

# Mending the Nets

## Examining the Equipping of the Saints in Ephesians 4:11-12

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and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints into work  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Greek Word Καταρτισμός	4
Paul's Equipping of the Saints	31
The Gifts or Gifted Men	48
Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists	55
Pastors and Teachers	106
The Purpose for Equipping the Saints	111

# Mending the Nets

## Examining the Equipping of the Saints in Ephesians 4:11-12

### Introduction

**Ephesians 4:11-13** And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the **equipping** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. NKJV

**Matthew 4:21** And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. KJV

**Lamentations 5:21** Restore us to Thee, O LORD, that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old. NASB

Paul declares in Ephesians 4:11-12 that the Lord Jesus Christ has given gifts to men. Some take this to mean that Christ gave certain men the gift of apostleship, the gift of being a prophet, the gift of being an evangelist, the gift of being a pastor or a teacher. Others take it to mean that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are themselves the gifts that were given to men. Either way, the point is that gifts were given so that Christians could be perfected or equipped unto two functions—the work of ministry and the building up of the Body of Christ.

These two verses are so important for the spiritual well-being of the Church for they are given to us by the Holy Spirit during this dispensation of grace to help the Church grow to a place of maturity and safety. They are given so that the saints will no longer be like little children, so easily intrigued by every new wind of teaching that suddenly blows into the Church—teachings that promise them well-being and success, but in reality are nothing more than just empty teachings from men who love to gamble with the lives of the saints (Eph. 4:14).<sup>1</sup>

Paul tells us in these few verses that the purpose of these gifts given by Christ to His own are so we will not be caught up like a ship in a raging storm, being tossed about, here and there, forward and backward, up and down, never being able to reach our desired goal. He tells us these gifts are given so the saints can grow up in all things into Christ so the Church will not be led astray any longer by such unscrupulous men, who practice such subterfuge. Because of all this, it is very important to fully understand the overall context of the passage.

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<sup>1</sup> What most English readers do not realize is that Paul is using a word associated with gambling in Eph. 4:14 in conjunction with the winds of doctrine. He uses the Greek word *κοβεία* (*sleight* in the KJV) which literally means playing with dice. Thus the imagery is that unscrupulous men give forth the thought that one can win the role of the dice, knowing full well that the odds are against them. It is the age-old deceptiveness of gambling, where the one who really wins is the one who encourages others to gamble. Thus, the analogy is that men take advantage of the saints, by introducing some new teaching or methodology that promises to be helpful to individual hearts, or helpful to the Church as a whole, but in reality, after seeming success, ultimately leads to nothing but heartache and loss, just as is so true in the lives of so many, who have had their lives and families destroyed by the addiction of gambling.

With that in mind let us begin our study with 1) the underlying meaning of the Greek word καταρτισμός, translated as “perfecting” or “equipping” of the saints, for this word is key to the whole text. Then, after examining that word, we will examine 2) the five-fold gifts or gifted men listed, and then conclude with a brief discussion on 3) the stated purpose for such equipping or perfecting of the saints.

## The Greek Word Καταρτισμός

As we just said, the key to this whole text is to rightly understand the word translated “perfecting” in the KJV, and “equipping” in the NASB. This word is the Greek word καταρτισμός. The word does, indeed, carry the meaning of “perfection,” and so it is translated as such in the King James Version of the Bible. It bespeaks a state where everything is brought into “perfect working order,” a state wherein everything is seen as “functioning normally.” This is the only place where this word is used in the entire New Testament.

Moreover, what is so interesting (because Paul used this word with those who lived in the city of Ephesus) is the fact that this same word is used in extra-biblical literature of a Greek physician from Ephesus. His name was Soranus (c. 100 A.D.) and he uses the word for the “setting of a bone.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, he was using the word of the state of a bone, having been reset after being broken, which, of course bespeaks the bone being reset to its original condition.

Another extra-biblical usage of the word, which will help us understand the intended meaning of this word chosen by Paul, is that given by Liddell and Scott in their lexicon. The first gloss they give for the word in this usage is *restoration*—

“καταρτισμός, ὁ, *restoration, reconciliation*, Clem. Al. 638.”<sup>3</sup>

So, if we were to use that gloss, Ephesians 4:11-12 would then read as follows—

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957) pg. 419

<sup>3</sup> Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1883) pg. 771



**Ephesians 4:11-12** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **for the restoration of the saints** to the work of ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ:

This gloss is interesting, because one of most widely used English Bibles in the English speaking world, before the existence of the King James Bible, was the Geneva Bible, which referenced this idea of *restoration*. While the 1583 edition of this Bible translated this word as, “gathered together,” they included a margin note for the word indicating that the word contained this thought of *restoration*. Their gloss for this word in the margin of their Bible read as follows: “to *restore* that which was out of order.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in their mind, it seems they understood Paul to be saying that whenever the Church falls into disrepair and disorder, Christ uses the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the pastors and teachers to remedy the situation, by bringing the saints back together, so as to *restore* them to their intended order and function.

This underlying nuance of this Greek word is also seen a few years later in 1592, where this Greek word was translated into English as “repairing.” Richard Turnbull of Corpus Christi College in London rendered Eph. 4:12 this way in his Bible Commentary—“for the repairing of the Saintes, for the worke of the ministry, and for the edification of the body of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> (I left the old spelling intact, only changing the old letter-form of the letter “s” to its current letter-form.)

And then in 1599, one of the later editions of the Geneva Bible actually incorporated that understanding of the

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<sup>4</sup> For an actual look at this Bible, please see the link to the 1583 “Noblest” Geneva Bible at—[www.bibles-online.net/](http://www.bibles-online.net/)

<sup>5</sup> Richard Turnbull, *An Exposition Upon the Canonical Epistle of Saint James* (John Windet, London, 1592) pg. A2b

Greek word καταρτισμός into the very text of Paul's epistle, changing it from the earlier, "gathered together" to "repairing," as can be seen below. This is how it read in the Geneva Bible of 1599. (I updated the spelling).

**Ephesians 4:12** For the **repairing** of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the body of Christ.

And, then finally in 1611, as we have already mentioned, the King James Version translators rendered the word as "perfecting," which continued to be the most common rendering of the word until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In their mind it seems that they understood this "gathering together" of the saints back to their proper order and function was not only a restoration, or a repairing, it also was a form of perfecting.

And so their rendering of the word as "perfecting" continued during the ensuing years leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this time, however, while many Greek Lexicographers included this idea of "perfection" for the word, they also continued to include the underlying thought of "restoration," or "repairing."

For instance, this is how it appeared in John Pickering's Greek Lexicon from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"καταρτισμός, οὗ, ὁ, a renewing, **perfecting, restoration**, setting in place; reconciliation." <sup>6</sup>

And John Groves, also from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, declared it this way in his Greek Lexicon:

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<sup>6</sup> John Pickering, *A Comprehensive Lexicon of the Greek Language* (Rice and Kendall, Boston, 1840) pg. 707

“Καταρτισμός, -οῦ, ὁ, (fr. same) the sitting or reduction of a bone or joint; a joining or fitting of parts; reconciliation; **repair**, amendment; a finishing, completion, **perfection**.”<sup>7</sup>

So what we see is that even with the change to “perfecting” from the earlier idea of “restoring” and “repairing,” the Greek Lexicons of the 19<sup>th</sup> century still included the previous glosses for the word, i.e. as warranted by context. And, if one stops to think about it, one can see why the nuance of restoration does not necessarily preclude the meaning of perfecting. The reason for this is because perfection can only be measured by comparison to some “existing” standard! And, since man cannot create perfection, not being God, we must look backward for our standard, not forward to something we think we can do in order to bring about the perfection we desire (cf. Deut. 32:4).

Thus, the only way we can be perfected is not by looking forward to some new standard, but by looking backward to a pre-existing standard, not by introducing new things, but by returning to the old things, not by the creation of new forms and ways of doing the Lord’s work that we think will improve things, but returning to the original forms and old ways.

**Lamentations 5:21** Restore us to Thee, O LORD, that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old. NASB

Those who think they can reach perfection by any other means for themselves, or for the Church, are deceived. They are like our parents of old, who thought it was possible to improve upon the “way” which God originally gave to them as a way to live and to walk (that being represented, of

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<sup>7</sup> John Groves, *A Greek English Dictionary*, (Hilliard, Gray, and Company, Boston, 1839) pg. 326

course, by the Tree of Life, as opposed to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil).

This was the first temptation presented to Eve by the Serpent (Gen. 3:5). Eve sought to improve herself. She sought “perfection” and “wisdom” in a new way that was different from the way that God provided (Gen. 3:6). She thought she could become perfect like God, which in her mind was a “good” thing, by going forward to new ways and thinking (as introduced by the Serpent), in complete contradiction to the old ways and thinking (as found in the original words of God given to Adam). Beloved, living by the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil will never lead to perfection, for ourselves, or for the Church; such perfection can only be found by living by the Tree of life!

And so for us, because we are born dead in our trespasses and sin, the only standard of perfection we have is that which is found behind us, which is none other than Christ Jesus our LORD! He is the only revealed standard of perfection we have, and for us to see that perfection we must look backward to Him (represented by the Tree of Life) not forward to new ways or new methods, developed by well-intentioned Christians, who are offering what may seem to be a “good” way forward (not being sinful or evil, at least to on the surface) but, in reality, is not a good way forward, because it does not come from His wisdom and life, but rather from man’s own wisdom and life, from man’s own creative ways (represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), rather than from the Creator Himself. It cannot bring perfection and enduring success. It never has and never will. It will always wither away.

Unfortunately, however, like Adam and Eve, many Churches in Christendom do not believe this. History always seems to repeat itself, and throughout Church History many Churches have often sought perfection and improvement in

things gleaned from human wisdom and understanding, and not from those things given to us in Scripture.

For example, one of the oldest Historic Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, believed that perfection could be found by looking forward to new ways and thinking. They created their doctrine of development, whereby the Church could only be perfected through the additional authority of their oral traditions codified into Canon Law. This mindset of the doctrine of development allowed them to look forward for solutions, conforming themselves to the age they lived in by adapting many things from the world into their beliefs—things which they considered helpful and not evil, and so acceptable. This allowed them to continue making more traditions for the Church to follow (which are really nothing but the traditions of men—Mark 7:7-9). And what is so ironic in it all, is that they still will look backward, tenaciously clinging to those man-made traditions they developed through the first six centuries of Church History, while ignoring the true older apostolic traditions, which are from Christ and are preserved for us in God’s Word!

This same mindset can also be found in the Orthodox segment of Christendom, perhaps, to a slightly less degree than the Roman Catholic Church, but to a degree that still rejects any thought of the sufficiency of Scripture, thinking their man-made traditions are also a necessary ingredient for their ongoing perfection.

And then continuing on with Church History, we then see some Churches in Christendom rejecting these traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and the similar traditions of the Orthodox Churches; we see them returning to the sufficiency of Scripture. We see, during this period called the Reformation, the wonderful doctrine of justification by faith being restored to the Churches. But even with their wonderful restoration and reformation, we still do not see them entirely abandoning this mindset that looked forward for things arising

from human wisdom (despite their plea of *Sola Scriptura*). They did not return, so to speak, to eating fully of the Tree of Life (representing the sufficiency of Christ in all things). They understood the sufficiency of Christ in regard to their justification, but not completely in regard to their sanctification. In that regard, they were still partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. How?—by believing they were saved to walk like the first Adam (i.e. before he fell), rather than being saved to walk like the last Adam, which was Christ Jesus our Lord.

With such a mindset they began to approach Scripture only with the human logic of their soul, rather than with the human logic of their soul, along with the spiritual discernment of their spirit in Christ (perhaps, in part, because many are dichotomists and not trichotomists). And because of this mindset, certain things began to be rationalized away by human logic, and certain things began to be allowed to enter the Church. As a result, during the last four hundred years, since that time of Reformation, we now see some of those old Churches routinely adopting things influenced by the thinking of the world, which just a few years ago they never would have dreamed possible. Because of their lack of spiritual discernment some of those old denominational Churches now believe they have found a more enlightened, liberal and progressive way forward for the Church. Things that were once considered sinful are now considered acceptable.

During this period of rationalization, in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we then see certain Churches rejecting this forward looking, and liberal mindset. They became known as evangelical Churches, or as fundamental Churches. Rather than looking forward, they continued looking backward to the sufficiency of Scripture and the sufficiency of Christ for any need that might arise in their life, or in the life of the Church. The power of the Spirit was paramount in their thinking for any work of the

Lord, not the fine-tuning of natural talent. This faithfulness continued on for a few decades, but now, unfortunately, just as with the older mainline Churches, we now see many of these Churches, known as evangelical, beginning to also look “forward,” to new ways and new methods of doing things for the perfecting the saints. These include such things as the now popular and acceptable incorporation of human psychology (relabelled Christian psychology) into the mindset and walk of the believer, as well as methods gleaned from the corporate world of business and marketing, which are now being introduced as efficient ways to do the work of the Lord. We even see new ways of worship being brought into the Church’s worship, which have introduced the sensual stimuli that are found in so many worldly concerts.

In much of the Evangelical portion of Christendom, natural talent has become paramount in doing the work of the Lord, rather than the use of spiritual gifts. Indeed, the distinction between the two has all but been lost and the two are now commonly confused. Such forward-looking beliefs can never bring perfection to the saints, for perfection is only found in Christ by way of the cross, whereas, these new ways are abandoning the old ways of the cross with the denial of self, and are replacing them with new ways that encourage Christians to go forward by “believing in yourself,” “being confident in yourself,” and by “loving yourself.”

These new ways and new methods are also being incorporated into the philosophy of Bible translation. New translations of the Bible routinely dilute and alter the meaning of some texts, because the translators are relying more and more on the new concept of dynamic equivalence, which, in turn, is influenced by the science of modern linguistics. This new translation theory easily provides the means wherein the subjective opinions of men are inserted in the text of the Bible as if they were the thoughts of Paul, or of Peter, or Matthew, or John, etc. Thus, the saints have no clue that in some cases

they are just reading the subjective opinions of fallible men in the text, rather the words of the infallible writers of Scripture who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Now, of course, there is always an element of subjectivity in a translation of one language into another, but that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about wholesale changes in the text made through additions and subtractions, with the idea that the original thought is being held intact (but that is a subjective opinion). It adds words to the Scripture without any indication, and subtracts words that were inspired by the Holy Spirit, without any indication (unbeknownst to most readers). But an objective mindset of the old method of complete equivalence that looks backward mitigates this, and so provides a translation more faithful to the original words, and thus, truly keeps the thoughts behind the words intact (as it is best represented by the underlying MSS).

Beloved, solutions for enduring success are not found in the forward things of human wisdom and creativity, but in the past things of the unchanging Word of God. Even Paul, when he speaks of pressing forward in Christ—when he speaks of forgetting those things of sin and death that are behind—still does so by reminding us that it can only be accomplished if we look backward to the cross, being conformed to His death!

**Philippians 3:10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, **being conformed to His death**,<sup>11</sup> if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.<sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,<sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. NKJV



Consequently, returning to our passage in Ephesians and the change from the translation of *repairing*, which causes the reader to think backward to a previous condition to which one is restored, one can see that the King James Version of *perfecting*, (even though it is more nebulous), can still cause one to look backwards, if it is remembered that our revealed standard of perfection is only found in Christ and the way of the cross, as it is recorded for us in God's Word.

Thus, whenever anything in the life of the Church is altered or damaged, the only solution for us is to be "repaired" or "restored" by the Holy Spirit of God in accordance with Christ Jesus our LORD, and in accordance with the eternal and unchanging Word of God.

So we see the new translation of *perfecting* in the King James Version did not really nullify the thought of *repairing* in the Geneva Bible (although it must be admitted it did not as readily convey the nuance of that word, i.e. apart from mediation upon the truth of what perfection really is in reality).

But as time went on, even this King James Version's choice of *perfecting*, as the chosen rendering for καταρτισμός, over the Geneva Bible's choice of *repairing*, did not continue as the preferred translation of the word. By the time we arrive in the 20<sup>th</sup> century many modern Bibles began to render the Greek word, by some form of "equip" or "equipping."

Now, as with "perfecting," this translation is still acceptable, that is as long as it is still understood by the underlying nuance of the original Greek word and the overall context of the revelation given to us in Scripture. But, unfortunately, the English word "equipping" somewhat obscures this underlying nuance of the word, even more so than the word "perfecting." Equipping has almost developed into the thought of simply "teaching," which subtly puts the emphasis more on "addition" for perfection, rather than on

“restoration” for perfection, or an emphasis on “impartation” for perfection, rather than on a “condition” for perfection.

In other words, to use an example—if someone was to say he was “equipping” a robot to perform a task on an assembly line, one would think data is being input so as to program the robot for the needed task. But if someone was to say he was “repairing” a robot to perform a task on an assembly line, one would think something about the robot was broken that needed to be mended, so the robot could then perform the needed task. That is the difference between *equipping* the saints and *repairing* the saints, or, indeed, between *equipping* and *perfecting* the saints in this sense.

By using the translation “perfecting the saint,” one puts the emphasis more on the *condition* of the one being perfected, by implying that something is “imperfect” in the saint, either by neglect or by falling away from the original standard. Whereas “equipping the saint” is a more neutral term and does not, necessarily, carry any idea that the one being equipped is “imperfect,” either through neglect or through falling away from the original standard, but, rather, is one that simply needs to have some things added for perfection, without, necessarily, implying the one needs to be restored to the proper standard or model for perfection.

Of course, we are talking in very general terms. Obviously, if part of the knowledge that is imparted is the knowledge that every believer is imperfect and in need of perfection, by looking backward to the standards left for us in the Word, then the word equipping the saints can still convey the same nuance of repairing and perfecting.

But the sad fact is that many times this is not done and so there is no thought that the Church has somehow departed from the original patterns and standards left for us by the apostles and prophets in Scripture.

Yet, even with its problems, as with *perfecting*, if one really thinks it through, the translation of *equipping* the saints can still be understood with that nuance of looking backward.

Let me explain. In I Chronicles 12:23-24, we see Scripture speaking of David's army being "equipped" for war. It even mentions some of those things that they were equipped with, i.e. shields and spears.

**I Chronicles 12:23-24** Now these are the numbers of the divisions **equipped** for war, who came to David at Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. <sup>24</sup> The sons of Judah who **bore shield and spear were 6,800**. NASB

But in this story, we see that David was just not concerned about those soldiers being equipped with weapons; he also was interested in the *condition* of the person, himself. He wanted to know if their heart was with him.

**I Chronicles 12:17** And David went out to meet them, and answered and said to them, "If you come peacefully to me to help me, my heart shall be united with you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look on *it* and decide." NASB

Thus, being equipped for war meant more to David than just making sure the soldiers possessed the proper weapons; it also had to do with the condition of their hearts. This is mentioned in I Chron. 12:33, which not only speaks of the weapons of war, but also of the conditions of their hearts.

**I Chronicles 12:33** Of Zebulun, there were 50,000 who went out in the army, who could draw up in battle formation **with all kinds of weapons of war** and helped *David with an undivided heart*. NASB

And finally, in I Chron. 12:38, it is said they could draw up in battle formation...with a perfect heart.

**I Chronicles 12:38** All these, being men of war, who could **draw up in battle formation**, came to Hebron **with a perfect heart**, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one mind to make David king. NASB

Now, of course, we are not saying the LXX utilizes the same Greek word as used in Eph. 4:12. We are simply speaking of the English concept behind the word “equip” in certain contexts.

So with that in mind, we see that these verses show us an army that is equipped for war, being able draw up in battle formation not only with weapons, but also with perfect hearts. This is what it meant to be an “equipped” army according to David.

But where did this idea come that that is what constitutes a properly equipped army? It must have come from some existing standard by which they measured themselves. That indicates there must have been a pre-existing idea of what would constitute a fully equipped soldier, one of the many things being, having a perfect heart of loyalty and not just the correct weapons of war. So, even in that, such equipping is measured by having to look backward to some pre-existing standard in the mind of David, which must have been gleaned from his many years of military experience.

Moreover, let us suppose, after a great battle, David’s army returns with all things spent and depleted. What would one suppose David would do? Would he not command those under him to “re-equip” the army for the next battle? Why of course. But what would that mean?

Would one not expect that the army would be “restored” back to the condition it was in before it left? Would it only deal with the weapons of war? Would it not also deal with the condition of those soldiers’ hearts, making sure their hearts still remained undivided? Would it not mean that not only would deficient shields be repaired, and missing spears replaced, but also wavering hearts would be mended? As

such, the equipping would only be completed once the army was “restored” back to its original condition or standard before the battle.

