

023 Equip The Saints Part 9 Putting it all together

If you have followed me through this last section on equipping the saint's then you have done very well.

There has to be a reason for all this you may ask?

Well yes there is and a lot of people in traditional 21 Century church structure are going to have real difficulty with all this.

I have to come back and remind you of the very basics.

It is all about God's Glorious Kingdom – His Unshakable Kingdom Principles.

Eph 3:8-11

*Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*

*10 His intent was that **now, through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known **to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**,*

11 according to his eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The aspect that was hidden was the wonder of His Eternal Kingdom in Christ Jesus made up of people of every generation, kindred, tongue and nation and this to be displayed or made plain to every being in the heavenly realms and on earth. God's marvelous plan was that this amazing, Eternal Kingdom, brought to us through the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ Jesus, expressing God's manifold Wisdom and Grace is to be made known **NOW** 'through the church'. All this was planned before the foundation of the earth, planned in eternity – for eternity, effective in the here and now.

Is it little wonder then, as God had planned in ages past, that His church was to be the main instrument through which His eternal purposes were to be revealed to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, that the church would become the main focus of attack by unholy rulers and authorities from those realms.

There are a number of ways to try and destroy an enemy. There is the full force out frontal attack and bombardment way. Jesus experienced that right from his birth when Joseph and Mary had to take the infant Jesus and run and live in Egypt as Herod was trying to murder him.

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Matt 2:13-15

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

*14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,
15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."*

Then there is the open opposition attack. Again Jesus bore that too.

Matt 22:15-18

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.

16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.

17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?"

Then there is the insider – the informant. Again Jesus suffered that attack too.

Matt 26:21-25

21 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.

24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

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Then there is the cunning attack as a result of the informants work.

Matt 26:46-50

46 Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."

49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

50 Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Now Jesus experienced everything for the church so the church has a Lord and Head who knows what it will go through.

Eph 1:22-23

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Now the early church went through the same experiences.

The murder attacks came early on.

Acts 7:57-60

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him,

58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

And we know that down through the centuries thousands of saint's have been martyred for their faith in Christ.

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Then came the open opposition attacks

Acts 8:1-3

1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Then came the informant – insider attacks

Gal 2:4

4[This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

Then some of the results of insider attacks.

Heb 10:34

34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

Throughout the New Testament we see again and again these attacks already happening to the church endeavoring to prevent it from being the ‘channel’ of God’s wonderful revelation. Paul the apostle writes over and over related to these challenges. Down through the centuries the church has suffered the same attacks more and more as the Day of the Lord approaches.

However, the most sinister and that which has the most far-reaching effect and is warned about more than any other, is that of the ‘insider’ attack of the enemy.

Rom 16:17-18

7 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

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Again I repeat what I have said so many times before in these studies, go to God's word, check EVERYTHING out and then stand on the truth.

Now the Lord being the head of the church knows all these challenges and that is why he set in the church apostles, prophets, evangelist, shepherds, teachers, to "**Equip the Saints**".

If the Eternal Lord, The Creator of ALL things, the one who flung the stars and planets in place, the one who came and gave His own life a ransom to save us, the one who rose from the dead, ascended to the Fathers Right hand with ALL things under His feet, the one who is the Head of the Church, the one who is coming again and will judge the world, if He set these ministries in the church, then who do we think we are to disagree with Scripture, design our own ideas of church, set up our own denominations and isms and schism because we want it to suit us?

The Lord put all these ministries in the body because He said it's going to take ALL these ministries to "Equip the Saints."

When we compare (typically in the West) the 21st century church and the New Testament church they are so far apart, it's tragic.

- We have people go to this church because they have more comfortable seats.
- We have people go to that church because that is where the dignitaries go.
- We have people go to this other church because they have great programs.
- We have people go to another church because there is a lot of humor in the preaching and its fun to listen to.
- We have people go there because it is only a one-hour service.
- We have people go here because the parking is so easy and they have a shuttle.
- We have people go to this other church because it's the biggest in the area.
- We have people go to yet another church because they are made to feel comfortable and are not challenged.
- We have people go to yet still another church because the message is only 10 minutes long.
- We have people go to still yet another church because it has more a liberal approach and is not so demanding.
- We have people go to that church because the minister is gay and we want to appear non-judgmental.
- We have people go to that church because 'they bring out the inner power that is within'.

And the list goes on.

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In the New Testament they went to the **only** church because of the total recognition of sin and that Christ is the ONLY way of salvation and more than anything else they had a deep love for the Lord, and the power of the Holy Spirit was there. To become a Christian could probably mean they would lose their life, or be thrown out of the family, or imprisoned, or beaten.

