was preached that preacher asked everybody to kneel down and pray.

And everybody around him knelt down. And he was the only one sitting there. And he was very, very embarrassed.

He was trying to get out but he couldn't because he was surrounded. So at that moment he remembered. He said when he was a child his mother used to take him to visit all kinds of temples.

Even temples belong to other religions, not Sikh religion. And his mother always told him when you go to any temple you have to show respect. Even if you are not a follower but you have to show respect.

So that word came to him I have to show respect. Even though I know not this God but to show respect. So he knelt down.

And while he knelt down the presence of God was so living and real. He didn't understand. That was all.

So after he arrived in Canada one day his friend asked him What gift do you want me to give you? He said, and he started to read. When he came to John 3, 16 he was found later. He was saved in Canada.

And after he was saved he continued his study. He was a mechanical engineer. He was very critical of the missionaries.

Because he felt the missionaries in India they lived such a high class life. You know. So he was very critical of these missionaries.

And he was determined that he will contribute whatever money he had to preach the gospel. But one day the Lord spoke to him and said how about you? Oh he said Lord I'll go back and earn money and then I'll support. But the Lord said no.

So he went back. Talking to anybody who would like to talk with him. And his only meal often time was a tea that people invited.

That was how he faced God. And the Lord began to use him. Many many got saved.

He traveled all around India and many people got saved. But after he was busily preaching the gospel and got many saved he had a problem. A real problem.

While he was preaching in certain cities many people got saved. But the second time he went there most of them did. And that troubled him.

Children are born. But who takes care of them? The churches, so called churches were so weak. They couldn't take care of these new born babies.

And he didn't know what to do. So one day he received a letter from a dear sister, an English woman. I knew her very well.

This English woman who came from somewhere else, she wrote to him and said, if you need rest you can come to my home. And the Lord spoke to Boxer. He was so busy.

He really felt he needed some quiet time and some rest. And the Lord said, you go to that widow. Because their sister was a widow.

Elderly widow. So he went there. And I was told for several months maybe two months four of them came together every morning, doing nothing asking the Lord to show them what the Lord wanted.

How can this problem be solved? And after they had prayed for a spirit the Lord began to reveal to Brother Boxer. So he went down to Madras and started his life. And you know dear brothers and sisters, hundreds and hundreds of Indians I mention this just to point out one thing.

And I do believe that this is the problem that many of God's best servants are facing. They faithfully serve the Lord going here and there getting many souls saved. Where do you take this? How do you take care of this? Is this the way to build the body of Christ? What is the way to build the body of Christ? Probably we think only in terms of the body of Christ in the universal sense.

There you go. The body of Christ is universal. Christ ahead.

The body of Christ is everywhere. It's universal. But how do you build the universal thing? How do you do it? In the book of Acts it shows us a principle.

And that is Paul all the time he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. He saw the body of Christ. And he was working for the building of the body of Christ.

But in what way? How? How do you build the body of Christ? To build the body of Christ in each way. In other words, the body of Christ universal is to be built through the body of Christ. After he preached the gospel, he did not leave them to enter it, establish it and attach testimony in that locality.

He went to another place and another church. It is not just evangelism. It is evangelism with.

And here you find the church in Antioch, the church in Lystra, the church in Derbe, the church in Philippi, the church in Thessalonica, the church in Athens, the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus, the church in Rome. You'll find here and there everywhere lots of churches. The local expression of the body of Christ universal appears here and there.

Are all these churches different from the church of God universal? No. They are the local expression of the church. In building the local church, you build the church universal.

In building the body of Christ in a local thing, then the body of Christ in the universal thing is being accomplished. That is the only practical way of building. Use another illustration.

When you open the book of Revelation, I think everybody is interested in the end. I don't know. When you read a book, what do you do? You know, when I read a book, I usually do it.

I will open the first two or three pages and then I'll go to the last two or three pages. I'm so anxious to know what will be the end. Because the end is really the goal.

Brothers and sisters, when you open the book of Revelation, if you open the first three chapters, and then you go to the last three chapters, what do you see there? In the first three chapters, you'll find the seven churches in Asia. And in the last two chapters, you'll find the New Jerusalem. In other words, how is New Jerusalem built? The New Jerusalem that appears at the end, at the consummation of God's workings, actually is built in Revelation 2 and 3. It is because the Lord is building the church local in these seven churches.

Therefore, you'll find eventually and ultimately the church universal as represented by New Jerusalem comes. That's the way. We are all interested in New Jerusalem.

Why? Because it is so perfect, full of the glory of God. Everyone who reads Revelation 2 and 3 feel a little bit downhearted. Of the seven churches, only one church, the church in Philadelphia, seems to have all praise and no rebuke.

But, even so, there is a warning. Hold fast, lest it is taken away. Brothers and sisters, the Lord is dealing with the church local in these churches.

Why? He is dealing with the church local in order that He may perfect the church. Today, it is the church local that the Lord is working. And tomorrow, you don't have the church. Otherwise, brothers and sisters, when we say we are building the church of God, it is so very difficult.

So difficult. How do you deal with it? How do you deal with the body of Christ? It is only when you come down to the place where you are then you begin to see that it is really building on earth, not the temple in the air. Difficult work.