Well, beloved, when Paul wrote the epistle to the Ephesians, the only standard he had (and we still have) for what it means to be fully equipped, is none other than Christ! If Paul wanted to equip the saints, he could only consider the equipping complete once it measured up to a pre-existing standard that was Christ and those things provided by Christ!

Thus, since Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit, and since he knew by the same Spirit that over time the Church would be compromised, and since he knew that wolves would enter into the flock in sheep’s clothing, not sparing the flock, and since he knew that many would fall away from the Faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrine of demons, and since he knew the saints would be carried away with the winds of false doctrines, he would know the only way those gifted men could equip the saints, could perfect the saints, could repair the saints, would be to *restore* them back to the condition the Church was in at first, which meant to a condition where Christ was presented as being all and in all, and where Scripture was considered to be sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness, and where the Churches that were founded by him and the apostles were considered to be the only Churches to emulate (cf. Col. 2: 6-9; 3:11; I Cor. 1:30; II Per. 1:3).

We must remember, that in Paul’s mind the early Churches were a standard to follow, a standard for comparison, a standard to emulate (although he still respected the autonomy and liberty of every Church to judge for themselves, which, in itself, is really another aspect of equipping as well).

**I Corinthians 11:16** But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God. NASB

And so it is no different for us today. If we wish to be equipped to perform the work of ministry and the building up of the Body of Christ, we must not adopt new methods that are not found in Scripture, new methods that may promise us wisdom and success, but in reality are no different than the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Why?—because these new methods will almost always be a mixture of worldly principles that have been adapted to biblical principles, or biblical principles that have been mixed with worldly principles. Many times men will take some business strategy or philosophy that has been successfully used in the business world, or in politics, and then adapt them to the things of the Lord. But, beloved, Scripture says to never mix up the wool and the linen in the things of God (Deut. 22:17; Ezekiel. 44:17). Why?—because wool causes sweat, and sweat is a sign of the fall of Adam and so is seen as a sign of human endeavour and strength (Gen. 3:19).

In the work of the Lord, things must not be done by the things of the first man, Adam, but rather must be done by the things of the last Adam. In the work of the Lord, things done by human wisdom and ingenuity will not endure, but things done by the Holy Spirit of God will endure to eternity. Remember Zechariah 4:6! Things done by the Spirit bring glory to Christ; things done by human strength, wisdom, or creativity bring glory to the one who devised the new method of doing God's work! The former causes our boast to be in God; the latter causes our boast to be in man.

**Jeremiah 9:23** Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches. NASB

**II Corinthians 10:17** But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. NASB

Any idea or method mixed with any method gleaned from the world must be rejected by the spiritual Christian, since the world to the spiritual Christian is counted crucified.

**Galatians 6:14** But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. NASB

The true method of enduring success is gained from following the way or mindset of God. For example, His mindset was shown forth in His choice of a lowly manger in the little town of Bethlehem to be the birthplace of His Son—He who was the King of kings and Lord of lords—rather than choosing a rich palace to be His birthplace. That revealed the mindset of God, for the choice was only His.

The true method of enduring success is found at Calvary, where our Lord was crucified, not in any modern psychological method of human behavior that has a proven track record of success in attracting large crowds. It may, indeed, attract, but will never endure, and it most certainly will not bring about the perfecting of the saints.

We do not need to be looking forward for new ways to equip or to perfect the saints. Rather, we only need to look backward to the sufficiency of the Word of God, to the fullness and sufficiency of Christ, to the power of the Spirit, and to the perfect mindset of the Father. Both the apostle Paul and the apostle John said the same thing in regard to finding all things in Christ, who is the eternal image of God His Father.

**Colossians 2:6-10** As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him, <sup>7</sup> having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude. <sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary

principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.<sup>9</sup> For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form,<sup>10</sup> and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority. NASB

**1 John 2:24** Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. KJV

And so, dear brethren, if we like the translation of *equipping*, rather than the translation *perfecting*, or *repairing*, that is fine, but we should not forget the underlying and controlling nuance of looking backward to what things were, back to their original condition as instituted by God in the beginning.

You see, beloved, the bottom line is that Paul knew the Church would fall away as time passed on. He knew it would be carried away with every wind of doctrine. He knew that just like Israel of old, the Church would follow the ways of the world, whether it was the evil ways of the world, or even the good, religious ways of the world. He knew, like with Israel, whether it was evil ways or good ways, it was an affront to the way of God. And he knew that whenever this might happen the Church would stop functioning in the way he and the other apostles originally intended, and so were careful in instituting.

As such, Paul was saying that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers would be there to *restore* the saints back to the way of God, just as there were prophets in the Old Testament to restore Israel back to the way of God. And just as the Old Testament prophets (and godly leaders) would never equip Israel with new methods and ways to fulfill the Old Covenant, so too, the five-fold gifted men would never *equip* the Church with new methods and ways to fulfill her responsibilities under the New Covenant.



And so again, let me say, the bottom line is that Paul intended the Greek word καταρτισμός (no matter how one wishes to translate it) to convey this thought of restoration or repair so that the Church could function in the way that God originally intended as instituted by the apostles and prophets in the Spirit. And in that light Christ gives these five-fold gifts to insure this model is followed. That is what it means to equip the saints. It means to restore them back to the way they were in the beginning.

And this now brings us to another example to help us understand the underlying nuance of this word chosen by Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that is a cognate form with this noun, the verbal form—καταρτίζω.

In their Greek Lexicon, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich provide this as one of the first glosses for this verbal form—to “restore to its former condition...”<sup>8</sup> This, of course, supports the idea of *repairing* over *perfecting*, assuming the same underlying nuance in its cognate.

Next we have the New American Standard Bible’s rendering of this verbal form as used by Matthew in his Gospel as *mending*. (It is also rendered the same way by the KJV and the NKJV). In Matthew 4:21 the word occurs within the following context:

**Matt. 4:21** And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, **mending their nets**; and He called them.

As we can see, Matthew uses this verbal form of our Greek noun to convey the idea of “mending” nets! In other

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<sup>8</sup> Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957) pg. 418

words, the nets were being “mended” or “repaired” by James and John. They were being “restored” to their former condition, making sure they were being kept in good working order, i.e. in the condition they were in before they became altered or damaged by that day’s fishing. One could say they were “equipping” their nets for the next day’s fishing by “mending” or “repairing” them!

So, when Paul uses its cognate noun in Eph. 4:12, and says that God gave gifts for the *repairing*, the *perfecting*, the *equipping* of the saints, he is saying they are given for the “mending” of the saints, so to speak, *restoring* them back to their original condition. He is saying that Christ gave those gifts or gifted men to the Church so they could “mend” the saints, to “repair” the saints, to “restore” the saints back to their original condition in Christ, so that they might properly minister to one another in love and edify one another as the Body of Christ, so the Church might grow unto full maturity. This is why it is so important to follow the pattern and standard given by God for His Church in the Scripture.

Whenever the saint’s purpose and function in the Church, as revealed in the Word of God, is altered or changed over time by worldly influence, or by man-made traditions, it must then be “mended.” It must be “restored” back to the way it was originally instituted by the apostles in the pages of the New Testament.

Just as the nets of James and John would sometimes need to be “mended,” or “restored” back to their original condition, so too the saints sometimes need to be “mended” or “restored” back to their original condition, so they can function properly in the Church, and the Church can then continue to grow unto the full stature of Christ. Whenever God’s pattern is changed or altered, one destroys the “proper function” intended by God for the Church.

As such, Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor and teachers to maintain and protect this order and

function, *repairing* it when needed, *restoring* it when necessary, and *mending* it when damaged by new ways, whether from human wisdom, or man-made traditions.

So when Christian leaders think they know of a better way for the Church to function or be governed, and so, for instance, change its governance to what they might consider to be more pragmatic and efficient, they are then saying that they know better than God as to how the Church should function properly.

It would be no different (if we might make up a story) of a day labourer, let's say by the name of Joseph, who was hired by the apostles James and John to help in their fishing business on the Sea of Galilee.

Let us suppose, after a day's fishing, James and John's nets had been damaged by some underwater obstacle with which it became entangled (like many Churches might become entangled by the things of the world). In any case, the nets were ruined and so were in need of repair and mending. Because of this, James and John brought out a net, which, while old and worn out, was still correctly woven or formed.

Then, let's say that they laid out this old net before Joseph and instructed him on how to mend the damaged net, telling him to be careful to follow the same pattern of the netting as found in the old net. But, then after James and John left him to this task, Joseph decided to ignore the form of netting in the old net, and instead, decided to mend the damaged net according to his own thoughts and wisdom. Now, he did not do so from any malice, but he did so because he honestly thought he knew of a better way to repair the net (even though the business was not his, but theirs, and he was just a hired labourer, not a partner), and he thought James and John would tell him, "Well done!"

And so, during the next day's fishing expedition, something happens. The fish that were caught escaped from the net because the net broke under the great weight of so

many fish. And it broke because Joseph thought he could bring the damaged net to “perfection” by altering the net’s basic or original structure. He did not “mend” the net, as he was told, following the same form and structure of the old net, but, rather, he mended it according to what he perceived was a better and more efficient way to form a net for fishing.

What happened was that Joseph thought it would be better to weave tighter netting than James and John had instructed him to weave; he thought by having a tighter weave, thus having smaller open spaces in the net, the net would become more efficient in catching more fish. But what Joseph did not understand, which James and John did understand, from their many years of experience gained from fishing on the Sea of Galilee, was at that particular time of the year a smaller fish would be in abundance which they did not want to catch—thus the reason for their use of the wider netting. So because Joseph increased the weave into finer netting, the smaller fish (which James and John did not want to catch) were not able to escape and thus the weight of all those smaller fish with the larger fish broke the net. Joseph did not realize James and John wanted a wider netting so all those smaller fish could escape, leaving only the larger fish. But it was not for a day labourer to know this.

If Joseph had simply trusted his employers and had done what he was told to do, the net would not have broken. (Of course, not being a fisherman, I am not sure if such a scenario is even possible, but I simply postulated such a scenario to illustrate the point.) Obviously, in this example, Joseph had a well-intentioned heart, but he still was being presumptuous, because he did not trust in the experience, knowledge and wisdom of James and John, let alone, respecting their right to decide as to how to keep their own nets in good working order.

Well, dear brethren, if such a thing can be true in everyday life, how much more is such a thing true in the

things of the Lord? Our Lord commanded that certain things be done a certain way in regard to the Church and He revealed those things to us through the apostles and prophets, which things we now have inscripturated for us in the New Testament. It is not up to us to change things; it is not right for future servants of the Lord to decide they know a better way to do things than that of our Master, and so, because of that, decide to “perfect,” the saints in a different way. We may not understand why God ordained that the Church should function in a certain way, but it is not up to us to know; we are simply called to obey.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers were told to keep the Church in proper working order according to the original plan of God. They were to “equip,” “restore,” to “mend” the saints, so to speak, for two things—the work of ministry, and the building up of the Body of Christ. These five gifts or gifted men were given by Christ to the Church so the saints can function as God intended.

As such, in the pages of the New Testament, we can see how the apostles would always bring back the saints to the foundational issues of the Church whenever they might be led astray (I Cor. 3:10-23; I John 1:1-3; 4:1-3). These included all foundational issues that were meant to continue and not just the issue of the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). For example, it also included such issues as the proper governance of the Church as revealed in Scripture (Acts 20: 28-32; III John 1:9-11), and also the proper worship and way to meet (I Cor. 11-14).

And then we have the prophets. The prophets in the New Testament equipped the saints by bringing the saints back to the mind of Christ (Rev. 1:9-11). So many times men tried to introduce new ways to think, and new ways to live, and new ways to walk, into the Church, ways that were the opposite of the old ways first taught by the apostles. Those old ways were to think with the mind of Christ, to live by the life

of the Son, and to walk by the way of the cross, walking as the Lord walked. As such, the prophet would seek to perfect or to equip the saints by directing them back to the Lord and back to the things of the beginning, as declared by the prophet John in his first epistle.

**I John 2:5-7** But whoso **keepeth his word**, in him verily is the love of God **perfected**: hereby know we that we are in him. <sup>6</sup> He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so **to walk, even as he walked**. <sup>7</sup> Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an **old commandment** which ye had from **the beginning**. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. KJV

And so the prophets in the New Testament always reminded the saints of this, always directing them back to the old ways, the ancient paths, if you will, just as the prophets of Old Testament would always seek to direct the people of God back to their old ways, to their ancient paths.

**Jeremiah 6:16a** “Thus says the LORD, ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for **the ancient paths**, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls...’” NASB

(In that light, we should pray that the Church never respond like Israel responded, as can be seen in the verse below.)

**Jeremiah 6:16b** But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it*.’ NASB

Or, let us consider the evangelist. Evangelists equipped the saints by bringing God’s people back to the proper proclamation of the Gospel and regard for the truth. This is exactly what Paul told Timothy to do—”Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but

according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (II Tim. 4:2-5 NKJV).

As such, an evangelist did more than just preach the Gospel, he also equipped the saints by encouraging them in the truth and in those things of faith—"And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith. (I Thess. 3:2NASB)

And then we have pastors. They equipped the saints by bringing the saints back to a proper fold where they would be kept safe under their watchful eyes, and so, receive the proper care, love and nourishment that they needed to function properly in the Church. They equipped the saints by taking to heart Paul's admonition given to elders or pastors from Ephesus—"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20: 27-30).

And then, finally, the teachers brought the people back to sound Biblical doctrine, teaching them the basic doctrines of the Word and the fundamental doctrines of the Faith as we mentioned before.

**II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. NASB**

**Titus 1:9** Holding fast the **faithful word** which is **in accordance with the teaching**, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. NASB

**I Timothy 1:3, 6** As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may **instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines.** <sup>6</sup> For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion. NASB

**II Timothy 4:7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, **I have kept the Faith.** KJV (capitalization mine)

**Jude 1:3** Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* **that ye should earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 1:3 KJV)

This was the means whereby the saints were *equipped* or *mended* in the New Testament. Churches were directed back to the beginning, and encouraged to be faithful to what was already given to them in the beginning when they were first founded by the apostles. This is how they were *repaired* to properly serve each other in ministry, and to build up each other in the Church.

In that sense, since the Church is called the Temple of God in this dispensation (I Cor. 3:16), we can say that process was similar to the Old Testament account of King Josiah, who ordered that the Temple of God, the house of the LORD, be *repaired* and *restored* back to the way it was when first constructed by Solomon (II Kings 22:1-6).

In this same way, during this age of grace, the King of kings and Lord of lords orders the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers to be the ones to make sure that the Temple of God in this dispensation—the Church—is maintained, repaired and restored back to its proper working order when damaged, just as originally



intended, and just as laid out for us in the pages of the New Testament.

And so, just as the Tabernacle and Temple in the Old Testament were to be constructed and kept according the original pattern, being repaired when necessary, so too in the New Testament, the Temple of God that is the Church was to be kept and maintained according to the original pattern. Why?—because the Temple of Old, and the Temple today, that is the Church, were both structured in such a way that the priests could properly do their work of ministry, and be able to bear witness to the presence of God in their midst.

In this way, in the Church today, which is the Temple of God (with veil torn in two!), if any unbeliever might walk into a meeting, their heart would be convicted by all, and they would fall down and declare that God was certainly in the midst (I Cor. 14:25).<sup>9</sup>

And, not only that, we also know that the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Church were structured the way they were structured so as to bespeak the glories of Christ, the Eternal Son of God. And for this reason the pattern should never be changed or altered, for if it is changed in any way from the way it was laid out in Scripture, one detracts and robs the eternal Son of God of some of the glory that belongs solely to Him as intended by God the Father!

And so—just as Moses was faithful to follow the pattern of the Tabernacle given to him, and Solomon was faithful to follow the pattern of the Temple given to him by

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, unlike the priests in the Old Testament, we know that in the New Testament every believer is a priest unto God, and so has their own work of ministry to perform in accordance with their gifts—”As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Pet. 4:10 NKJV)—“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5 NKJV).

his father David, so too, we should be careful to follow the pattern given to the apostles of Christ, especially the pattern left for us by the apostle Paul.

**Hebrews 8:5** who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “**that you make all things according to the pattern** which was shown you on the mountain.” NASB

**I Chronicles 28:11-12** Then David gave to Solomon his son the **pattern** of the porch *of the temple*, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat; <sup>12</sup> **and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit**, for the courts of the house of Jehovah, and for all the chambers round about, for the treasuries of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the dedicated things. ASV

**Philippians 3:17** Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk **according to the pattern** you have in us. NASB

You see, beloved, the real way to find out what Paul meant by the word καταρτισμός is to simply look to pattern of Paul’s life and to see what he did in his life.

In other words, if Christ gave gifts to men for the “καταρτισμός” (equipping) of the saints, then all we need to really do, in order to properly understand what “equipping” is, is to simply see what those apostles of Christ did, for they were all faithful to fulfill the responsibilities given to them.

And in the case of an apostle like Paul, all we really need to do to understand what Paul really meant by *equipping* of the saints, is to simply read his writings, and then understand what he actually did in his function as an apostle! Paul clearly tells us he was faithful to finish his course, and

that course, obviously, would have to include his equipping the saints as an apostle of Christ!

**II Timothy 4:7** I have fought a good fight, **I have finished my course**, I have kept the faith. KJV

So, if apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers were given by Christ to equip the saints, and Paul was an apostle of Christ, and Paul obeyed the Lord in all things, being faithful to finish his course, then his life becomes a definition for us of what it means to properly equip the saints.

Consequently, by simply looking to the life of Paul, with his commandments, exhortations, admonitions, and teachings, one will be able to see what is the real meaning behind the word translated “equipping” the saints. His life will become our best definition for the Greek word καταρτισμός!

So, with this in mind, let us see a few of the ways Paul carried out his responsibility of equipping of the saints, as recorded for us in the pages of Holy Writ.

## Paul’s Equipping of the Saints

**1)** The first thing we realize, when we look at the course of Paul’s life, is that it was very important to him to make sure that the saints heard the “whole counsel of God.” This means that equipping the saints **must** first include teaching them the all the doctrines of the Bible.

**Acts 20:27** For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God. ASV

**2)** In so teaching the saints the whole counsel of God, we also see that in Paul’s mind it meant summarizing that counsel into an *outline of sound words*, which is exactly what

a Creed, a Confession, or what many call today, a Statement of Faith actually is. The basis for such a thing is found in II Tim. 1:13, where Paul exhorts Timothy to do this very thing. The Greek word Paul uses in this verse actually means “a summary account,” or an “outline of sound words” as translated by Darby. This, too, is an important part of equipping the saints for this is what he exhorted Timothy to do.

**II Timothy 1:13** Have an **outline of sound words**, which *words* thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which *are* in Christ Jesus. (Darby)

This allows us to keep the truth of God before us at all times in a very concise manner. In some ways, it was similar to the Old Testament command of God to the children of Israel to write the truth given to them in Deut. 6:4-5 upon their hearts and upon their doorposts and gates. Those two verses were their statement of Faith, their Confession, their “outline of sound words,” if you will, which God said they were to keep before them at all times, as a reminder of who God is. It is no different for us in the New Testament, where our Statement of Faith becomes a reminder, in concise form, of who God is!

And so, this too would be an essential aspect to “perfecting” or “equipping” the saints. The fullness and accuracy of our Statements of Faith is very important!

Oh, how this is missing in so many cases today. More and more Statements of Faith are being minimized in our Churches, ministries, and even, in some cases, in Bible Colleges and Seminaries. But in Paul’s mind, this was so important that Paul did not simply exhort Timothy to have such an outline of sound words, he wrote one such outline himself under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in I Tim. 3:16.

**1 Timothy 3:15-16** And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in *the* Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among *the* nations, has been believed on in *the* world, has been received up in glory. Darby's Version

3) Moreover, it was not sufficient to just have this Statement of Faith; Paul also exhorts believers to “strive together” for this Faith. (Just as another apostle of Christ tells us that we should also earnestly “contend” for the Faith.) So this is our third point. If one is not exhorting the saints to strive and to contend for the Faith, one is not fully equipping the saints.

**Philippians 1:27** Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind **striving together for the faith of the gospel.** KJV

**Jude 1:3** Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints. KJV

On this aspect alone, so many Christian leaders today, who are included in this five-fold list, are failing miserably. Not only is the Faith not being contended for by many Christian leaders, it is being diluted and altered! So many Statements of Faith, over the last century, or so, have erased all mention of the following particular truth of the Blessed Trinity—the unbegottenness of the Father, the eternal begottenness of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. This truth has always been a major pillar of the Historic Christian Faith since the earliest days of the Church, yet this truth is dismissed and nullified by some Christian leaders who claim the Church has really been misled on this doctrine for nearly two-thousand years. Not only is this an affront to One

who gifted them, it is also an affront to all three Persons—the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, for it negates the very nature of their personal subsistence. It is a disservice to the saints, **and is the opposite of equipping**. It is nothing more than a departure from the Historic Christian Faith, plain and simple.