Now I realize that there are those in this present 21st century who this last paragraph is still so fitting, particularly in Muslim and Idolatrous worshipping nations. Our hearts and prayers should be for these suffering Christians every day, because one day it could happen here in the West.

Again I also know there are churches and leaders who are the exception to the list above and they serve the Lord with pure hearts and motives and are totally committed to the purposes of God, reaching out and going out with the Gospel and demonstrating His Eternal Kingdom and discipling the people in the ways of Truth and Righteousness.

But again I ask the question. Is there recognized input and equipping from all five of Christ's ministry?

As far as I understand the New Testament church, a local fellowship should have the ongoing direction and vision of apostolic ministry and demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power, the inspiration and anticipation of the Prophetic ministry, the outward looking and reaching encouraged and led by the Evangelist. Then there is the overall caring of the flock by the Shepherd and then the solid Teaching of Biblical foundation of God's Word ministered to each life. Here then the Elders take all this and work it into the every day fabric of the peoples lives in home church throughout the week with side by side loving and caring shepherding, developing Godly character and conduct.

Now you tell me what a POWERHOUSE that fellowship would be.

BUT this can only be accomplished through Godly, Holy Spirit joined relationships, not organization.

We have all seen mans way of organizing things like this, with no true Biblical understanding, no committed tested and tried relationships and they have ended in disaster.

Many say ' Oh I have been in home groups and this and that happened and they fell apart so I won't go to those'. Sad and true as that is, there are just the same disasters in large traditional churches too, but people still go.

I wonder why they will go to the one and not the other?

Maybe the answer is that they can hide in the larger setting, but you cannot hide in the small group. But again the question is, does hiding help you grow? Probably not, so we end up with our 21st Century church again.

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Now you can see the enemy will do all he can through hurts, division, disagreements, mistrust, legalism, religiosity, formalism etc, the entire insider arsenal of attacks, to bring down the church and prevent it from being the triumphant powerhouse of God's awesome Revelation.

I am going to conclude this section of the studies with 2 scriptures.

Matt 11:12

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

It is going to take a totally committed and a forceful company of people to bring about God's Eternal Purpose for His church. Make no mistake, it WILL happen because Christ said it would. He said He WILL build His Church and hell itself will not be able to withstand it.

I have a message on the Cruise ship or the Battleship mentality. Most of the 21st century church is on the cruise ship, just sailing along and don't rock the boat.

Jesus didn't die for a cruise ship, and that is not what He said he would build. The New Testament church was a great warship ready, equipped and in the thick of battle.

God is taking the cruise ship into dry dock and refitting it as His battleship. However, he won't have holidaymakers or vacationers on board any more, he is going to get soldiers equipped and ready for battle. Are you a cruiser or a soldier?

The second scripture is the whole reference we have been talking about in this section of study.

According to this;

- There is a lot of service to perform
- There is a lot of "Equipping" to be accomplished
- There is a lot of building up to do
- There is a lot of unity to achieve
- We have a lot of maturing to do
- We have a lot of knowledge of Christ to obtain
- There is lot of growing up to do and doing away with infancy
- We have a lot of truth speaking in love to do
- We have a lot of support to learn to give to each other
- We have a lot of lifestyle to change
- We have a lot of stinking thinking to get rid of
- We have a lot of 'old self' to put off
- We have a lot of 'New Attitude' to take on board
- We have a whole 'New Self' to put on

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- We have a whole load of 'falsehood' to dispose of
- We have a lot of 'devil footholds' to break up
- We have a lot of good honest work to do
- We have a lot of unwholesome talk to stop out of our mouths
- We have a lot of bitterness to get rid of
- We have a lot of rage and anger to get rid of
- We have a lot of brawling that needs to stop
- We have slander that has to cease along with every form of malice
- We have a lot of kindness and compassion to give to and receive from each other
- We have a whole load of forgiveness that has to be expressed

Now we see that the Lord knew we would need ALL these ministries to make us ready for His glorious return. Man! We have a long way to go and a lot of work to accomplish in our lives for that to happen, but He has given us the wonderful Holy Spirit who can work all this in our lives if we are willing and obedient to His Word and walk according to it's instruction.

Read the whole Scripture and may the Holy Spirit enable us all to *attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Eph 4:11-5:1

*11 It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,
12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up
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.
14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.
15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.
16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.
18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.
19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.
20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.
21 Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.
22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;*

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- 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;*
24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.
26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.
28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands that he may have something to share with those in need.
29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.