Not all pleasant. Many problems have to be faced. But this is where the work begins.

Brothers and sisters, what is the Lord really doing today? The Lord said, I will build my church upon this rock. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. But how is He building? Where is He building? What is He building? It is nothing in all these places.

A lamp stand here. A lamp stand there. Then there is nothing there.

All the building is very little in practice. That is what the last part of the book of Acts tries to show us. How is this body of Christ? That too complete here.

You come to Ephesians. Now in Ephesians chapter 4 you find that for the building of the body of Christ. Now how? God, the risen Lord, He gives to the church some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.

Now these four classes of people are God's gift to the church. This is different from 1 Corinthians 12. This is different from Romans 12.

Why? Because in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, these are spiritual gifts. These are gifts. Gifts according to grace.

But in Ephesians chapter 4, these four kinds of people, they are gifts. The people are gifts. God gives some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, and God gives these four classes of people to the church as gifts.

Now what is their worth? Their worth is for the perfecting of the saints. Their worth is to perfect the saints. In what way? For what purpose? With a view to the worth of the saints.

These men are given to the church to perfect the saints. In other words, to help them grow in Christ. To help them know the Lord more.

To help them to have more of the life of Christ. To help them to develop their gifts. To help them to fulfill their function.

They are to stimulate, to activate all the saints. That these saints may be strong in spirit, in life, and in function. That is the worth of these four classes.

For the purpose. And what is the purpose for the perfecting of the saints? When the saints are perfected, what will happen? With a view. There is a purpose there.

The purpose is the work of the minister. Now brothers and sisters, we often think of ministry in terms of these four kinds of people. We think that the apostles, the prophets, the teachers, the evangelists, the pastors, now they are in the ministry.

If we get into that, we get into ministry. Their ministry is special ministry. But the ministry in the Bible is the ministry of the body.

That is the ministry. You often hear people talk about body ministry. Now what is body ministry? When people talk about body ministry, they are thinking more in terms of, I'm ministering to the body.

No. Body ministry is the body ministry itself. That's body ministry.

These people are given by God to activate, to reinforce, to help build up the spiritual life of these saints. And as these saints are growing stronger in the Lord and healthier, then you'll find the saints begin to do the work of the ministry. The ministry here is the ministry of the body.

Not the ministry of these four people. I'm very happy when I read Dr. Leipzig. No.

He was an Anglican bishop. And when he commented on this verse, he was such a scholar. And he was such a man of God.

When he commented on this verse, he said, the ministry here is the body ministry. It is the ministry of the body. We do not see the body.

Why? Because all we see is certain kinds of people are ministering to us. And we are just here as the audience. We don't see the body.

But the effect of the special ministries of these people upon the saints should produce body ministry. They are not to substitute body ministry. To replace body ministry.

To monopolize spiritual ministry. They are to stimulate, encourage, bring forth. And when all the members of the body begin to function according to each work.

In other words, the spirit of God, the life of Christ is working in every member of the body. All different. All are different.

Not all the same. But as people's spiritual life are built up, then everyone begins to contribute that part of the Lord's work in him and in her. And everyone is contributing it to the body.

The result is the body is building up. The body of Christ is not built by these special people. The body of Christ is built directly by the members of the body.

If the members of the body are not perfect, that is to say, do not grow, then they are not able to fulfill the ministry of the body. And if they are not fulfilling the ministry of the body, then the body will never be built up. Never be built up.

People may be preaching and preaching and preaching for a hundred years, but all you find is a congregation, not a body. The body is not built up. It is the building of a congregation.

You may build up a congregation to three thousand members, but it is a congregation. Where is the body? And if the body is not built up, where is the body universal? God is very practical. We have to see that this is the way that the Lord is working.

Every member of the body, as it grows and matures, then begins to function. Function together severally, but coordinately, undone. And when this happens, the body builds itself up.

These men, given by God to the church, are like the scaffold. When you build a big building, you need some scaffold. But after the building is finished, the scaffold is taken.

Because it is the building, not the body. The body of Christ begins to build itself up. And this is what Paul and the others will do in the book of Acts.

They preach the gospel, souls worship, they encourage them, they build them up. Then some begin to manifest more mature life, and they will put in more responsibility. And there you'll find the members of the body begin to function, to fulfill its ministry.

And here, there, everywhere, the body begins. That is the building of the body of Christ. And this is eventually fulfilling Revelation chapter 21 and 22.

So may the Lord show them, you know, show us in the book of Acts the principle, the working of God. And if we come to see this, then we will be working with God. And not just working, many are working for God.

But few are working with our Lord Jesus when he was on earth. He did the work of the Father. He was not doing his own work, or doing some work for the Father.

More than that, he was working the work. And may this be true with all of us, that our laboring on earth may not be just a working, but really working. Oh Lord, do reveal to us thy mind as to the way thou will build thy church, this body of Christ.

We ask thee that thou will get us, not only to the third heaven, to see the great Revelation, but thou will lead us down to earth to deal with the practical matters. We do desire to see thy church built. We do desire to see thy people grow spiritually, that each may fulfill its function to the building up of the body of Christ in life.

Oh, may this be real, and we just commit ourselves to thee, Lord. If this is what thou are doing, we want to work with thee. In thy precious name, we ask thee.

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