Every gifted Christian leader should be bearing witness to the Faith, striving for the Faith, and contending for that Faith as historically affirmed by untold millions of godly Christians down through the centuries. The apostle Matthew bore witness to it. Peter bore witness to it. John bore witness to it, and, indeed, Paul bore witness to it. So should we. If this is not done today, then one is not properly equipping the saints.

What we need today in our Churches, ministries, and Bible Colleges and Seminaries is a clear and concise Statement of the Faith in regard to every aspect of the Blessed Trinity that does not neglect this important eternal aspect of the intra-Trinitarian relationships of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. If it is missing in our Statements, we should restore it immediately for without it we cannot fully equip the saints as we should. The truth of how each Person subsists, i.e. the unbegottenness of the Father, the eternal begottenness of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, is a blessing to the soul and strength to the heart of every saint.

Beloved, this is not a matter of mere semantics. Without our witness to the doctrine of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the saints cannot be fully equipped. It would be like King David equipping his army with bows and shields, but no arrows! The doctrine should never be ignored, but, rather it should be taught in our Churches and in any Bible College or Seminary (for without it, our knowledge of who God truly is, is truly deficient).

If a course like Ecclesiology 101 is offered, or a course like Soteriology 101 is offered, or an elective course like Apologetics is offered, would it not be a welcomed sign

to have a course like Trinity 101 being offered? Indeed, would it not be nice that such a course be actually required? The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is the doctrine of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, the very name into which we are baptized, the very basis of our salvation, the very basis of who we are in Christ Jesus our LORD, and the very basis of equipping of the saints.

4) Equipping also involves bearing witness to the Verbal Plenary Inspiration of Scripture. As such, it means rejecting any philosophy of translation which ignores it, or that might minimize it in actual practice. Every word of God is pure and should never be ignored, but, because of the popularity and acceptance of new theories of translation like dynamic equivalence, many times such words are ignored because they are completely deleted from the text!

Dynamic Equivalence is fine for personal interpretations, and/or for paraphrases found in Bible Commentaries used for the purpose of interpretation and teaching (for then the reader knows it is but an opinion), but it should be roundly rejected as a sufficient translation method for any text of Scripture that is going to be published as a new Bible translation.

Rather, new Bible Versions should follow a complete equivalence method of translation that respects that “verbal” part of Verbal Plenary Inspiration. Every single word is essential to translation, and if, because of awkwardness in another language, an article or particle must sometimes be left untranslated, perhaps it would be wise to reference it in the margin, or at least indicate it in some way.

But, despite such difficulties in translating from one language to another, one should realize that when such difficulties arise in translation, those occasions would be less frequent if a method of complete equivalence was followed.

With complete equivalence it would be an exception if a particle was left out, rather than being the rule. But with dynamic equivalence it is more often the rule, rather than the exception. Why is that so?—because those who follow complete equivalence believe every single word is inspired by God and so they try their utmost to include every single word in their translation, whereas those who hold to dynamic equivalence minimize the individual words and seek only to emphasize the overall thought. To them it is the thought that is inspired not necessarily the words, so they are not as concerned if some words are left out, or more words are added.<sup>10</sup> But that certainly is not what the Holy Spirit of God said through Agur in the Old Testament, or through Paul in the New Testament!

In the Old Testament the words of Agur, the son of Jakeh declare the importance of maintaining the accuracy of every word spoken by God—

**Proverbs 30:5** Every word of God *is* pure; he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. <sup>6</sup> **Add thou not unto his words**, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. KJV

And in the New Testament, Paul declares that not only is a word given by God important, even the number of that word is important and inspired.

**Galatians 3:16** Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. **He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one**, And to thy seed, which is Christ. KJV

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<sup>10</sup> This alone shows they do not believe in “Verbal” Plenary Inspiration, but only in Plenary Inspiration, if even that, for how can one have inspiration of thought, without the inspiration of words?



**II Timothy 3:16-17** All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. KJV

Without an accurate translation the saints cannot be properly equipped. Many modern translations rob God's people of their spiritual heritage by adding words to Scripture (without any mechanism to indicate they were added) and by subtracting words from Scripture. It is the very words of God that are living and powerful (Heb. 4:12), not the words added by man!

One who wishes to equip the saints must reject any translation that follows the theory of dynamic equivalence, or even variations of dynamic equivalence, such as optimal equivalence.

**5)** The apostle Paul also reveals to us that equipping of the saints means more than just the impartation of knowledge, as important as that is, but Paul also reminds us (and this is also an integral part of equipping the saints) that knowledge as knowledge is not enough; there must be more.

**I Corinthians 13:2** And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. NKJV

Equipping of the saints must also include the exhortation and, indeed, the pleading to the saints to follow a pilgrim's path, being filled with the love of Christ. And that can only occur if saints take up their cross, for the cross is the only way to know what true love is. As such, the apostle Matthew was careful to include these words of the Saviour for the equipping of the saints.

**Matthew 16:24** Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. KJV

And Paul reiterated the same, declaring—

**Galatians 6:14** But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. KJV

And so we see the exhortation to walk in the way of the cross, with its denial of self, is also a major pillar of equipping the saints **for it teaches us the importance of truly loving others in our knowledge and love of God** (cf. Matt. 22:37-39). This, indeed, is forgotten by many, being replaced today with an emphasis on self-esteem and the love of self. The way of knowledge, without the cross, puffs one up, bringing self-love. The way of knowledge, with the cross, humbles one's self, bringing love for others. How could it be any other way?

The love of Christ cannot be fully manifested in our hearts without the cross of Christ, for without the cross to humble us, our knowledge is controlled by self, and so is often puffed up, which in turn creates in us a condescending mindset toward others who are considered less educated in comparison with ourselves. Condescension is never a fruit of the Spirit, but rather is a fruit of the flesh.

**I Cor. 8:1b** Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. NKJV

6) Not only was Paul careful to keep the cross at the forefront of believer's minds, he was careful to emphasize that the way of the cross did not just entail a denial of self, it also entailed a replacement of self in our living with the very life of Christ within. This meant being filled with the Spirit of God in all that we say and do.

Without a constant reminder that we are crucified with Christ, so as to have Christ can live in us, we cannot be fulfilling our responsibility to properly equip the saints. Indeed, if we wish to equip the saints, not only will we be always talking about the cross, we will also always be glorying in the cross! But it will be toward the goal of having Christ live in us and dwell in our hearts by faith. It will not be a morbid thought, but glorious thought, for death frees us from sin, and out of death comes resurrection life!

Part of equipping the saints is making sure a Christian knows that he or she must get out of the way, leaving their old man on the cross, so Christ can be formed in them, so Christ can dwell in them, and so Christ can then live in them, living out His life through them.

**Galatians 6:14** But God forbid that I should glory, **save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. KJV

**Galatians 4:19** My little children, of whom I travail in birth again **until Christ be formed in you**. KJV

**Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ:** nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. KJV

**Ephesians 3:16-18** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; <sup>17</sup> That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. KJV

**Ephesians 5:18** And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but **be filled with the Spirit**; KJV

**Colossians 1:27-29** To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving **according to his working, which worketh in me mightily**. KJV

7) Finally, when we look at how Paul finished his course in equipping the saints, we see that any pressing forward in the things of God was based upon looking backward to the things of Christ. He did not believe in adopting new creative ways to do the things of God, for he did not believe the saints should be *creators*, but rather they should be *imitators*. As we said before, that was the mistake of our first parents who wished to be like God by ignoring God's Word, and replacing it with their own wisdom and understanding.

As such, Paul knew that in every dispensation, God faithfully gave the saints a pattern to follow in the beginning of that dispensation; this was done so that all they needed to do was to look backward and be faithful to what was already given and revealed. There are many examples of this.

God made sure that both Adam and Eve knew of His command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden. And so, Eve should have never added her own thoughts and words to God's, but rather should have been content with the original words given by God as being the way by which they could be brought to perfection and completeness (Gen. 3:3).

And then we have the example of Noah. God gave him a pattern to follow, the plan of the Ark. But Noah, unlike Adam and Eve, remained faithful, and was careful to follow that original plan, neither adding to it with his own wisdom or creativity, nor subtracting from it in any way.

We could go on. There was Moses, who was faithful to the pattern of the Tabernacle that was given to him (Heb.

8:5). And there was David, who was faithful to the plan of the Temple that was given to him by the Spirit of God, passing it on to his son Solomon.<sup>11</sup> And even in the final dispensation of the Millennium, we see that in the beginning God provides a pattern for His Temple that those living must be careful to follow (Eze. 43:10-11). In every dispensation, we see that God always provided a word to be obeyed and a pattern to be followed.

And it is no different for this dispensation of the Church. In the beginning of this dispensation, God gave to His people the lives of the apostles to be imitated, as they imitated the Lord. And He provided the pattern for His Church through the Churches that were founded by those same apostles. And He gave us His words of truth by inspiring the apostles and prophets to write down His words in the pages of the New Testament for all to obey.

And all this was only possible because the Father first sent forth His Son to this world in the fullness of time to bear witness to the Truth.

**John 18:37** Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and **for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.** Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. KJV

And the Son sent forth the Spirit of Truth to guide His apostles into that truth.

**John 16:13** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you into all truth:** for he shall not speak of himself; but

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<sup>11</sup> For more on this, please read the New King James Version or the New American Standard Version of the passage as found in I Chron. 28:11-13.

whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. KJV

And the apostles had the privilege to bear witness to all truth, by bearing witness to Christ, the One who is the pattern of Perfection for all, the Archetype to be followed, the One who is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), the One who is Himself Truth (John 14:6). They bore witness to none other than He, who was from the beginning, and the One whom the apostles heard, saw, and handled with their hands.

**1 John 1:1-3** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; <sup>2</sup> (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) <sup>3</sup> That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. KJV

And so we see that all were faithful to that which went before. The Son was faithful to all that the Father gave to Him to do (John 5:36). And the apostles were faithful to bear witness to the all that they had seen and heard and what they were given to do. And so their testimony was true.

**III John 1:12** Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, **and you know that our testimony is true.** NKJV

In that light, it is important to remember that Jesus, who is our pattern of perfection, said that He, the Son, did nothing of Himself in John 5:19.

**John 5:19** Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The Son can do nothing of himself**, but what he

seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. KJV

If anyone could have been creative, coming up with new ways and new methods to serve the Father it was Jesus. If anyone could develop new strategies of service, it was the Eternal Son of God, for He was very God of very God and He could do no sin. He had perfect logic and perfect creativity (being the Creator of all!). And yet, the Son of Man did not walk by His logic and creativity. He simply walked by faith, doing what the Father commanded Him to do. He walked as the Holy Spirit led Him to walk (Luke 4:1). He would not even perform a healing according to His own wisdom, timing, and logic, thinking that this would be as good time as any to do a miracle, for many people will see the power of God and believe. He did not think that way.

**Luke 5:17** And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem; **and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing.** NASB

Our Lord walked moment by moment in complete obedience to the voice of His Father in Heaven. He could have healed anytime He wished without any taint of sin, yet He refused to do so, waiting instead until the power was present, as Luke relates. He always had the power to heal, but He walked in total submission to His Father even in the little things. Why?—because His life was a pattern to be followed.

We are all commanded to walk as Jesus walked by the apostle John in his first epistle. He told us that “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (I John 2:6) This means that our Lord’s life on this earth was a pattern for us to follow. As such, since Jesus did nothing *out of Himself*, neither should we, but rather we

should do all things in obedience to what he has already provided for us in the Word as we are led by the Holy Spirit. And for us, and for the apostles, that means looking backward to the Word of God, and to the pattern of His life.

Just as Jesus walked, being led by the Spirit, in accordance with the Word of God, and just as Paul walked by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, in accordance with the Word of God, so too, we need to learn to walk by the witness of the Spirit down deep within our heart, in accordance to with the Word of God.

And so we see that Paul knew that for the saints to be properly equipped, they not only needed—the whole counsel of God, a concise Statement of the Faith, a fervency of the Spirit that would contend for that Faith, fidelity to the Verbal Plenary Inspiration of Scripture along with its inerrancy, the way of the cross with its denial of self, and the life of Christ living in us through Christ being formed in us—it was also important for the saints to have a pattern to follow, a way to emulate. And so he left for us, as an apostle of Christ, the pattern of his life to be imitated, just as he had the pattern of the Son, who did nothing of Himself, as a pattern for him to follow (I Cor. 11:1).

Paul did not do this because he thought himself so great, but he did so because he knew that the Spirit of God caused him to bear about in his body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his body for others (II Cor. 4:10). He deeply knew the way of cross in his life. He knew that death worked in him, so life could be worked into others (II Cor. 4:12). And he knew that the Spirit of God exhibited apostles to be last of all so as to be a pattern for the saints to imitate until Christ came once again.

All the apostles knew that by pointing the saints backward to the way of the cross, to a pattern created by the Spirit of God in their own lives, they would be equipping the



saints for work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ until the end of the Church Age came.

Oh, dear brethren, how many times some new way or new method is created in the Church as a way to be successful in ministry, and it soon spreads like wildfire throughout every Church, each one eagerly seeking to implement the new way or method. But, then, after a few years it loses its popularity, and is shortly replaced by the next new thing that comes along, until it too loses its lustre. And whole cycle gets repeated over and over with no enduring success.

Beloved, such cycles are simply walking by the tree of knowledge and good and evil. The way we should walk is found in the pattern left for us in the pages of the New Testament, and that is found in the apostles and the Churches they founded. We should look back to them for they were graciously given to us by the Holy Spirit of God in the beginning of this dispensation as a pattern to be imitated until the end of the dispensation.

This is why Paul declared this in his first epistle to the Corinthians—

**I Corinthians 4:9-17** For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. <sup>10</sup> *We are* fools for Christ's sake, but you *are* wise in Christ! *We are* weak, but you *are* strong! You *are* distinguished, but we *are* dishonored! <sup>11</sup> To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. <sup>12</sup> And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup> being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. <sup>14</sup> I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. <sup>15</sup> For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> **Therefore I urge you, imitate me.** <sup>17</sup> For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful

son in the Lord, **who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.** NKJV

(Do we imitate Paul and his ways in Christ Jesus, today, dear saints, or do we imitate other Christian leaders today who come up with new ideas and ways that seemingly are so popular and successful? Do we get more excited by Paul and his ways, or by the new ways of others? If we follow Paul's "ways in Christ," our works will be gold, silver and precious stones, but if we follow the ways of others, different than Paul's way, our works will be wood, hay and stubble that are burnt up in the end—I Cor. 3:10-15.)

The Holy Spirit commands us to imitate Paul and to follow his patterns, to keep his traditions as recorded in Scripture, and to imitate his ways in Christ Jesus. If every Christian leader does that and encourages the saints to do the same, they will be faithful in equipping the saints as they should, for that is how Paul equipped the saints.

**I Corinthians 11:1-2** Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ. <sup>2</sup> Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things **and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.** NKJV

**Philippians 3:17** Brethren, join in **following my example**, and observe those who walk **according to the pattern you have in us.** NASB

**II Timothy 3:10** But you have carefully **followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance.** NKJV

And so, beloved, whether one prefers the translation of "equipping" for καταρτισμός, or the translation of "perfecting," "repairing," "mending," or, perhaps, even "restoring," one can understand what that Greek word means by just observing the life and teachings of Paul the apostle and

how he exhorted and encouraged the saints to emulate his ways in Christ Jesus. His whole life was an equipping of the saints! If the apostles exhorted the saints to look backward, even in their own day, how much more should we do the same, nearly two thousand years later?

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**F**or this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, **who will remind you of my ways in Christ**, as I teach everywhere in every church. **I Cor. 4:17 NKJV**

## The Gifts or Gifted Men

Next, in examining Eph. 4:11-12, we need to look closer to the gifts or gifted men that were given to us by Christ. When we do this the first thing we see is that Paul makes a distinction between the first three and the last two. He makes a distinction between apostles, prophets, evangelists, and then the pastors and teachers.

He does this by the Greek construction of the verse. In Greek he writes: “Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν **τοὺς μὲν** ἀποστόλους, **τοὺς δὲ** προφήτας, **τοὺς δὲ** εὐαγγελιστάς, **τοὺς δὲ** ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους.” He sets apart each group with **τοὺς μὲν** and **τοὺς δὲ**. This Greek combination of μὲν... δὲ with an article is a common Greek construction indicating distinctions and is commonly translated as “some” (cf. Matt. 13:8; Acts 14:4). But notice when he gets to the pastors and teachers he does not set apart the teachers from the pastors with the same τοὺς δὲ (some), as he set apart the evangelists from the prophets and the prophets from the apostles. Rather, by omitting τοὺς δὲ from before διδασκάλους (teachers) and replacing it with the conjunction καὶ (and), he is indicating he is setting apart both pastors and teachers together as a group apart from the other the three. In other words, he is making a distinction between the first three and the last two (which are combined together). Why? Some believe it is because elders or pastors are also teachers (as they are ones who are to be always ready (apt) to teach—I Tim. 3:2) and so they conclude elders should actually be known as pastor/teachers. Thus, Paul would be speaking of four categories of men and not five.

It is possible that Paul might be making this distinction, but I do not think so since in other places “teachers” are seen as a distinct category, in and of, themselves (cf. Acts 13:1; I Cor. 12:28; II Tim. 1:1; James 3:1). So the question remains, “Why would Paul grammatically set apart both pastors and teachers as a group

of two, from the other group of apostles, prophets and evangelists?” The answer, I believe is found in understanding the true relationship of “the work” in contrast to the “local Church.

In Scripture, the *work of the Lord* has two aspects—the *local* and the *extra-local work*. If we forget this distinction confusion will result (as happened with the Church of the second century). There is only one work of God today in this dispensation and that is the work of “building the Church.” All work should have that as its ultimate goal, because the other work of the Lord has been finished, i. e. his work of redemption. Our Lord died, once and for all, for all men. That work is done.

But after He returned to the right hand of God, and after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, He began a new work—the “work” of building His Church. This work is ongoing, with all that entails, from giving gifts to men, to sending out apostles, to the proclamation of the Gospel, to the building up of the Body of Christ, and to the final rapture and glorification of every saint. All this is based upon His finished work upon the cross.

This present work of the Lord is the work in which every Christian is called to abound.

**I Cor. 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, **always abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. KJV

But it is important to understand that Scripture indicates that this work of the Lord has two aspects in this present dispensation, which means each Christian should abound in this work according to the grace and spiritual gift he or she has received, and according to his or her place in the Body of Christ.

And, when it comes to Christian men, it is especially important to fully understand this distinction of the work in its relationship to the local Church—as Paul said in I Cor. 12:28—“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?” The answer, of course, is no, because each one is called to a specific ministry and function within the Body of Christ. And this means we must understand that some Christians are called to abound in the work of the Lord in a different way than others. This, I believe is the reason for Paul’s distinction between apostles, prophets, evangelists, and then, pastors and teachers.

Paul is not combining pastors and teachers into one gift by his lack of τοὺς δὲ (some) before διδασκάλους (teachers). He is, however, grammatically setting apart pastors and teachers from the other three categories by his lack of τοὺς δὲ. In other words, he is creating two groupings of gifts. The first grouping is apostles, prophets and evangelists, and the second grouping is pastors and teachers. All are given for the equipping of the saints, but each group performs that responsibility differently. And this involves understanding the work of the Lord from the perspective of both of its aspects—the **local** and the **extra-local** aspect of the work of the Lord.

In Acts 13:1-2, the Holy Spirit reveals this truth, by telling the prophets and teachers in **local Church** in Antioch to “set apart” Barnabas and Saul for **the work** to which they had been called.

**Acts 13:1-2** Now in **the church** that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for **the work** to which I have called them.” NKJV

This distinction is all the more emphasized as Luke includes the definite article in the prepositional phrase εἰς τὸ

ἔργον—**into the work**. You see, in Greek a noun can be definite even without the presence of an article in the prepositional phrase, so when an article is included, it can make it even more emphatic.

So with the phrase before us, Luke is emphasizing “the work,” in contradistinction to the Local Church. It is not a different work of the Lord, but it is a different aspect of the one work. Barnabas and Saul were being separated from that local work of building the Church to an extra-local work of building the Church in other places. Each sphere of labour was divinely supervised, if you will, by the Holy Spirit of God. This distinction is also emphasized when Paul and Barnabas return from their first missionary journey, when Luke again emphasizes this distinction with the definite article—“the work.”

**Acts 14:26** And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for [lit. into] **the work** which they fulfilled. KJV

Thus, because of this other aspect of the work, Paul identifies himself, and those with him, as fellow workers in the work of God, in contradistinction to the local Church (I Cor. 3:9).<sup>12</sup>

**I Cor. 3:9** For **we** are God's fellow workers; **you** are God's field, God's building. NASB

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<sup>12</sup> Some might believe this is a use of a literary “we,” but normally this is not the case when a second person plural is used in the same sentence and when contextual considerations are taken into account (especially I Cor. 4), which clearly excludes any idea of a literary “we.” Paul is, indeed, making a distinction between himself (and his co-workers) and the local church.

In this verse above we can see this distinction by the use of a first person plural verb, “we,” with a second person plural verb, “you,” that shows this contrast between “we” (Paul and those with him in the work) and “you,” (those in the local Church).”

Paul also shows the contrast between the work and the local Church by the use of the personal pronoun ἡμεῖς (we) and the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς (you) in I Cor. 4:10. The “we” is Paul and the other apostles with him in the “work,” and the “you” is the local Church in Corinth that he founded in the Lord.

**I Cor. 4:9** We are fools for Christ's sake, but **you** are prudent in Christ; **we** are weak, but **you** are strong; **you** are distinguished, but **we** are without honor. NASB

The purpose of the “work” must always be to build the Church, just as he told Peter, “I will build My Church.” As such, the apostles, prophets and evangelists were separated by the Holy Spirit from the local work in the Church into that extra-local work of the Lord to be co-workers or fellow-workers of God in the proclamation of the Gospel and establishment of new Churches!

Throughout his epistles, Paul makes a distinction between those in the work and those in the local Church. Of course, Paul is not saying that he and his fellow workers are not in the Church. Whenever they visit the different Churches they founded, they are a part of that local Church, the Body of Christ as long as they are gathering with them, and, most assuredly, they are always a part of the universal Church with every believer in Christ no matter where they are. No, what he is saying is that in the work of the Lord, where every believer is called to work and minister, each one has his particular sphere of labour assigned to them by the Lord. With some it involves, an “extra-local work,” which some have called, a



*circulating ministry*, and with others it involves a “local work,” which some have called a *stationary ministry*. But each aspect is distinct and must be recognized as such, because the Holy Spirit marks off as a boundary, or divides up among labourers the one work, just as He wills.

Unfortunately, this distinction between **the work** and **the local Church**, or we might say between **the extra-local work** and **the local work** of the Lord is a distinction that has become somewhat ignored by many today. This failure to recognize this distinction has not only brought about confusion regarding the structure and governance of the Church, it has also led to a confusion of the responsibilities of each and every believer in the Body of Christ.<sup>13</sup> But it is a distinction that must be maintained, especially if we desire to fully understand Eph. 4:11-12.

You see, the reason why Paul grammatically sets off pastors and teachers, from the apostles, prophets and evangelists is because he is speaking to the distinction between the work and the local Church, or between the extra-local and local work of the Lord, or as some early brothers would sometimes say, the *circulating* or *migratory* work of the Lord, and the *stationary* work of the Lord.

The apostles, prophets and evangelists were grouped together because they primarily belonged to the *circulating*

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<sup>13</sup> It was this misunderstanding of this distinction between the work and the local Church that caused the Church in the second century to alter the governance of the Church from a plurality of men (elders or pastors) to that of one man, who became known as a monarchical bishop. And it is this misunderstanding of this distinction between the work and the Lord that has caused some men to lord it over the saints today, demanding formal authority in the Church. The extreme example of this is those today who claim to be apostles, and so elevate themselves into a hierarchical authority structure in the Church. Such men are false apostles, for they do what the original apostles would never do!

*work*, and the pastors and teachers were grouped together because they primarily belonged to the *local* or *stationary work* in the Church.

One early brother from Plymouth, from the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, J. Lamdon Harris, said it this way—

“In the Ministry of the Spirit there are **two distinct departments**, that which is **within the Church**, and that **without**. It is indeed true that the same individual may be, but is not necessarily, qualified for both; but the ministry of the pastor would not be required in the world, nor that of the Evangelist in the Church. The command is, *Go and preach the gospel to every creature*—here is the Evangelist sent forth into the world. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*—here is the Church ‘come together in one place’... [And] with respect to the **Ministry in** the Church, it is not as that of the Evangelist, **migratory**, but [it is] **stationary**...”<sup>14</sup>

This is the divine pattern of the work given by God to the Church. Christ ascended on high and gave gifts to men for the Church. Their purpose was to perfect the saints, to mend them, to restore them, to ever keep them in proper working order as the Body of Christ until the time comes when the Church is fully grown and mature (Eph. 4:13).

Paul clearly says those gifts are given until we reach the fullness of Christ, which we know will not occur till Christ comes and we are fully glorified with Him (Eph. 6:25-27). So, in one sense, one could say these five gifts have never disappeared (with a certain caveat, which we will soon mention).

As such, none of these gifts has ever been lost, which means they are not in need of restoration, which means those who claim they are now restoring a lost gift (or position) are simply wrong! Christ has never abandoned His Church, even

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<sup>14</sup> J. Lamdon Harris, “On Christian Ministry,” *The Christian Witness*, Vol. I (January, 1834) pg. 10-11

in the darkest days of our self-will and disobedience. He is ever faithfully shepherding His sheep, always having a remnant, and so, always giving the exact amount of gifts needed for His Church.

In this light, let's look at each one of these gifts or gifted men given to the saints for their equipping, their repairing, for their perfecting unto maturity.

## Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists

The apostles, who were sent by God to preach the Gospel throughout the world, were the first ones given by God for the equipping of the saints once people believed and a Church was established. Until elders were appointed and established in the Churches, they were given to mend or perfect the saints, being faithful to keep them in good working order in regard to foundational issues of the Faith and in regard to their proper functioning within the Body of Christ.

Now, of course, we do not have apostles today as we had in the New Testament, but we do have men of *apostolic stature*, who as faithful missionaries have established Churches throughout the world in places where there were none. They preached the Gospel, making sure that a Church was built upon the one foundation that is Christ Jesus.

In the past, we could point to such missionaries of *apostolic stature* as Hudson Taylor, who faithfully laboured in China, or C. T. Studd and F. S. Arnot, who both served the Lord in Africa, and then we could point to Adoniram Judson, who faithfully laboured in the work of the Lord in Burma. In fact, two books written about the life of Adoniram Judson in the late 1800's reveal this thought that he was viewed by some to be an example of a modern day missionary of *apostolic stature*, simply because the two books that were

written about him were entitled, *The Apostle of Burma*.<sup>15</sup> However, it should be noted that these men of God never claimed to be apostles, but who can deny they did the work of an apostle in far off unevangelized areas.

It is important to mention in these days of false apostles that apostles were few and far between, even in the Early Church. It seems in the Church that pastors and/or teachers would be the most plentiful. Then would come evangelists, who while being less in number than pastors and teachers would be greater in number than the prophets. And, then, of course, prophets would be greater in number than the apostles, but less in number than evangelists. The apostles, of course, being a foundational gift, would be the fewest of all. In all of Church History there probably have only been a handful of apostles, when compared to prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. Yet, the gift is still important and even today God may still give the gift when the gospel is carried to distant and unevangelized lands.

However, with that being said, in all likelihood (since the gift is rarely given today) most Christians all over the world will never come face to face with such a gifted Christian. It is interesting to note that Adoniram Judson, who some considered to be an example of a modern day apostle, returned to America only once in his some 37 years of labour in Burma. Most of his countrymen never saw him once the Holy Spirit had sent him out as a “pioneer missionary.”

But the thing to remember in all this is that if someone claims to be an apostle today, adopting that honor and name for himself, he, is a false apostle. If someone, ministers only in “evangelized” areas and not “unevangelized”

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<sup>15</sup>The first was *The Apostle of Burma: A Missionary Epic*, written by William Carey Richards and published in 1889, and the other was *The Apostle of Burma: A Memoir of Adoniram Judson*, by Jabez Marrat and published in 1890.

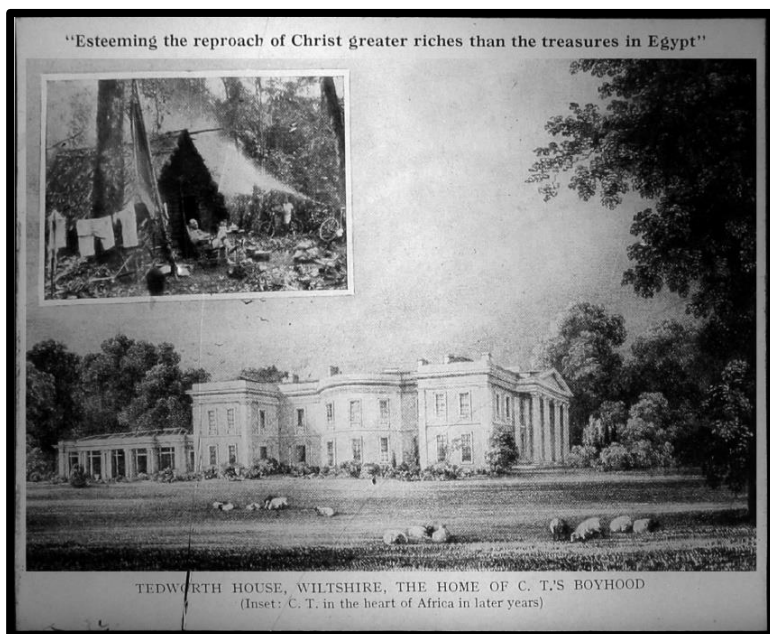
areas of the world, he is a false apostle. If such a one asks for money, either for himself, or his ministry, he is a false apostle. If such a one does not know or contend for the Historic Christian Faith, such a one is a false apostle. If such a one purports to have new revelation or deeper knowledge of that which has been written, such a one is a false apostle. And, if such a one “lords” it over the saints, demanding submission, instituting a system of strict accountability and hierarchy, such a one is a false apostle.

A true apostle today will work with his own hands when needed, never asking for money for himself or his ministry. He will never make money off his writings, his books, or anything associated with his ministry, whether it be a fee for a seminar, or a price for a message, or a charge for material. He will search out areas where Christ has not been named in order to share the good news of Christ Jesus. He will more than likely be unknown to many. He will suffer greatly. He will pour himself out for the lost, taking up his cross, ever denying himself. He will be as Paul says, a spectacle to the world, a fool for Christ; one who is weak and has no honour; one who might be hungry and thirsty and poorly clothed. He will, in all likelihood, be roughly treated, sometimes homeless, and most certainly reviled, persecuted, slandered, and treated as the scum of the world, the dreg of all things (see I Cor. 4:9-13 NASB). These are the signs of one who is truly gifted by God to be an apostle. He will live like his Master lived in His humiliation (Acts 8:33), not in His glorification. He will always know the cross must come before glory. And, like his Master he will never seek the prestige and honor of his position, but will gird a towel and wash the feet of the disciples. Anyone who resists this, and prefers a position of honor and glory among the saints instead, should be immediately held suspect.

Consider the life of C. T. Studd, one such modern day pioneer missionary of apostolic stature. His life truly

manifested the character of Christ, who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor (II Cor. 8:9). He never believed that “godliness was a means of gain,” but like Paul he believed that “if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (I Tim. 6:5-8). Even though he grew up in a wealthy family, and even though he inherited a large fortune as a young man, he gave it all away because of his love for Christ. His motto was, “If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.” He believed that since Christ died for all, “they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (II Cor. 5:15).

The following picture exemplifies his motto. It contrasts the life he could have had for himself in England, with the life that he did have for lost souls in Africa.



**Tedworth House, Wiltshire, The Home of C. T.'S Boyhood**  
(Inset: C. T. in the heart of Africa in later years)

He gave away his fortune to serve Christ in far off, unevangelized lands—first in China with CIM, then later in India, and finally in the middle of Africa.

His inheritance was given to the cause of Christ. A large portion was given to D. L. Moody, who used it to start Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Another large sum was given to George Müller of Bristol for missionary work and for the orphans in Bristol. And later, he gave an equally large sum to China Inland Mission, as well as many other gospel works.<sup>16</sup>

He truly showed forth the character of an apostle of Christ (unlike so many who falsely claim to be apostles today). He took up his cross and followed his Master to places that never heard the name of Jesus, nor of His love for mankind. He served Christ “as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (II Cor. 6:10)—all he ever needed or desired was Christ Jesus his LORD!

With this being said, perhaps, now would be the time to reference the *caveat* we mentioned before, since there are many who falsely claim to be apostles in the world today.

It is important to remember that in Scripture there seems to be three types of apostles—1) the Twelve who were chosen by the Lord before His resurrection (with the exception of Matthias)—2) a secondary group of apostles chosen by the Lord after His resurrection like Paul, Barnabas, Silas, James, the brother of our Lord, Andronicus, Junias (if Junias was a man—see Rom 16:7), and, perhaps, even more from that group referred to as “all of the apostles” in I Cor. 15:7. And then, finally, 3) a third group of apostles chosen by the Holy Spirit through the Church, like Epaphroditus, who is called an apostle in Phil. 2:25, and other unnamed men who were sent out by the Churches mentioned in II Cor. 8:23.

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<sup>16</sup> Norman P. Grubb, *C. T. Studd: Cricketer & Pioneer* (CLC Publications, Fort Washington, 2008) pg. 60

As for this last reference in II Cor. 8:23, it should be mentioned that this verse actually refers to additional apostles, even though it is not seen in most English translations, as most versions translate the Greek word as “messengers.” But Paul actually says in II Cor. 8:23 that certain ones were sent out as “apostles” from the Churches. Literally, the phrase in the verse reads: ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν (apostles of the churches). Dean Alford accurately reflects this in his own English translation of the verse, translating it as follows—

**II Cor. 8:23** Whether concerning Titus,—he is my partner and fellow-worker toward you: or our brethren,—**they are apostles of the churches**, and the glory of Christ.<sup>17</sup>

And in his *Greek New Testament* he provides the following comment on this particular verse—

**“They are Apostles** (in the more general sense of Acts xiv.14; 1Thess. ii. 6; Phil. ii. 25) **of the churches** (i.e. ‘are of the churches, what we are of the Lord’—persons sent out with authority), **the glory of Christ** (i.e. men whose work tends to Christ’s glory).”<sup>18</sup>

We should notice particularly notice that Dean Alford mentions the distinction between what we have called the second grouping of apostles and the third grouping of apostles when he says those apostles “are of the churches, what we are of the Lord.” In other words, he is saying that as we are sent out by the Lord (meaning Paul and those with him in what we have called the second group) those apostles are sent out by the Churches (what we have called the third group).

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<sup>17</sup> Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1955) pg. 1132

<sup>18</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament, Vol. II* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1958) pg. 684-685



But even though Scripture indicates that there were these three distinct categories of apostles, the one thing that remained the same with all three of them was that they all had the same true character of an apostle, for they were all filled with the Holy Spirit of God before being sent! Why would this indicate the same character?—simply because the fruit, character, or life of the Holy Spirit of God never changes! If the apostle’s character was a manifestation of the filling, fruit and character of Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit was a prerequisite for apostleship, then anyone who is gifted to be an apostle will obviously manifest the same character! And if he does not, he is a false apostle, for the Holy Spirit will not send out one who is carnal to be an apostle. So with that in mind, let’s look at each group or category of these apostles.

As for the first group, the Twelve, it is important to emphasize that the first group was a closed group never to be repeated during this dispensation of grace! They had a unique responsibility that was different from the other two groups. The Twelve were specifically chosen to bear witness to “that which was from the beginning,” as the apostle John specifically declares in his first epistle (I John 1:1-3).

None but a small group of men could fulfill this commission. The main prerequisite was that they witnessed all that Jesus said and began to do from the beginning of His work until the time of His ascension to the right hand of God on high. Obviously, even Paul would not have qualified for that ministry, for he was a unbeliever when Jesus began his ministry at the baptism of John, nor could even James, the Lord’s brother, qualify for such a ministry, for he too was not a believer in the beginning, nor was he with the Lord during that time (Mark. 3:31-32; Matt. 13:55-56; John 7:5). Peter speaks of this prerequisite in Acts 1:21-24.

**Acts 1:21-24** “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,<sup>22</sup> “beginning

from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.<sup>23</sup> And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. NKJV

Additionally, another reason there could never be others like the Twelve is that they were given foundational responsibility in the Church, represented by there being only twelve foundation stones in the New Jerusalem which is called the Bride of Christ—the Church (Rev. 21:14). Also the Twelve are given places of authority over the twelve tribes of Israel during the Millennium, unlike any of the other apostles (Matt. 19:28). So we see that the Twelve had a unique place in the Church, never to be repeated by others.

But Scripture also shows that there was a secondary group of apostles which were also sent out directly by the Lord Jesus, but with different responsibilities. This secondary category of apostle was, indeed, open to others so gifted in the early Church, and Paul, being one of the apostles of the second group, speaks to us of the signs of one so gifted.

First and foremost, it seems these apostles had to be ones who had also seen the Lord, that is, those apostles not only in the first category, but those also the second category; they either saw the Lord in His incarnation before His resurrection (as the Twelve), or in a post-resurrection appearance (as Paul and others). Paul speaks of this prerequisite in I Cor. 9:1.

**I Corinthians 9:1** Am I not an apostle? am I not free? **have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?** are not ye my work in the Lord? KJV

The Twelve, of course, as we already mentioned, saw the Lord at the beginning of His ministry, and also saw Him after His resurrection (Acts 1:3). But those apostles in the secondary group were not with the Lord from the beginning of

His ministry, but they did see the Lord in His post-resurrection glory as shown below.<sup>19</sup>

**I Corinthians 15: 5-8** And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: <sup>6</sup> After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> **After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.** <sup>8</sup> **And last of all he was seen of me also,** as of one born out of due time. KJV

In these verses, Paul clearly says that the Lord appeared first to Cephas, and then to the Twelve (which obviously must include Matthias as one of the Twelve, for Judas Iscariot was dead at that time),<sup>20</sup> and then to over five hundred brethren, and then to James, the Lord's brother, who, while not being one of the Twelve, was still called an apostle (Gal. 1:19), next to a group known as "all the apostles," and then, finally (on the Damascus road), to Paul, the last of all.

Equally, since Barnabas and Silas were called apostles (Acts 14:14; also cf. I Thess. 2:6 with Acts 17:4, 10), they also must have seen the Lord in a post-resurrection appearance. Perhaps, they were within that group of five hundred brethren to whom the Lord appeared (I Cor. 15:6), or, in the case of Barnabas, he may have been in that next to the last group in Paul's list, which he designates, "all the apostles."

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<sup>19</sup> This does not mean, of course, that some like James, the brother of the Lord, and maybe Barnabas, might not also have seen the Lord before His resurrection.

<sup>20</sup> Scripture declares that when Jesus appeared to the "Eleven" there were other disciples with them (Luke 24:33-36). One of these we know was Cleopas (Luke. 24:9, 13, 18). As such, since Paul uses the phrase the "Twelve," rather than the "Eleven" in this verse, we know that one of the others, who were also with the Eleven at that time, must have also been Matthias.

Of this group J. P. Lightfoot makes this comment—

“And as a matter of fact we do not find the term Apostle restricted to the Twelve...St Paul himself seems in one passage to distinguish between 'the Twelve' and 'all the Apostles,' as if the latter were the more comprehensive term (i Cor. xv. 5, 7).”<sup>21</sup>

We also have this comment by John Wesley (the well-known evangelist, who, along with his brother Charles and the evangelist George Whitefield, were all so instrumental in restoring the open proclamation of the Gospel to lost souls outside the confines of a Church building) who believed that some of these other apostles might have included some of those disciples known as the Seventy that were mentioned in Luke 10:1. He says—

“**Then by all the apostles** - The twelve were mentioned [in] verse 5. This title here, therefore, seems to include the seventy; if not all those, likewise, whom God afterwards sent to plant the gospel in heathen nations.”<sup>22</sup>

And Henry Alford mentions the same thing.

“**ἀποστ. πᾶσιν**—This is decisive for the much wider use of the term ἀπόστολος than as applying to the Twelve only: and a strong presumption that James, just mentioned, and evidently here and Galatians 1:19, included among the ἀπόστολοι, was not one of the Twelve. Chrys... extends the term to the Seventy of Luke 10 and others.”<sup>23 24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, a revised text with intr., notes, and dissertations* (Macmillan and Co., London, 1866) pg. 95

<sup>22</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, Vol. II* (John Mason, London, 1831) pg. 121

<sup>23</sup> Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament, Vol. II* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1958) pg. 604

In fact, what is interesting is that Church tradition declares that Barnabas may have originally been one of these Seventy.

In any case, it seems that any apostle within this secondary group also had to have seen the Lord Jesus and been an eyewitness of His resurrection. And, as with the Twelve, this secondary group of apostles also had certain foundational responsibilities in laying the foundation of the Church. Thus, we can see that this secondary group of apostles would also be a closed category—being only for the days of the early Church.

And so we see that the only type of apostle that could continue to the present hour would be those of the third category, “the apostles of the churches.” These never saw the Lord, but they most certainly knew the Lord down deep in their hearts, for they were sent out from the Church by the Holy Spirit to also do the work that they were given. And, as they were also chosen by the Holy Spirit, having been set apart and sent out from the Churches, they would also have the character of an apostle as we already mentioned.

You see, dear brethren, an apostle, by definition, must always be one who is sent out by another. The Twelve were sent out directly by Christ (Matt. 10:5; John 17:18).<sup>24</sup> Those in the secondary group, which also included those who had seen Christ, were sent out directly by Christ, being set apart and let go by the Church (Gal. 1:1; Acts 13:1-3; 26:13-20). And the

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<sup>24</sup> It should also be mentioned that the other view of this is that it bespeaks another appearance of the Lord to the Twelve again. But if that was the case, why did not Paul just say something like—“After that, he was seen of James; then of the Twelve, once again?”

<sup>25</sup> Matthias, of course, was chosen differently, yet even in his case the apostles directly asked the Lord Jesus in prayer, whom He had chosen to be sent out with them (Acts 1:24-26). And, assuming the lot was directed by the LORD Jesus Christ, the answer was Matthias.

third grouping, who never saw the Lord in his incarnation, or shortly thereafter in a post-resurrection appearance, were those who were sent out from the Church, not by Christ directly, but by the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:40; II Cor. 8:23).

As such, since Paul says these five-fold gifts were given until the Church reaches full maturity, this gift may still be given today, albeit with certain limitations and with certain qualifications.

The limitations, of course, are the fact that none can be an apostle like those from the Twelve, and/or like anyone from the secondary group of apostles like Paul. Those two categories are forever closed, never to be repeated. Yet even though that is true, and their ministry is never to be repeated, it is important to mention that, in one sense, their ministry has never ceased; they still are performing their ministry of perfecting, equipping and repairing the saints, simply because certain of their words that were given two thousand years ago are still living, being inspired, and so inscripturated, into the Holy Writ!

Regarding this fact, Louis Talbot once made this wonderful comment.

“We still have apostles and prophets *in their writings*. We have seen from former studies that they laid the great doctrinal foundations, propounding in their writings, Christ, and the doctrines concerning Christ. In the inspired writings, therefore, **the apostles and prophets live and speak with us.**”<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, now that we understand these limitations, we can see the only type of apostle that could be given today would be those in the third category, who are known as the apostles of the Churches, which today we would

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<sup>26</sup> Louis Talbot, *Lectures on Ephesians* (Van Kampen Press, Wheaton, 1937) Pg. 132

call missionaries sent out from the Churches to those unevangelized areas of the world. And even though they would be limited in their function and positions as apostles of Christ, they most certainly would not be limited in their possession of the same godly characteristics of those first apostles, i.e. if they are truly so gifted. So, with these limitations now before us, let us now continue in our study regarding their certain qualifications.

First and foremost, the **first qualification** of anyone who claims to be gifted to do apostolic work today would be that they will have a godly love for those who dwell in darkness, in those unevangelized areas of the earth. This would mean they will always seek to minister in places where Christ has not been named (Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; Rom. 15:20). This is such an important qualification, for without it, any Christian claim to modern day apostleship, is simply an empty boast. Apostles are meant to go to unevangelized places.

**Acts 9:15-16** But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. KJV

**Acts 22:21** “And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'“ NASB

**Romans 15:20** Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation. KJV

This burden, in one claiming to be an apostle, will be so deep that it will propel him onwards, and he will say, “Woe is me if I do not”—I Cor. 9:16! Apostles were commanded to go, not to stay! They were commanded to go where Christ has not been named where no Church exists, not to areas where Churches already exist!

This fact alone would disqualify most so-called apostles today from ever really being an apostle, despite their claims, for they do not go to remote places of the earth where Christ is not named.

An apostle's main purpose was always to take the Gospel to the lost, not to become stationary in their service, and certainly not to become so stationary in their work, that they create a hierarchical authority structure over a Church where they place themselves at the top! <sup>27</sup>

Apostles are to bring souls to Christ, lay the foundation of a new Church, instruct them in the things of the Lord, and then, after entrusting them to the Lord, move on to preach the Gospel in another place. Now, of course, being in a *circulatory ministry*, after a short while, they may return and minister to the same saints, equipping and repairing them, and then, make sure that those who have been made elders in the Church by the Holy Spirit become duly recognized. But after that, they move on once more. Rarely, did Paul and Barnabas, or Paul and Silas stay in one place for more than a year or two. There may be times when they rest between journeys, in one Church or the other, but their gift is always to move on to repeat the process all over again. They are not given to rule a Church in a permanent hierarchical structure. That is given to the elders, also known as bishops and pastors. Why is this point so important? Because each local Church is still called by God to try those who claim they are apostles (see Rev. 2:2), and this is the first and foremost qualification of anyone who claims to be gifted to do apostolic work.

How awful it is that this sacred ministry and gift has been abused over the centuries by carnal Christians who claim this gift for themselves, who seek to have this prestige and

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<sup>27</sup> If one would like to further study this principle, please see *Church Principles of the New Testament, Vol. I*, pages 413-451—available in digital format at [www.silicabiblechapel.com](http://www.silicabiblechapel.com)



power over fellow Christians, all in order to create their own permanent place of honour within a Church, rather than finding those places where Christ has not been named, so that they might take the glorious gospel to those darkened areas. The presumptiveness of it all is amazing.

The **second qualification** of anyone who might be gifted to do apostolic work today is that such a one will never name himself an apostle. It is interesting to note that the Twelve apostles never presumed to name themselves apostles. They never were so presumptuous to adopt that title for themselves; it was Jesus, Himself, who conferred that name upon them.

**Luke 6:13** And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, **whom also he named apostles**. KJV

In the same way, the secondary group of apostles, represented by the apostle Paul, never adopted that title for themselves. Paul says it was Jesus Christ who designated him an apostle.

**I Corinthians 1:1** Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will, and Sosthenes the brother (Darby's Version)<sup>28</sup>

Paul did not take or presume to take that title for himself. Even, James the Lord's brother never used that title for himself in Scripture, although, he was a true apostle who had seen the Lord (Gal. 1:19; I Cor. 15:7). He simply calls

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<sup>28</sup> Paul affirms the same thing in Romans 1:1. In that verse he also says he is a called apostle of Christ, meaning he is called apostle by Christ. This is indicated because κλητὸς ἀπόστολος (called apostle) as well as δοῦλος, (servant) is construed with the genitive Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (Jesus Christ). This understanding of the genitive is confirmed in verse 5, wherein he states that not only did he receive grace by Christ, he also received his apostleship by Christ.

himself a servant of God (James 1:1). Now, of course, after the Twelve and Paul were named apostles by the Lord, they then would sometimes identify themselves by that gift (cf. Titus 1:1; I Pet. 1:1), but that was not until the Lord Jesus Christ first appeared to them, gifted them, named them, and then, for those in the second group that were in a Church, release them from that Church for the work to which He had called them.

Nowhere in Scripture does one name himself an apostle, nor, indeed, does any one individual ever name another an apostle of Christ, whether that other person is an apostle or a prophet.<sup>29</sup> Nor is there any such thing as apostolic succession in Scripture. Only Christ can give that gift and so designate one an apostle, either directly, as was the case with

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<sup>29</sup> Some mistakenly believe Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the prophets in Acts 13:1-3 to be apostles. The verse does not say that, nor does it even say they were appointed to be apostles at that time. Some assume that to be the case, because they believe that since Scripture says the Lord appointed those whom He “sent” out (e.g. John 17:8; 20:21), and because this verse also says that Paul and Barnabas were “sent” out, then this must mean they were also appointed by that act. But Luke does not use the same verb “to send” in this verse that John uses for the Lord in John 17:8 and 20:21. The Greek verb that John uses (ἀποστέλλω—*apostello*), which is a cognate word of the noun *apostle*, is made up of ἀπό (away or from) and στέλλω (to dispatch). But the verb used in Acts 13:3 is actually a different Greek verb (ἀπολύω) and actually means to “release” or “let go,” being made up of ἀπό (away or from) and λύω (to release). The Geneva Bible, which preceded the King James Bible, correctly reflects this meaning, translating the verb as “let go”—“Then fasted they and prayed, and laid their hands on them, and let them go.” So this verse does not really say they were “sent” out at that time, meaning that they were made, or that they were appointed to be apostles by prophets at that time. They were simply released from their responsibilities in the Church at that time, and so they were “let go.”

the first two categories of apostles, or through the Church (by the Holy Spirit), as was the case with the third category of apostles—those missionaries of the Churches.

It is truly presumptuous for Christians to individually appoint, or to individually name another Christian an apostle today, or even for some Christians to name themselves apostles! No one can claim that honour for himself, or send himself out. Only Christ can do this. This is one of the reasons (among others I am sure) that the Church in Ephesus knew those who claimed to be apostles were false apostles (Rev. 2:2). They were false apostles for they claimed that honor for themselves, which one would never do if he was really a true apostle.

**Revelation 2:2** I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those **who call themselves apostles**, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false. NASB

The phrase above in Rev. 2:2, which reads: καὶ ἐπείρασας τοὺς λέγοντας ἑαυτοὺς ἀποστόλους [εἶναι], literally could be translated as, “and test the ones professing themselves apostles,” or “and test the ones designating themselves as (to be) apostles” (i.e. according to the Byzantine text). In other words, the Twelve could say they were apostles directly “by Christ” before the resurrection. Paul and Barnabas could say they were apostles directly “by Christ” after the resurrection. And those in the third category could say they were “apostles of the Churches” (by Christ through the Holy Spirit). Each one was sent out by someone other than themselves. However, those men in Rev. 2:2, when asked who sent them out, apparently said they were sent out by themselves! Thus they were shown to be false. No man can take that honor to himself. You cannot appoint yourself an apostle as many false apostles do today, nor can another Christian, in and of themselves, appoint another an apostle!

Apostles are not kings. In other words, they are not like those kings of the Old Testament, who were appointed and anointed by a prophet!

And so, if someone today says they are an apostle of themselves, they are a false apostle. A true apostle will be one who makes himself of no reputation like his Master, and most men who call themselves apostles today are seeking to do the opposite; they are seeking reputations for themselves in the Church, and high honour from the saints. And because the flesh always loves power, and because they seek the power and authority that comes with that title, they often will confer the title upon themselves! A carnal Christian will always seek the honour of a name or of a title, much like the Pharisees of old loved to obtain titles for themselves (Matt. 23:6-7).

And so if anyone purports to have such an authority, they are false! That in itself shows they are not an apostle separated out by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will not separate out a man that is filled with pride and carnal ways to be one to equip saints, for he is in need of being “repaired” or “equipped” himself!

The **third qualification** for anyone claiming to be truly gifted with this gift today is this—simply stated—he will have the character of an apostle of Christ! This might seem simplistic, but apostles are sent out to represent Christ (John 13:20), and since the character of Christ never changes (Heb. 13:8), the one who is truly an apostle of Christ must be having the same character as Christ being revealed through him.

In other words, a true apostle of Christ will be manifesting His life, His love, and His faith. Galatians 2:20 will be a living reality in the life of any true apostle.

**Galatians 2:20** I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. KJV

It was a living reality for the Twelve. It was a living reality to those apostles in the secondary category like Paul, and most certainly it will be a living reality to any apostle of the third category that might exist today. If the one claiming to be an apostle today does not manifest the same characteristics of Christ's life and ministry, he is a false apostle.

As such, an apostolic man of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be no different than an apostolic man of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. This is a true test for any who claim to be apostles today.

In I Cor. 4:9-13, Paul states the following regarding true apostles. He states that an apostle is a spectacle to the world, a fool for Christ; he states that he is weak; he has no honour; many times he is hungry and thirsty; he is poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless. He says he is one who toils, working with his own hands to support himself and others. He is reviled, persecuted, and slandered; he is treated as the scum of the world and the dreg of all things. And, finally, in II Cor. 1:24 reveals such a man will be humble, never "lording it over" the lives of other Christians.

We should compare these characteristics and virtues of a first century apostle of Christ, with that of a twenty-first century person, who claims to be an apostle of Christ, for the character of a true apostle will never change for Christ does not change!

A person today, who claims to be an apostle of Christ, but seeks for honour and prestige among the saints, is not a true apostle, for the Holy Spirit does not appoint men to be apostles who do not know how to take up their cross, despising the shame, just like their Master before them. The word "despising" means to "disregard," "take it not into account." In other words, our Lord never thought of Himself and the honour that was really due Him as the King of Israel (let alone the Creator of all!) when he hung upon the cross. He was taunted to come down if He truly was the King of Israel,

the Messiah, but our Lord did not consider His reputation as being more important than His work upon the cross and His love for all mankind. He was willing to undergo shame and dishonor, so that others might live. A true apostle will never seek his own honour. If such a one does, he is not an apostle of Christ.

Beloved, false apostles (and carnal men) will always love to bring attention to themselves by outward things, and by the way they present themselves in public (many times even by the way they dress!—c.f. Lu. 20:46; Matt. 23:5). They will always be concerned about receiving glory and honour from fellow Christians.

**Matthew 6:2** Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **that they may have glory of men.** Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. KJV

But a true apostle of Christ will not. Paul reveals that those of apostolic character will never seek such glory from men.

**I Thessalonians 2:6** **nor did we seek glory from men,** either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. NASB

Beloved, these are just some of the important characteristics of a true apostle. But there are more! A true apostle will never “demand” submission; he never will lord it over the faith of other Christians. Paul, as an apostle, makes this clear, declaring that he would never do such a thing in II Cor. 1:24.

**II Cor. 1:24** **Not that we lord it over your faith,** but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm. NASB

This Greek word translated as “lord it over” (*have dominion over* in KJV) is the Greek word κυριεύω. The Lord Jesus used the same word in Luke 22:25-26 regarding the carnal ways of men who love to exercise authority.

**Luke 22:25-26** And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles **lord it over** (κυριεύουσιν) them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' <sup>26</sup> “But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. NASB

However, carnal Christians will love to lord it over and exercise authority over the saints, having others look up to them. It flatters their pride.

True apostles, on the other hand, will never love such a thing; rather they will seek to serve by example, exercising a spiritual authority over others by putting themselves under others as servants. This does not mean that they will acquiesce in submission to the wishes and thoughts of others; they will not. They can never compromise the truth by acquiescing to men. They will boldly proclaim the truth. That is their spiritual authority. But they will never “demand” submission, punishing those who oppose them by putting them out of the Church simply because they disagree with them regarding some matter that has nothing to do with an essential doctrine of the Faith, or because their authority is challenged, or because they are asked to prove the genuineness of their apostleship (which a local Church is praised by Christ for so doing—Rev. 2:2), or even because they are offended by what they consider to be a lack of respect by someone.

However, a false apostle, being carnal, will do all these things! (Remember the carnal nature of Diotrephes—III John 1: 9-10.) They will love to be first and lord it over others, and in their lording, they will take away the liberty of the saints, demanding their complete submission.

**Galatians 2:4** But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order **to bring us into bondage**. NASB

**II Corinthians 11:20** “For you tolerate it if anyone **enslaves you**, anyone **devours you**, anyone **takes advantage of you**, anyone **exalts himself**, anyone **hits you in the face**.” KJV

A true apostle, on the other hand, will respect every believer’s liberty in Christ Jesus, believing there is only one who can rightfully and righteously “lord” it over others, and that is Jesus Christ, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

In fact, the apostle Paul uses this very same Greek word in Rom. 14:9 of the Lord, which he would not use of himself in II Cor. 1:24. A very literal rendering of this verse would read as follows—<sup>30</sup>

**Romans 14:9** For unto this, Christ also died and rose and lived *again*, so that He might **lord it over** (κυριεύσῃ) *the dead and the living*.”

Only one Person in the entire universe has the “right” to *lord it over* another, and to demand complete submission, and that is the LORD Jesus Christ!

And, finally, the **fourth qualification** we will examine of one claiming to be an apostle today is that such a one will never make merchandise of the things of God. A person who sells the things of their ministry, or requires money for their teaching in such things as seminars or conferences is not a true apostle. How shameful it is today that some men, claiming to be an apostle of Christ, actually sell for their own profit those things that are freely given to them by the Lord—freely given to them for the benefit of all!

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<sup>30</sup> Please note that Paul is not using a noun for “Lord” in this verse, but is actually using the verb κυριεύω, inflected as κυριεύσῃ.



They receive it freely from the Lord, but then turn around and offer it for money! How shameful it is that many, who claim to be an apostle of Christ, actually make money off the one who freely gave us all things, even His very life. Such men are simply false apostles. A true apostle will never “peddle” the word of God for money (II Cor. 2:17). Indeed, we are told that apostles are to freely give as they freely received!

**Matthew 10:8** Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: **freely ye have received, freely give.** KJV

**II Corinthians 2:17** For we are not like many, **peddling the word of God**, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God. NASB

This Greek word *καπηλεύω* in II Cor. 2:17 is better translated “peddling,” as in the NASB and in the NKJV, than “corrupt” as in the King James Version. The word simply means to sell things as in a retail trade, and does not, necessarily, mean, as some wish to claim, that it means to sell by deception. The word was used of the legitimate selling of goods, either as a retailer in one place, or by one who takes his goods from town to town selling such things in order to make a living. It is unfortunate that sometimes the word is limited only to dishonest gain, as if Paul was saying that selling or peddling the things of God is all right as long as one does not markup things exorbitantly, thus making dishonest gain. The Greek word was never limited to dishonest gain. It simply means to make any gain, honest or otherwise, which means that Paul made no money off the things of God, no matter how honest the profit might be.

Even the Jewish Rabbis of his day had a moral and virtuous mindset regarding such things. One of their sayings, commonly practiced by the Rabbis before, during and after the Apostle Paul’s day, was—”turn not the Torah into a spade to dig with.”

Jewish writer Solomon Schechter said this regarding this common Rabbinic saying at the time in which Paul wrote.

“This very R. Zadok, whom I have just mentioned, says: ‘Make not the Torah a crown wherewith to aggrandise thyself, nor a spade wherewith to dig;’ whilst **Hillel considers it as a mortal sin to derive any material profit from the words of the Torah.**”<sup>31</sup>

It must be remembered that Paul had a Jewish upbringing, being educated under Gamaliel, the grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel. Jewish Rabbis, from the time of Hillel onwards, never would dream of selling the truth of God’s Word for material profit, and, neither would Paul the apostle. He never used his ministry for material profit; he offered his ministry for free, working with his own hands, for his own needs, and for the needs of those who were with him (Acts 20:24). How many modern day Christians (and so-called Christians), who call themselves apostles, follow that practice? I am afraid not very many. It is sad when certain virtues practiced by unbelievers (like those Jewish Rabbis who did not believe in Christ) surpass the virtues practiced by believers. Just because such virtuous acts will never save an unbeliever, does not mean that God ignores the righteous character of such acts (see Acts 10:4, 34-35).

Paul followed this same virtuous mindset throughout his lifetime, earning his way with his trade—a tentmaker (Acts 20: 33-35). During the times when he was not able to do so, for one reason or the other, or when he devoted himself fully to the Word, he would live by faith, trusting in the provision of God (II Cor. 11:7-9; Phil. 4: 10-19). During such times, when he could not work, he trusted that God would move the hearts of His people to give, without Paul ever having to ask for their support, but always being gracious

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<sup>31</sup> Solomon Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (Macmillan, New York, 1909) pg. 154

whenever they did. He never asked for money, either for himself or for his ministry. Such a thought was anathema to him.

And the one time Paul thought it might be perceived by some that he was seeking or wishing for money, he stated, clearly and emphatically— “Not because I desire a gift” (Phil. 4:17 KJV). Beloved, he was not speaking in pious platitudes! He was speaking truthfully (especially since he was speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). He was not trying to convey indirectly, as some are wont to do, that he still desired such gifts or offerings. He spoke honestly. Like his Lord before him, he never asked for money or ever charged for ministry.

He truly imitated Jesus in this. The Lord never charged anyone for ministry. He gave all things freely! And He is the archetype of every man who claims to be an apostle today, for He is the first and the only perfect Apostle (Heb. 3:1). Can anyone, for instance, imagine our Lord charging money for someone to come and hear His Sermon on the Mount? Or can anyone imagine the Lord passing out an offering basket after such a sermon for money? (Indeed, the opposite thing was true; on more than one occasion, after a sermon, free baskets of fish and bread were passed out for the hungry multitude, rather than baskets being passed out to receive money for Himself, or for His ministry!—e.g. Matt. 15:29-38)

But false apostles never can trust in God for their support. They cannot live by faith; they must sell their books for profit; they must ask directly for offerings and money, either for themselves, and/or for their ministry (of which many will then take a large salary that many times will be larger than any salary that could ever be made by the ones of whom they are called to serve). Moreover, they will constantly make known their needs in order to be supported,

rather than relying upon God in prayer to move the hearts of His people to give freely as the Holy Spirit guides them.

This apostolic virtue of not peddling the Word of God, of not selling for profit anything having to do with the work of the Lord, was such a gauge of truth for one claiming to be a true apostle, that during the last part of the first century and the early part of the second century, an apostle (as well as a prophet) was immediately considered to be false, if such a one ever asked for money! This can be seen in the following quote from the *Didache*, known as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, which was written at that time.

“But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do. Let every **apostle** that cometh to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goeth away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodgeth; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet...**whoever saith in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, ye shall not listen to him;** but if he saith to you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him.”<sup>32</sup>

This document shows us that after the death of the Twelve, and after the death of all those from the secondary group of apostles, men were apt to use the title of “apostle,” or the title of “prophet” to gain money! They did so, apparently, because they knew that the name “apostle” and “prophet” was so greatly honoured by Christians that they could obtain money, simply by using that name.

In fact, this practice of using names or a position to obtain money is revealed by a person named Lucian (c. 125-

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, et al, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Volume 7 (Christian Literature Company, Buffalo, 1886) pg. 380-81

180 A.D.). He wrote a few decades after the death of the last apostle of Christ. He relates how Christians were so trusting and so easily taken advantage of that he refers to them as “simple souls.” He relates the following—

“You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. **Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow, who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls, and his fortune is pretty soon made; he plays with them.**”<sup>33</sup>

Now Lucian was not an apostle or even claimed to be an apostle, but he pretended to be a teacher. But if one could obtain money by pretending to be a teacher, how much more could one do the same by pretending to be an apostle!

And so, dear brethren, because of all these things that are practiced by false apostles, and because of the rarity of the gift, and the unique place of the apostles in the early Church, would it not be better, if any man who is gifted to be an apostle today—as, perhaps, was Hudson Taylor, or Adoniram Judson—to simply never call themselves apostles or use that title? Rather, would it not be better to call themselves “missionaries,” or, perhaps, a “pioneer missionary” (for not all missionaries are necessarily gifted to do apostolic work; some are gifted as evangelists). But if one is gifted to do

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<sup>33</sup> Lucian of Samosata, H. W. Fowler, F. G. Fowler, tr., *The Works of Lucian of Samosata: Complete with Exceptions Specified in the Preface*, Vol. 4 (At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1905) pg. 83

“apostolic work,” such a one will surely be ministering in the remote parts of the world, where Christ is not named, where Churches do not exist, or if they do exist they will be few and far between. And so, because of that fact, would it not be better to simply call such a one a “pioneer” missionary?

The title “apostle” is simply too much equated in the mind of Christians today with the authority, power, and infallibility of those apostles from the first two categories, which those in the third category could never possess. But Christians today do not seem to be able to keep that distinction in their mind, because whenever they hear the name “apostle,” then tend to view such a one as they would view Peter or Paul.

And that is the exact reason why that title is so coveted by men claiming to be apostles today. Some love the monetary advantages that can be gleaned by that name. Others love the weight of authority that comes with that title. They love the accolades and submission of Christians to their supposed authority.

But no “apostle” in the third category can ever exercise the authority of the Twelve, or the authority of one like Paul, or Silas, or Barnabas. Nor can any from the third category ever claim infallibility like was claimed by the Twelve and by Paul (cf. I Cor. 14:37). But false apostles will always do so anyway, for they love to “lord” it over the saints and exercise authority. Such ones should be ashamed of themselves. Not only are they carnal and false in their assertions, they are in need of their own repentance before the Lord, the very One they purport to represent.

Consequently, it seems it would be better today if the name of “apostle” is simply not used, being reserved only for those apostles in the early Church, doing so out of honour and respect for them. Instead, why not use the name “pioneer missionary,” if anyone wishes to give that gift a name?

After all, where did we get the word “apostle” from? It is simply a word in the English language that was created to translate the Greek word ἀπόστολος—apostolos. And what does that Greek word mean? It simply means *one sent out on a mission*.

“**Ἀπόστολος**, ου, ὁ, *adj.* sent forth; **sent out on a mission**; sent—employed for missions.”<sup>34</sup>

And what does our English word “missionary” mean? It also means *one sent out on a mission*, as can be seen from the dictionary quoted below—

“**Mis’sion-a-ry**...*n.* **One sent on a mission**; esp. one sent to propagate religion.”<sup>35</sup>

So, if the English word “apostle” means the same thing as our English word “missionary,” why not simply translate the Greek word ἀπόστολος in English by “missionary,” whenever it is used of an ἀπόστολος (apostle) from the third category of apostles, and continue to translate the word as “apostle” in English, whenever it is used of the Twelve, or when used of those apostles that were in the second category? If the gift remains today, yet the position equated with that gift in the minds of most Christians does not—would it not just be better to use the word “pioneer missionary” instead?

But, alas, I am afraid many men who use that “title” love it too much for the power and authority it brings. I am

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<sup>34</sup> James Donnegan, *A New Greek and English Lexicon, principally on the plan of the Greek and German Lexicon of Schneider* ((Hilliard, Gray & Co., Boston, 1839) pg. 232

<sup>35</sup> Noah Webster, *Webster’s Academic Dictionary of the English Language* (American Book Company, New York, 1895) pg. 364

afraid, rather than giving it up they will cling to it tenaciously, defending their use of the name at all costs.

To be honest, dear brethren, because the Church is still plagued by such men who love to lord it over the saints and take up for themselves the name of “apostle,” it would be so much easier to simply state that the gift is no longer given today. Then we could dismiss out of hand all such men who claim the title. But it is so important to trust and follow the plain and literal sense of Scripture, and the Holy Spirit clearly says in Eph. 4:13-14 that these five gifts are given until we reach the fullness of Christ and until the Church is no longer plagued by false doctrine. And that simply has not yet occurred today.

**Ephesians 4:13-14** until (μέχρι) we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming, NASB

The Greek word μέχρι, in the verse above, translated as “until,” plainly indicates the temporal extent of the given gifts.

Vincent in his Word Studies makes the following comment on this temporal conjunction.

“Specifying the time up to which this ministry and impartation of gifts are to last.”<sup>36</sup>

So we can clearly see that the literal and plain sense of the text indicates the period for which these gifts are given.

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<sup>36</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume 3, Second Edition* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1890) pg. 390



If the Church has not come to the unity of the faith, to a mature man that is measured by the fullness of Christ, and if the Church has not come to the time when it is no longer plagued by false doctrine and deceitful men, then, according to Eph. 4: 13-14, the Church will still have these gifts present. And, of course, as we said, this maturity will not come about until the time comes that the Church is raptured and presented to Christ in all her glory (Eph. 5:27). So how can we honestly say it has ended, without breaking our principles of interpretation that follow a literal, grammatical and historical hermeneutic?

Therefore, brethren, even though it would be easier to say the gift of apostleship has completely ceased today, and even though that would make it easier to thereby expose men who falsely claim to be apostles (and as we will see prophets), we must not ignore the plain sense of Scripture, and, rather seek to understand what the Lord is trying to teach us by the presence of this limited gift that might still be given today. By so doing, we can grow in our own spiritual walk and grow in our own knowledge of Scripture. This will give us the spiritual discernment that is needed to prove that certain men are false apostles and/or prophets, especially so that we can help our brethren who might be held under their sway, and who are kept by them in bondage and error.

Moreover, there are still so many places in the world that have never heard of Christ. They need the ministry of those gifted unto apostolic work. Every day new souls are born into this world who will grow up, never having heard of Christ and His love. Many lands are firmly held under the sway of false religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. And then there are lands held under the sway of atheism. Such lands are filled with much danger for one who proclaims the gospel, but apostles are gifted by Christ to serve in such situations. They are given a special grace to face such obstacles and dangers (Eph. 4:7). Paul speaks of the obstacles

and danger that an apostle must face in II Cor. 11:23-27 NASB.

“Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Beloved, I would dare say that none of us would have the courage that Paul had, or the courage that such pioneer missionaries today must have, but that should lead us to be humble before God and thank Him all the more that he still bestows such grace and courage on such men of apostolic stature who, like the Saviour before them, are completely willing to lay down their life in love for lost souls.

And so, we should pray that Christ might continue to give such gifted men today to serve in such remote places of the earth that know not Christ. We should give Him thanks for such missionaries who are willing to risk their lives in such darkened and dangerous lands, laboring hard in the gospel of Christ out of love for the lost. We should “esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake” (I Thess. 5:13) and give them the honour that they would never dream of seeking for themselves. And, finally, we should pray for them, as Paul the apostle asked those early Christians to pray for him—”praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the

mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Eph. 6:18-20 KJV).

Before we move on to prophets, perhaps, it will be helpful to share a few thoughts by J. N. Darby, regarding the continuing gift of apostolic work that might exist today.

“Hence, though **subsisting not in authoritative revelation of the will of God, nor power in the Church, yet in a subordinate sense, it seems to me that the gift of apostle and prophet has not passed away.** Barnabas was an apostle. Junius and Andronicus were of note among the apostles: and it was praise to a Church that they had tried certain whether they were apostles, and they were not, but liars. Doubtless, these pretenders set up for the highest form of apostolate. But the Church could not have been commended for trying them, if there had been question only of the twelve and Paul. **In truth, the word apostle...amounts to one sent, a missionary.** The messenger of the Church is called “your apostle” in the original. That which seems to designate the character of apostle, is the being directly sent of Christ, raised up to act on his own personal responsibility to Christ ... **In this sense,** while the authoritative primary revelation of God's will, gathering and regulating the Church, has clearly closed in the scriptural record to apostolic ministry, **I do not see but that apostolic service may still subsist, and probably has been exercised, though the name may not have been attached;** men raised up and sent by God for a certain-mission...though with no fresh revelation, but with a special energy in which to fulfil it...In the same way, prophets, who were associated with apostles as the foundation, because they revealed the mind of God, may, it appears to me, in a subordinate sense, be believed to exist.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> J. N. Darby, *Operations of the Spirit of God* (W. H. Broom, London, 1865) pg. 115-116

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Prophets equip or mend the saints, if you will, by keeping the mind of God before the saints when they are confronted with new ways of following Christ in contradiction to the way of the cross.

It must be remembered that much, if not most of a prophet's ministry in the New Testament was not spent on telling the future. Nor was it spent on receiving new revelations from the Lord, but, rather, it was spent on encouraging the saints in regard to current issues confronting the Church; it was spent on making known the mind of God on issues requiring spiritual discernment—in other words, their main purpose was *forth-telling* if you will, not *future telling*. Because of this, Scripture declares to us that a prophet is also known as a “preacher.”

For example, Noah was considered to be a prophet of God by the Jews because he was given the revelation that a flood would come upon all the earth (see Philo Q.Her 1:260). Yet we see that Peter, who most assuredly would have been aware of this, calls him, instead, a “preacher” of righteousness (II Pet. 2:5). Or let us consider, for instance, Paul the apostle. Most assuredly Paul received revelations and prophesied of future things. As such, he may, indeed, have been also gifted to be a prophet (although Scripture never directly calls him a prophet except, perhaps, indirectly in Acts 13:1), yet we see him call himself a “preacher” on more than one occasion (I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11).

And then we have the example of Jonah. We certainly know that Jonah in the Old Testament was a prophet (II Kings 14:25), yet he was told to go Nineveh, not to “prophesy,” but to “**preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee**” (Jonah 3:2 KJV). Not once in the book of Jonah was Jonah told to go and prophesy; nor does it say that he was prophesying; nor it say

that he had prophesied! Yet he was a prophet (also cf. Matt. 12:39).

The same was true of John the Baptist in the New Testament. John the Baptist was called by the Lord the greatest of prophets (Luke 7:28) and yet nowhere does Scripture say that John the Baptist went about prophesying, but it does say he went about “preaching” (Matt. 3:1)!

Now, of course, every “preacher” is not a “prophet,” but every “prophet” is certainly a “preacher” in the New Testament, that being the largest portion of a prophet’s ministry. Their ministry was primarily a ministry of comfort, encouragement and of forth-telling (Acts 15:32).

**Acts 15:32** Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. NASB

Thus we see that prophets *circulated* among the Churches with a spiritual authority speaking in the name of the Lord (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 15:22, 32; 21:10-11). As such, the Lord also used them, like the apostles, to lay the foundation of a Church (Eph. 2:20). For instance, Silas, who was also a prophet, and who traveled with Paul, helped lay the foundation of such Churches as the Church in Philippi, and the Church in Thessalonica (Acts 15:32, 40; 16: 12-15; 17: 4).

Moreover, it is also interesting to note that this *circulating* ministry seems to be a common characteristic of prophets. Not only do we see it in the New Testament, we also see it in the Old Testament. Samuel the prophet travelled in a circuit.

**I Samuel 7:15-16** And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year **in circuit** to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. KJV

Today, such men with this gift might travel and speak in different Bible Conferences, but their authority, like the

apostles, will always be spiritual and moral. They will not exercise any official authority within the local Churches they visit. They will respect the formal and localized authority of the elders (pastors) within every assembly, yet still speak boldly in the name of the Lord.

However, it is also important to note that prophets today do not have the same function as those prophets in the New Testament, for as we said, the Canon of Scripture is closed; there is no new revelation to be given; and the one foundation of the universal Church that continues to the time of the rapture, has already been laid (Eph. 2:20). So, just as there can only be apostles today in a subordinate sense, not being like those apostles from the first two categories of apostles, so too there can only be prophets today in a subordinate sense, not being like those prophets in the New Testament.

With that in mind, just as there might be those today who do apostolic work, yet never take the title of “apostle” for themselves, so it seems there might be those today who function with *prophetic insight*, yet never take the title of “prophet” for themselves. Perhaps, for all the same reasons we mentioned above concerning the title of apostle, it would be better to simply call those with this gift of prophetic insight, a “preacher.”

After all, dear brethren, a hand does not need to know it is a hand to function as a hand. It simply needs to obey the Head. So too, a prophet does not need to be called a prophet, or, indeed, know that he is a prophet to function with prophetic insight, he simply needs to obey the Head and speak as he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

It seems it would be better to reserve both titles of *apostles* or *prophets* only for those men of the New Testament who were given to lay the foundation of the Church and to write Scriptures. Those two positions of spiritual authority were unique to the beginning of the Church, to the beginning

of this dispensation. They held a unique place in the Church, which was never to be repeated, and yet, no doubt, throughout Church History the function of both (but not the position) have been exercised among the saints for the furtherance of Gospel and the restoring of the saints to their proper place of ministry and edification.

So, in this limited sense, the gift of prophetic insight is still needed in the Church today for the equipping or repairing of the saints. Paul warned us, in I Tim. 4:1 and II Tim.3:1-7, that many would fall away from the Faith and be influenced by men who were lovers of self and lovers of money, who would have a form of godliness, but who would deny the power. Such is happening today. More and more Christians are adopting the self-loving psychological and humanistic mindsets in their pursuit of spiritual growth. More and more Christians are shying away from the cross of Christ in their daily living, and, instead, are replacing it with love of self and the esteeming of themselves, as being more important than others, rather than the esteeming of others, as being more important than themselves (Phil. 2:3). Many others are making common the things of the Lord, following the ways of the world and adopting methods from worldly business models to further the Lord's work!

And for that very reason, Churches today need a "preacher" with prophetic insight who will boldly preach that whoever wishes to be a friend of the world will make himself an enemy of God (Jam 4:4 NASB). They need one who will bring spiritual clarity to issues confronting a Church that has lost its spiritual discernment.

One gifted with prophetic insight will make known that salvation or sanctification cannot be found in the psychologies of human wisdom or in the many philosophies of the world. He will remind the saints that perfection is gained by looking back to Christ, not forward to new ways of doing things created by human ingenuity. He will continually

*equip* or *mend* the spiritual life of the saints by being faithful to remind them of the unchanging admonition of Paul—

**Colossians 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. NASB

A preacher with prophetic insight can also bring the mind of Christ to bear upon our ongoing sanctification and the spiritual condition of our hearts. Many times we do not know that there is pride behind our humility, selfishness behind our good deeds, and self-righteousness behind our piety.

Now, of course, humility, good deeds and piety are all good things that every follower of Christ should seek to attain by God's grace. But God wishes to sanctify us wholly—spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:23). He desires to sanctify us not just outwardly, but also inwardly. He wants every believer to recognize the “self,” which must be denied, and the “old man,” which must be reckoned dead, and the religiosity of the flesh, which must be counted crucified.

Only when we are sanctified in this manner, being filled with the Spirit of God, will we be able to manifest the inward graces and fruit of the Spirit. Only then will there be true humbleness behind our humility, a self-less-ness behind our good deeds, and true righteousness behind our piety.

But such sanctification can only be accomplished by the God. And part of the way that He accomplishes this, is to use those gifted with prophetic insight to bring to light the uncanny ability of our “self” to never see our true inward condition. While, at the same time, He also uses them to bring to light the utter heights to which we have risen in Christ Jesus, where every spiritual blessing is found in Him. This too is part of the equipping and mending of a prophet.

And so it seems, as with apostles, this gift has continued to be given throughout Church history. As example,



perhaps, we might consider John Bunyan from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to be a “preacher” who spoke with “prophetic insight.” He never called himself a prophet, but who can deny he was one of *prophetic stature*. Just as Judas and Silas “exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words” (Acts 15:32 NKJV), he “exhorted and strengthened the brethren” with many words through such writings such as *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, and *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

By his writings he was able to exhort the saints, bringing to light the deceptiveness of the human heart, and the lukewarm spirit of the Church.<sup>38</sup> He was able to apply to the Church of his day, the prophetic insight of Scripture that was

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<sup>38</sup> It should equally be noted that like the true character of a New Testament prophet (and an apostle) John Bunyan did not make merchandise of the things of God, nor peddle the Word of God. Over his life, some made false charges against him regarding this. Some intimated that he preached for hire, for gifts, for rewards, and that he divined for money and agreed to preach for a certain amount for a year. In response to such false charges and insinuations he once said this. “For though I be poor, and of no repute in the world as to outward things; yet through grace I have learned by the example of the apostle, to preach the truth; and also to work with my hands, both for my own living, and for those that are with me, when I have opportunity. And I trust that the Lord Jesus, who hath helped me to reject the wages of unrighteousness hitherto, will also help me still, so that I shall distribute that which God hath given me freely, and not for filthy lucre’s sake. Other things I might speak in vindication of my practice in this thing: but ask of others, and they will tell thee that the things I say are truth: and hereafter have a care of receiving anything by hearsay only, lest you be found a publisher of those lies which are brought to you by others, and so render yourself the less credible; but be it so.” —John Bunyan, George Offor, ed., *The Works of John Bunyan: Experimental, Doctrinal, and Practical* Vol. II (Blackie and Son, London, 1861) pg. 201 (In regard to the false charges and intimations, please see page 209, Query 10.)

given to another prophet of God, that being the apostle John in the book of Revelation.

**Rev. 3: 15-19** I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. NASB

In this, John Bunyan was a faithful preacher of righteousness, having true prophetic insight for the Church of his day.

In the last century, we could also mention A. W. Tozer as one of *prophetic stature*. Most assuredly, like a prophet he brought the mind of God to bear on modern day issues plaguing the Church. He pointed people back to God, and contended earnestly for the Historic Christian Faith. There were many who could not see the harm that was arising in the Churches, but the Lord saw it, and so gifted him to make it known to a Church that had become so dull of hearing. He equipped the saints by exhorting them to come back to the old ways, to come back to the Lord. But, unfortunately, just as with those sent by God in the Old Testaments, many would not listen—

**II Chronicles 24:19** Yet He sent prophets to them **to bring them back** to the LORD; though they testified against them, **they would not listen.** NASB

And, equally like those in the Old Testament, many preferred having preachers who would preach pleasant things

to their ears, assuaging them of any guilt rising from their worldly ways.

**Jeremiah 23:16-17** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the LORD. <sup>17</sup> They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. KJV

And so, with all the issues confronting the Church today, such men as this are still needed to bring the mind of Christ to bear on issues threatening the spiritual well-being of the saints, and to issues that are detrimental to Body of Christ. Those with prophetic insight and spiritual discernment are given by the Lord to “mend” the saints when such situations arise.

Let me conclude this section on the prophets by providing an example of the message, admonition, and exhortation of one gifted with such prophetic insight in our own modern times—the aforementioned A.W. Tozer. (I will provide a few of his quotations taken from different books and different pages, but I will attempt to unite them into one cohesive whole to convey the burden of his heart.)

“The second great passion of my heart is the church of Jesus Christ, particularly the evangelical/fundamentalist church...Because I love them with a godly love, I need to address certain problems that have been developing for several generations...”<sup>39</sup>

“Have we come to a stage in this generation that the so-called church is promoting everything and anything that will add to its numbers? The bottom line, as they say, is success; and success

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<sup>39</sup> A.W. Tozer, James L. Snyder, ed., *Voice of a Prophet: Who Speaks for God?* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014) pg. 16

has everything to do with numbers. Whatever brings the numbers in must be all right. This is far from the church fathers who gave their lives to establish the church of Jesus Christ...”<sup>40</sup>

“Every generation seems to drift a little further away from the vision of what God had for the church...When the church turns her back on the past, she has no sense of her future. She is like a ship without a rudder, floundering in a vast sea of uncertainty...”<sup>41</sup>

“Within the last quarter of a century we have actually seen a major shift in the beliefs and practices of the evangelical wing of the church so radical as to amount to a complete sellout; and all this behind the cloak of fervent orthodoxy. With Bibles under their arms and bundles of tracts in their pockets religious persons now meet to carry on “services” so carnal...that they can hardly be distinguished from the old vaudeville shows of earlier days. And for a preacher or a writer to challenge this...is to invite ridicule and abuse from every quarter.”<sup>42</sup>

“For some reason, they go to Hollywood to get their authority...If they can only package the message in an acceptable manner that will entertain the most numbers of people, they count that to be successful. Even so, I wonder how entertaining it was for Jesus to die on the cross?... All of this is contrary to wholesome spiritual development...”<sup>43</sup>

“If Christianity is to receive a rejuvenation, it must be by other means than any now being used. If the church in the second half of this century is to recover from the injuries she suffered in the first half, there must appear a new type of preacher. The proper, ruler-of-the-synagogue type will never do...nor the smooth-talking pastoral type who knows how to make the Christian religion acceptable to everyone. All these have been tried and found wanting.

Another kind of religious leader must arise among us. He must be of the old prophet type...When he comes (and I pray God there will be not one but many) he will stand in flat contradiction to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pg. 17

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pg. 18

<sup>42</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men* (Christian Publications, Harrisburg, 1960) pg. 19

<sup>43</sup> Tozer, *Voice of a Prophet: Who Speaks for God?* Op. cit., p. 21-22

everything our smirking, smooth civilization holds dear. He will contradict, denounce and protest in the name of God and will earn the hatred and opposition of a large segment of Christendom...He will love Christ and the souls of men to the point of willingness to die for the glory of the one and the salvation of the other. But he will fear nothing that breathes with mortal breath.”<sup>44</sup>

“The time has come to hear once again the voice of God through His prophets.”<sup>45</sup>

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Next we come to evangelists. Evangelists are perhaps, the most easily discerned today. God has gifted many evangelists over the years. In modern times, here in America, D. L. Moody and Billy Graham have both been greatly used by God to save many souls. In Canada, there were such evangelists like Donald Ross and Donald Munro, who came over to Canada from Scotland.

All over the world there have also been many other evangelists who have been greatly used by God. Some may be unknown to us in the West but they are well beloved in their own lands. For example, for those who might read this book in India, I have become acquainted with the wonderful labour in the gospel of evangelists in India like that of G. Jaya Sekhar in the Hyderabad/Andhra Pradesh area of India, and K. Paul Sadayan in the Tamil-Nadu area of India.

And before them, there were evangelists like John Arulappan in the early 1800's, and toward the eastern coast of India, there were the evangelists William Bowden and George Beer, who worked with Anthony Norris Groves in the Godavari delta region of India.

Then in the late 1800's and early 1900's there was the evangelist Tamil David born in the Tinnevely, India. He

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<sup>44</sup> Tozer, *Of God and Men*, Op. cit., pg. 22-23

<sup>45</sup> Tozer, *Voice of a Prophet: Who Speaks for God?* Op. cit., p. 24

worked closely with D. L. Moody, and was once introduced as **India's first evangelist to America**.

He not only travelled throughout America, he also preached the gospel in many other countries. And, of course, he laboured tirelessly throughout his native India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Once, after laboring in the Kerala region of India, he said: "Within three months of our work there, ten thousand people were converted; and out of those ten thousand, thirty-six evangelists without any money, voluntary workers, started to go anywhere and everywhere for the Lord."<sup>46</sup>

We could go on. In Africa, we could mention a missionary and evangelist who served with F. S. Arnot by the name of Dan Crawford. He came from Scotland to Africa and faithfully served the Lord for many years in Central Africa. He shared Christ's love to all who would listen, from the highest to the lowest. He loved everyone. He said the happiest times of his life were those evening hours spent with villagers gathered around the evening camp-fire, sharing with them the love of Christ; he fondly called those times of sharing his "gospel chats."

All of these evangelists were used by God, not only to bring the light of the gospel to darkened souls, but also to equip the saints in the things of God. And the list could go on and on, all over the world, evangelists were raised up by Christ to preach the Word in season and out of season. It was the one gift that seems to have readily continued into modern times, without any caveats or limitations. As such, it carries no stigma if one calls himself such.

But is it not interesting that Scripture never warns us against false evangelists as it does with false prophets and false apostles. Why is that? Why do we not see false brethren

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<sup>46</sup> *Official Report of the Sixteenth International Christian Endeavor Convention, San Francisco, CA July 7-12, 1897* (United Society of Christian Endeavor, Boston, 1897) pg. 126-127

clamoring to be called an “evangelist,” like they do with the name apostle and prophet?

Perhaps, the answer is because such false brethren cannot gain the same type of authority with the title of evangelist that they can gain with the title of apostle or prophet! And if that is true, does it not really show the true nature of their heart? What such men really desire is to have power and authority over others. Lust for power and authority has always been the bane of fallen human nature. As we mentioned before, our Lord specifically warned his disciples of its danger in Luke 22:25-26.

**Luke 22: 25-26** And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’<sup>26</sup> “But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.” NASB

So, since the position of an evangelist does not easily lend itself to that type of authority and power, it has not been as much of a plague to the Church like that of a false prophet and a false apostle. The only exception might be those evangelists (mostly in America, it seems), who use that title as a means to make money off the saints of God.

(In America, we have many television evangelists, who always seem to be begging for money. They are constantly selling the things of their ministry for profit. Great amounts of money are raised, purportedly for the Lord, but in the process much of it is used to support their lavish lifestyle that in some cases is hidden from the saints, but in other cases is openly displayed as proof of God’s blessing. Such men usually preach what is called a gospel of prosperity, rather than preaching the Gospel of Christ, and so are hurtful to the saints in the Church.)

Nevertheless, many faithful men of God, who are godly in their walk, have been called to be an evangelist. The

Church has been greatly blessed by their example, love, and faithfulness. They too, are gracious gifts given by Christ to the Church to “mend” the saints, to keep them in proper working order, especially in regard to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Sometimes we will find evangelists, who are missionaries, proclaiming the gospel in unevangelized areas of the earth where no Churches exist (much like pioneer missionaries), but also we will find them labouring in areas where Churches do exist, taking the gospel out to surrounding areas.

In this way they are much like the evangelist Philip and Timothy, who would travel from place to place and preach Christ Jesus to lost souls in a *circulating ministry*. It seems such evangelists would have a home base, from which they would take the gospel out to nearby areas.

For example, Acts 19:10 says that from Ephesus all of Asia heard the word of the Lord. And verse 22 indicates that for a good portion of the time that Paul was in Ephesus Timothy was with him, which, presumably, indicates that Timothy, as an evangelist, was many times sent out to proclaim the word of the Lord to the surrounding areas of Asia, while Paul continued on in Ephesus. As for Philip, even though he had to flee from Jerusalem because of persecution, we see him take the gospel first to Samaria, then in a circuit to Gaza, then Azotus (Ashdod), and then from Azotus, we see him preaching the gospel to all the cities up the coast, making his way to Caesarea, which then seems to become his next home base.

Also, in such a circulating work, evangelists, like pioneer missionaries and preachers, will also have a spiritual authority in any newly formed Churches that might arise from their work, but not a formal authority like that of an elder or pastor. As such, after the Holy Spirit appoints elders or pastors in those Churches, a missionary (evangelist) in the circulating work will, especially in foreign lands, continue to



travel between various Churches exercising a spiritual and moral authority, yet always respecting the authority of the pastors or elders in each Church.

Moreover, we see in Scripture that their ministry involves not only the preaching of the Gospel to the lost, but also teaching sound doctrine in those Churches, just as was done by Timothy later in Ephesus.

Not only did Timothy preach the Gospel, in season and out of season, as is seen in II Tim. 4:1-5, he also was involved in teaching and charging men not to teach doctrines that were false in those Churches he helped found with the apostle Paul (see Acts 19:1-22).

**I Timothy 1:3** As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no **other doctrine** (ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν—i.e. heterodox). NKJV

In this verse above, the Greek word translated as “other doctrine” is the word from which we get the English word heterodox, i.e. heresy. In this sense, this aspect of the ministry of an evangelist is no different than that of the prophets or apostles, or for that matter, of pastors or teachers. All those gifted men in Eph. 4:11-12 are given a responsibility to guard the flock against heresy and any dilution or falling away from the Historic Christian Faith. How wonderful that many gifted evangelists are also involved in teaching doctrine to the saints.

Moreover, we see from Scripture that evangelists are also responsible to convey those “faithful sayings” of Paul to the saints so as to insure the Church’s proper mindset and functioning, as well to convey Paul’s desire that proper respect and honour be shown to those elders ruling within the assembly (I Tim. 5:17). This helps the elders or pastors of each local Church.

This conveyance of Paul’s desire that elders be honoured and respected is such an important aspect of the

work of an evangelist for lack of respect will always be a seed that ends in sin. An evangelist, being a worker in a *circulating ministry*, and thus, having no official authority in the local Church, is a perfect candidate for this type of encouragement since he would be able to say things an elder might be hesitant to say, not wishing to appear autocratic. Paul knew this and so had Timothy make sure that this truth was taught in the Church. Today missionaries can do the same thing once they leave a Church in the hands of local pastors (elders).

In addition, we see that Timothy, as a worker and evangelist, would also be an arbitrator in local issues having to do with any charge brought against one of those elders. As one who exercised an extra-local, spiritual, and moral authority, he would be the perfect one to arbitrate in such cases (I Tim. 5:19).

So we can see some of the responsibilities given to an evangelist in the work. Those who have not understood the distinction between the *work* and *the local Church*, between a *spiritual* and a *formal* authority, between a *circulating* and a *stationary ministry* have misunderstood these verses in the epistles to Timothy, thinking that they should apply to every single believer. However, these epistles do not apply to each and every single believer, per se, for it was specifically written to one gifted to be an evangelist in the *circulating work*. And not every believer is in the *circulating work*. Even though we are all called to preach the Gospel, God has not gifted every believer to be an evangelist like Timothy, and so everything written to him is not necessarily written for each and every believer.

Now, of course, there will always be general principles that will apply to every believer in these epistles to Timothy, but it must not be forgotten that there are specific things written in the epistle that apply only to one gifted like him in the work. An obvious example is what we just mentioned above, regarding receiving an accusation against

an elder. Obviously that does not apply to every believer, nor does the fact that he was charged to oversee which widows would be put on a list (I Tim. 5:9-11).

We are told to rightly divide the Word of God; thus it is an important point to realize that when all the admonitions made to one gifted like Timothy, are taught as being admonitions to every Christian, a believers spiritual walk can be damaged, for when such a one tries to live up to those admonitions, he fails, for he does not have the gift, and so he does not have the grace from God to fulfill that gift (see Rom 12:3-4). As such, he feels he fails the Lord. But that Christian did not fail the Lord because he was not committed enough; he failed because he was not gifted to fulfill that specific admonition. Making this known is part of the equipping done by an evangelist

For instance, some have applied II Tim. 4:2 to every believer, making them feel guilty if they do not preach the Gospel in season and out of season as Timothy did. But, beloved, the Holy Spirit is not telling every believer to preach the word in season and out of season to the degree that Timothy did. Timothy was doing the work of an evangelist full time.

Now, that does not mean every believer is free from sharing the good news. Every believer should share the good news, but that charge to do so is not taken from this verse in Timothy (the general principle could, but not the specific charge). It is taken from such verses as Acts 8:3-4 that says that every believer went about sharing the good news of Christ. And it is taken from a verse like I Pet. 3:15, where Peter says, in regard to every believer, that they should be “ready always to give an answer to every man” that might ask them a question regarding the hope that is in them (I Pet. 3:15). And, indeed, it is taken from the lips of the Saviour who told everyone gathered with the Eleven the following: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again

from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **You are witnesses of these things.**” (Luke 24: 33, 46b-48).

Such verses as these will be the verses an evangelist will use to “restore” or “mend” the saints back to their original condition, reminding them that the Lord wishes every Christian to bear witness for Him. But that responsibility is not the same as that of an evangelist. The responsibility to be a witness for Christ is the same, but the extent is not the same.

The saints have additional responsibilities, part of which is to take care of their own business (I Thess. 4:11; Eph. 4:28), which, in and of itself, will mean having to deal with the affairs of everyday life, which affairs Timothy was specifically told to avoid himself (II Tim. 2:4)! Such affairs of everyday life allow believers to earn a living for their families and for the work of the Lord!

So in this too, we have another example of a verse that does not specifically apply to each and every believer, for if it did, such believers could not can earn the wherewithal to be the ones to help support workers like Timothy, who are truly called to preach the Word “in season, out of season [as well] to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine!”

And so, we see that part of the equipping of the saints done by an evangelist—is also making sure that the saints know what is their responsibility and what is not their responsibility, to let them know what the Lord does expect, and what the Lord does not expect, so everyone can function according to the role and function they have been given in the Body of Christ. When Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy wrote to the saints in Thessalonica to “mind their own business,” they were also equipping the saints with that exhortation!

Moreover, another misunderstanding that comes from not understanding the distinction between the work of an

evangelist and the local Church is that some will use these epistles to Timothy to teach that Timothy was the first bishop of Ephesus, or that he was the pastor of the Church. This, too, is the result of not recognizing the distinction between the work and the local Church. Timothy was not known as the bishop of the Church in Ephesus (despite that assertion being made in the subscription found at the end of the Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy in our King James Version, which, of course, we know was not inspired) nor was he known as the pastor of the Church in Ephesus. Rather, Timothy was known as a worker, as an evangelist.

This lack of rightly dividing the Word of God on this issue helps explain why so many have called these epistles, along with Titus, the “Pastoral Epistles.” They do not understand this distinction between the *extra-local work* and the *local work*. But if the saints are to be properly equipped and restored back to their original condition this distinction must be understood. And so, perhaps it would be better to call these epistles the “Worker’s Epistles,” for they were written to someone in the “work,” in the extra-local work of the Lord.

Indeed, Scripture makes this fact self-evident, for Timothy was soon, once more, traveling to other places in his *circulating ministry* as an evangelist (II Tim. 4:9-13, 19-21), leaving the care of the Church to those men appointed to a *stationary ministry* by the Holy Spirit as the bishops (also known as elders and pastors) of the Church (I Tim. 3:1; 5:17).

And, so for today, we can see that when this distinction between those in the *circulating work* and those in the *stationary work* is recognized and maintained, the saints are blessed and restored to their proper place and function within the Body of Christ. This allows an evangelist, as well those with prophetic insight to freely travel from Church to Church with their spiritual and moral authority of equipping the saints, restoring them to function as God intended. When Christians respect an evangelist’s place and authority in the

Body of Christ, and take heed to their spiritual admonitions against false doctrines, and heed their exhortations to follow Paul's ways in Christ, and their encouragement for each one to be a witness for Christ, then much blessing can be gained in the life of the Church (II Cor. 13:10).

And this now brings us to the last of these five-fold gifts—the last two gifts of pastors and teachers that were joined together.

## Pastors and Teachers

As we have already mentioned pastors and teachers are separated grammatically in the Greek from the first three, i.e. apostles, prophets, and evangelists. And yet, even though pastors and teachers are grouped together, Scripture is clear they are two different gifts. We can see this in I Cor. 12: 28, where teachers are listed separately without any mention of pastors.

**I Corinthians 12:28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly **teachers**, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. KJV

And we see in I Tim. 1:11 that Paul lists the gift of teacher separately, calling himself a teacher, but without any mention of his being a pastor, or even pastor/teacher.

**II Timothy 1:11** Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a **teacher** of the Gentiles. KJV

And so we see that the two are, indeed, distinct gifts yet, nevertheless, joined together. Why? — Because in contrast to the other three, these two were primarily involved in a *local* or *stationary work*, while the other three were

primarily engaged in an *extra-local* or *circulating work*. Thus Paul makes a distinction between the two groups involved in the equipping of the saints.

Generally speaking, pastors and teachers were not sent from Church to Church like the apostles, prophets and evangelists; however, sometimes in Scripture they might be, especially when those gifts were combined with a gift that was circulating. For example Paul was not only an apostle, he was also a teacher as we just saw (I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1: 11). In such a case, one could say a teacher was also sent to another location. But as his primary gift would still be that of an apostle, he was seen more as an apostle being sent, rather than a teacher being sent.

In most cases, teachers, in and of themselves, would remain local, working together with pastors in a local Church (cf. I Cor. 12:28; 14:26; Heb. 5:12; James 3:1; II Tim. 4:3; II Pet.2:1).

Likewise, even though pastors (elders) were localized in one Church, sometimes they might be sent to other cities, especially when that gift was combined with one of the circulating gifts. For example, Scripture tells us that Peter was an apostle, but he was also an elder or pastor (Jn. 21:15-17; I Pet. 5:1). So, in the same way, one could say that sometimes a pastor (elder) would be sent by the Lord to other locations. But, again, as a general rule, pastors (elders), along with teachers remained in one location doing the work of the Lord, although, sometimes their ministry might extend to other locations when so moved and gifted by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20: 28-35; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; I Pet. 5:1-4; cf. Gal. 6:6; II Tim. 4:3; Jam. 3:1).

Regarding this distinction, J. N. Darby provided a helpful and insightful comment. He wrote:

“Pastor and teacher are distinct things, but they are in Greek, and indeed in English, joined. They are connected, but not absolutely one, because a pastor includes in a certain sense the other; whereas a

teacher has nothing to do with the office of pastor, as to care for souls. I might expound the scripture, and yet not really have wisdom to deal with individual souls as a pastor has to do. That of pastor is a wider gift. Still they are closely connected, because you could hardly profit an individual without teaching him in a measure. A person may teach without being a pastor, but you can hardly be a pastor without teaching in a certain sense. The two gifts are closely connected, but you could not say they are the same thing. The pastor does not merely give food as the teacher; the pastor shepherds the sheep, leads them here and there, and takes care of them. I think it is a thing greatly wanted...Pastors must have a heart for the sheep. There are degrees of completeness in it, but that is what the pastor has to do. The testimony is in the evangelist, but his work is simpler. He carries the gospel to the poor sinner, whereas the pastor has saints on his heart and cares for them.”<sup>47</sup>

As for today, of course, this last grouping of gifted men is by the far largest of all the five. We all have multiple examples of the presence of pastors and teachers in our midst today. It is a blessed and good work that pastors and teachers do. We should all highly honour them for their work, especially those who labour hard in word and doctrine.

**I Tim. 5:17** Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.  
KJV

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And so we see that because of His love for the Church Christ gave gifts, or if some prefer gifted men, to equip the saints, to mend them when needed. He gave to the Church, apostles, prophets, and evangelists, as well as pastors and teachers, to keep the Church in proper working order,

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<sup>47</sup> John Nelson Darby, Substance of a Reading on Ephesians, *The Bible Treasury*, Volume 10 (1874)



functioning in the way the Holy Spirit commanded, and to keep the Church in conformity to the pattern revealed for it in the New Testament.

We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We are a new man. And, as the Creator of our physical bodies, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows what is normal and healthy for our physical bodies, He also knows what is best for His Body—the Church, His new creation. As He was able to heal the sickest of the sick while He was on earth, bringing back their physical bodies to a state of health and proper working order, so too, He knows how to restore a spiritually sick Church back to a state of health and proper working order. And so He has given these gifts to men in order to restore His Church to health, whenever it loses its way and becomes spiritual weak and sick.

Moreover, let us consider the example of our earthly physicians who have medical books to help them diagnose what is not normal or healthy for our physical bodies. Many times such physicians will prescribe a means whereby our bodies can once more be restored to a proper working order. Beloved, it is no different for the Church, the Body of Christ. The One Great Physician of our souls has provided gifted men to be the spiritual physicians, if you will, for the Body of Christ—they are the apostles, prophets, evangelist and pastors and teachers. And the medical book they consult is the Eternal Word of God! All that is needed for our spiritual health and well-being is found between its pages and they are the ones given by God to diagnose our spiritual disease with spiritual discernment, and then to prescribe the way whereby we may return back to spiritual health!

Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers to equip us, repair us, to mend us, to restore us to our former condition and proper function as saints in the Body of Christ. Those original apostles and prophets left for us everything we need in the Word of God—in the Gospels, in

the book of Acts, in the epistles of Paul, in the Worker's epistles, in Hebrews, in the General epistles, and in the book of Revelation. They once and for all delivered to us the Faith; they left for us in Scripture every Church principle, every Church practice, and every fundamental doctrine that is necessary for our godliness and spirituality.

It is our spiritual medicine, completely free, and readily available for every believer to read and every gifted man given by Christ to use—to equip us, to restore us to health, and to keep us properly ministering to one another in love, building each other up in the Lord. How blessed are these gifts of gifted men given to us by the Lord.

## The Purpose for Equipping the Saints

The stated purpose for equipping the saints in Eph. 4:12 is so that each believer in Christ might be mended or restored back to function as intended by God. This is determined by the Father's placement of each believer in the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:18), the function given to each believer based upon that placement (Rom. 12:4), the grace given by Christ to minister and to fulfill that function (I Cor. 12:5), and the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to edify the Body of Christ in that ministration (Rom. 12:6, I Cor. 12:4, 7). This is the underlying basis of the saints doing their "work of ministry," and their "edifying" or the "building up" of the Body of Christ mentioned in the verse before us, i.e. Eph. 4:12.

In light of this, it is important to note that the Greek word translated as "building," in Eph. 4:12 (in the New American Standard) and the Greek word translated as "edifying" in I Cor. 14: 12 (in the King James Version) is exactly the same word—the Greek word οἰκοδομῆν.

**Ephesians 4:12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the **building up** (οἰκοδομῆν) of the body of Christ NASB

**I Corinthians 14:12** Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the **edifying** (οἰκοδομῆν) of the church. KJV

Thus, one could also translate each verse as follows—

**Ephesians 4:12** for the equipping of the saints, **into** the work of ministry, **into** the **edifying** (οἰκοδομῆν) of the body of Christ.

**I Corinthians 14:12** Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the **building up** (οἰκοδομῆν) of the church.

The building up of the Body of Christ is the same as the edifying of the Body of Christ, which means the function referred to in Eph. 4:12 is done by every believer in the Church, as indicated by I Cor. 14:12, which, in turn, is addressed to every saint in the Church. This is the reason the saints are equipped, perfected, repaired, restored or mended.

Thus the apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers equip the saints so that they, the saints, themselves, can build up the Church through the exercise of their spiritual gifts in the Assembly.

Moreover, the Greek word translated “for” in the phrase, “for the work of the ministry,” and in the phrase “for the edifying of the Body of Christ,” is the Greek preposition εἰς, which carries the basal sense of entering into something, or in our case, entering back “into” the original function intended by God for every saint.

Thus, Paul is saying the saints are equipped or restored to their proper functioning by entering into their function of edifying each other in the Body of Christ, by properly exercising their spiritual gifts, which Scripture makes clear are not natural talents, but are manifestations of the Spirit given for the common good (I Cor. 12: 7 NASB). This is the purpose of their equipping, their mending. The saints are expected to build each other up by the exercise of their spiritual gifts as they are filled and led by the Holy Spirit during that portion of the Church meeting set aside for that very purpose. This, in turn, is their work of ministry or service to each other.

Therefore, we can see that it is not enough if only apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers exercise their spiritual gifts and ministry in the Church. God

composed the Body so that every member of the Body is to function in accordance with their place in the Body of Christ, thus allowing the proper spiritual growth of life to occur in all. A Church cannot grow to full maturity if the saints do not function in that manner.

The five-fold gifts were given by Christ to the Church, not just so the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers might minister and exercise their spiritual gifts within the Church, but also so that every believer might minister and exercise their spiritual gifts within the Church meeting, so that proper spiritual growth and maturity can occur in the Church. Each individual part must work.

**Ephesians 4:16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper **working of each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. NASB

So if a believer has stopped his edifying, or his building up of other believers in the Church, those five-fold gifted men encourage them to stir up the gift within them, so that they might be filled with the Spirit, and be able to function once more as they were intended by God. That is the purpose of equipping the saints “into” (εἰς) the work of ministry, “into” (εἰς) the building up of the Body of Christ. Equipping is meant to move the saints, from their current state of inactivity (assuming the Church is lethargic, carnal or soulical), back “into” their original state of service in the Church.

And this is the result when this is properly done—those young believers in the Church, who are to be a future Timothy, or a future Titus, or a future Philip (who are not yet known to be gifted in that way, but who are most certainly known to be by Christ) will one day be made known, and then, “set apart” from the local Church to continue to exercise

their spiritual gifts between Churches in a circulating ministry.

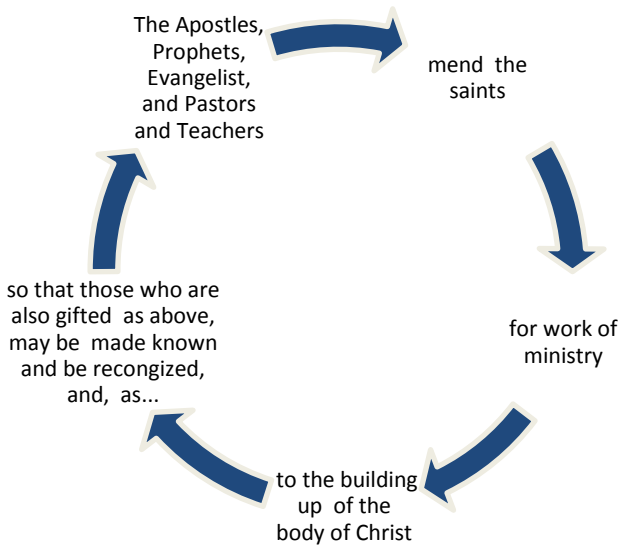
And for those young believers, who might be one like one of the unnamed elders in the Church in Ephesus, who are not yet known to be gifted in that way, but who are most certainly known to be by Christ, will one day be made known and so recognized by the local Church to continue to shepherd the flock in a stationary ministry.

And for those young believers who might be like one of those teachers listed in Acts 13:1 (we are not told who was a prophet or who was a teacher) who are not yet known to be gifted in that way, but who are most certainly known to be by Christ, will one day be so recognized and honoured by the local Church to teach in the Assembly in a stationary ministry.

By all the saints functioning properly in the Church meeting, ministering and edifying each other by the use of their spiritual gifts, those who are so gifted to be one of the gifts mentioned in Eph. 4:11, will be made known, and they will be eventually “set apart” and be recognized in accordance with the gift with which they were given by Christ. This is the circle of ministry, the circle that brings spiritual growth for the Church during this dispensation (See Fig. 2).

It is important to realize that spiritual gifts are not discovered by taking some test, or by determining what one enjoys doing in one’s life. Indeed, that which one enjoys doing naturally, might be the complete opposite of what one is gifted by God to do spiritually! Spiritual gifts are not natural talents or the natural dispositions of our souls. Sometimes, what we are naturally—must be denied, so that what we are spiritually—might be expressed.

For example, it seems that Timothy was actually shy and reserved, but his gift called him to be bold and open (II Tim. 7-8). Thus, he needed to learn to deny the natural shyness of his “self,” so he could be filled, not with his self,



**Fig. 2 The Circle of Growth and Ministry**

but with the Spirit of God, so as to boldly proclaim the gospel of grace, while reprovng, rebuking and exhorting with all longsuffering (II Tim. 4:2).

In the Old Testament we have the example of Moses. Now, of course, Moses was not given spiritual gifts, but the same spiritual principle can be seen in him. Moses was timid and could not speak, yet God called him to be courageous and to boldly speak (Ex. 4:10-12). Moses did not realize that his lack of eloquence and timidity was the very reason he was called to be bold and speak! God needs empty vessels to fill, to fill with power and Himself by the Holy Spirit.

Paul was no different as he testifies in I Cor. 1:17; II Cor. 11:6, and especially in I Cor. 2:1-4, as can be seen below.

**1 Corinthians 2:1-4** And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> **And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.** <sup>4</sup> And my message and my **preaching were not in persuasive words** of wisdom, but in **demonstration of the Spirit and of power.** NASB

Paul came not with superiority of speech; he came in weakness and fear and much trembling; but that did not matter to Paul. He did not try to remedy that deficiency. Nor, did he think he needed to take a course of homiletics to become skilled in speaking. Why?—because he understood the principle of an empty vessel, the principle of being weak yet strong. He came in the power and filling of the Spirit and that is what mattered.

Today, beloved, it seems so many of us have forgotten the lesson of empty vessels and the fullness and power of the Spirit. For example, unlike Paul, we rely on honing our speaking skills to be “effective” in our speaking, when what we really need is the opposite—we need to deny any speaking skills, so as to be spiritually “effective” in our speaking! We need to rely instead on the Spirit to take our poor words and fill them with power!

Has one ever noticed that God’s preparation of Paul entailed many things, but it did not entail training him to speak! It did not entail his taking a course of homiletics. There is a deep spiritual lesson in this. Paul clearly declares that he was “untrained” in speech, yet who was more effective than he!

**II Corinthians 11:6** Even though *I am untrained in speech*, yet *I am* not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. NKJV



What matters are not our persuasive words, but the filling, burden, moving, and power of the Holy Spirit in our message. If we speak by the burden of the Spirit in our own spirit, we will speak the right words, in the right order, with the right emphasis. If it seems inadequate by us, or, indeed, unskilled by others, it will not matter, for our poor words will be filled with power and will accomplish the purpose for which the Lord gave them to us. Do we have the faith to believe this? When we serve by the former, we, ourselves, will receive glory with such words as, “My, he is a wonderful speaker.” Whereas when we serve by the latter, God will receive the glory with such words as, “Oh, Lord I am undone. I am convicted by your Spirit.”

And so, beloved, the way to know what spiritual gifts we have is to follow the commandment of the Lord Jesus to “deny yourself, take up our cross, and follow Him, ever obeying Him as the Head of the Body. Function as the Holy Spirit leads you. Speak as the Holy Spirit burdens you. Serve as the Holy Spirit empowers you. One does not need to take a test to do this, nor, indeed, even know their gift to do this.

Consider our human body—a kidney does not need to know it is a kidney to function as a kidney. It must only obey the impulses and commands of the brain. A hand does not need to know it is a hand to move as a hand. It simply needs to obey the impulses and commands from the head. So too, beloved, you do not need to know what spiritual gift you have, you simply need to obey the commands from the Head—the Lord Jesus Christ. If you obey Him, you will perform the function that you were called to perform, and you will manifest the spiritual gift that you were called to manifest, for a true spiritual gift is not a manifestation of ourselves or our own natural talent, but is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit of God through us (I Cor. 12:7). Learn to hear and obey the Head and your spiritual gift will be manifested and eventually be made known to others.

And so we see that ministry is the occupation of all saints. We are told in John 12:26 and in Rev. 2:19 that we are all ministers and are all involved in ministry (the word for “servant” and “service” is minister and ministry respectively). Therefore, every Christian is called to minister. However, the content of our ministry will depend on the grace and gifts given to us by Christ (Eph. 3:7). And since we all receive different gifts and grace, Paul tells us in I Cor. 12:5 that there will be varieties of ministries, as we already mentioned.

Thus the saints ministry referred to by Paul in I Cor. 12:5, and referred to by Paul in Eph. 4:12, was intended by the Lord to occur in “the ministry” portion of the Church meeting (I Cor. 14). It is the means whereby the saints can “build up” the Body of Christ, and the means whereby they can edify one another (cf. Acts 2:42).

The Holy Spirit wants us to understand that all saints are to be mended or equipped for such ministry. Every single believer, who is not gifted to be an apostle, prophet, evangelist, or pastor or teacher, nevertheless, is still gifted in some way, so they can edify the other brethren within the assembly during that portion of the Church meeting that is set apart for that very purpose as summarized for us in I Cor. 14: 26 (without, of course, the misuse of tongues as taught earlier in the fourteenth chapter).

**I Corinthians 14:26** What is to be done then, brethren? When ye come together according as every one of you hath a Psalm, or hath doctrine, or hath a tongue, or hath revelation, or hat interpretation, let all things be done unto edifying. Geneva Version

This opportunity for every believer to exercise their spiritual gift within the assembly for ministry and edification is clearly revealed for us in I Cor. 14, where Paul also clearly commands that it be an integral part of our Church meetings.

This original function of the saints was so important that Paul makes his command even clearer, for any who might

wish to disagree, thinking that they know of a better way to meet as a Church and to build each other up, by declaring it was a command of the Lord!

**I Corinthians 14:37** If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that **the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord**. KJV

Clearly, Paul says that if any Christian considered himself to be a “spiritual” Christian, he would recognize that everything he wrote was none other than the commandments of the Lord.

And, in that light, did not Jesus clearly tell us, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)? And did not Paul also clearly tell us that this is one of His commandments? So should we not keep it?

Beloved, the liberty of every believer to be able to exercise their spiritual gift within the Church meeting is a commandment from the Lord Himself, and so should never be lightly esteemed or even worse, restricted. (Of course, all things must be to edification.) But, unfortunately, we know that is exactly what has happened.

We all know that this type of meeting was soon forgotten after the death of the apostles. It was one of the first things to disappear from the Church in the second century in complete contradiction to the original parameters set up by the apostles for the spiritual health of the Church.

This time of *open ministry*, which was to be led by the Holy Spirit in every Church meeting, wherein the life of the Spirit was manifested by the proper exercise of one’s spiritual gifts, was soon replaced by a prescribe and perfunctory liturgy by Christian leaders who forgot that the true liturgy of the Church was not a liturgy that was written down and simply recited, but was an open liturgy of the Spirit, whereby the saints would minister to one another in love, and minister to

God in worship, by the Holy Spirit's guidance and leading in each and every Church meeting.

(The English word liturgy comes from the Greek word λειτουργέω—lei-toor-g-eh-o, which, in different verbal forms, is translated as “ministered,” “to minister,” and “ministering” in Acts 13:2; Rom.15:27 and Heb. 10:11. Thus one could say the liturgy of the Spirit would be the leading of the Spirit, wherein He manifests Himself through us, by the exercise of our spiritual gifts one to another—unto ministry, and by our worship and adoration of God, through Jesus Christ—unto His everlasting glory.)

**I Peter 4:10-11** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, **that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. NKJV

Peter, of course, is referencing the same ministration of each believer that the apostle Paul referenced in Eph. 4:16.

**Ephesians 4:16** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together **by what every joint supplies**, according to the **effective working by which every part** does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. NKJV

Spiritual atrophy will soon occur in any Church which prohibits the effective working of each and every part of His Body. Historically this has been done by the creation of a clergy/laity system that restricts the work of ministry, and the building of the Body of Christ by each and every member, to that of a few Christians, who have been labeled the “clergy.” There was no such thing as a clergy/laity system in the early

Church. In fact, all those who are called the “laity” today, are called the “clergy” in Scripture (I Peter 5:3)!<sup>48</sup>

There may be a distinction between the shepherds and the sheep when it comes to oversight, but there is no distinction between shepherds and sheep when it comes to ministry. Why?—because, the imagery of the former is that of a flock with shepherds, where such distinctions do exist; but the imagery of the latter is that of a body, where such distinctions do not exist! Why?—because “God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another (I Cor. 12:24b-25 NASB).

So you see, beloved, when it comes to priesthood and ministry, we are all God’s clergy; we are all Gods priests, each with our own particular gift and function within the Body of Christ. Yes, we will have different gifts, and yes, we will have different responsibilities based upon that gift and the

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<sup>48</sup> The Greek word translated “heritage” is the Greek word κληρος, pronounced *klay-ros* in Koine Greek and *klee-ros* in Modern Greek. In the Latin Vulgate this Greek word was translated by the Latin *clerus* (which in Latin means a clerical order) wherein, we get the word “clergy.” So what Peter is really saying is that God’s heritage is God’s clergy, and that includes us all! Jesus died so that every child of God would be a priest to God. We all are a royal priesthood, a special “people” unto God. So what is today identified as the “clergy” is a complete contradiction to Scripture, and is a worldly man-made tradition, originating in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church, continuing on in the Protestant Church, and still remaining in many Evangelical Churches. And, as with every human tradition, it invalidates God’s Word, and so restricts the Holy Spirit from fully manifesting Himself in the Church through each one’s spiritual gifts—ultimately unto the glory of Christ and the glory of God the Father. Man-made traditions, even man-made Christian traditions, will always result in “making the Word of God of none effect,” just as Jesus said to the Pharisees in Mark 7:13.

grace that has been given unto us for that gift, but when it comes to the work of ministry and the building up of the Body of Christ, that responsibility is common to all, and was meant to always be a part of the Church meeting on each Lord's day, until that day that He comes.

This is the "liberty" to which the saints are to be restored. They are to be equipped, perfected, mended or repaired so as to once again "function" as the Lord commanded through the apostle Paul.

Now some may wonder how this would occur today, since so many Churches have abandoned this kind of ministry. It would occur by the saints ministering to one another in love and edification as the Holy Spirit guides them through the free use of the spiritual gifts that were bestowed upon them by the very same Spirit of God.

Perhaps, it might be a brother being led by the Spirit to simply stand up and give a five minute word of wisdom to the other saints regarding the best way to witness to a certain type of unbeliever, or, perhaps a brother might stand up and testify about the faithfulness of God in his own life, thereby being used by God to strengthen the faith of others, or maybe a brother might freely rise up and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God, or call out an hymn to be sung with the melody of one's heart to the Lord.

The sovereignty of all this is given to the Holy Spirit of God, wherein He moves and burdens the brothers to stand up and minister, and moves in the sisters to say "amen," and to pray for the brothers who so stand up to speak. All this is led by the Spirit of God, and not by man, and not by some written liturgy (even though it might be beautifully written), or by some order of worship and song.

(Of course, the pastors or elders are always called to oversight, and so, will always be watching over such meetings to make sure one does not stand up speak in an unedifying manner, or, in such situations where a stranger

might be visiting, who rises up and speaks in an unbiblical manner. In those cases, the elder (pastor) will use the wisdom of the Lord to deal with the situation. In some cases that might mean speaking to one after the meeting, or even (although this does not happen very often) right during the meeting. If one is speaking heresy, such a one must be stopped immediately. But even in those cases, it will still yield the fruit of righteousness for it will create a spiritual discernment among the saints, and will create the biblical mindset that all things must be done in love to edification in the assembly.)

In the same way, during the breaking of bread meeting, the brothers would have the liberty of the Spirit (II Cor. 3:17) to rise up and say a word of remembrance from Scripture about the Lord Jesus Christ and His death upon the cross, or about His resurrection, and His ascension back to the right hand of God. Or perhaps a brother might say a prayer of thanksgiving, or call out a hymn of praise to be sung to God.

In other words, during the breaking of bread meeting the brothers would function as priests unto God in worship, remembrance, and thanksgiving, showing that we are all called to minister as priests unto God the Father, in honour of the Son, and as led by the Holy Spirit, whose ministry is ever to lift up and glorify Christ Jesus (John 16:13-14).

This time, of course, is unlike the open ministry time, in which the subject may be broader to include any doctrine of the Bible, and not just those things in remembrance of Him. In many ways, it would be no different than the first breaking of bread meeting, wherein all were free to converse in fellowship with the Lord. The only difference is that we now do it in His presence spiritually by faith, wherein the first breaking of bread meeting it was done physically in His presence with sight. Other than that, it is done by the Spirit in worship, in remembrance, in communion and in honour to Him.

These small expressions of one's spiritual gift in the Church meeting, while not being like the longer edifying

messages given by the Holy Spirit, let us say through a pastor (elder), or to a teacher, are nonetheless just as important. Why?—because the life we need for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ is the life of the Spirit; so if the Holy Spirit wants to manifest His life in a *small way*, it still will produce spiritual growth in a *large way*.

Whenever we forget this, and a member of the Body of Christ ceases to function, atrophy will occur. And if a body has many members that are atrophied, the body cannot function as intended, and so will eventually become sick. And, if a body is sick, outward ministry will eventually come to a complete standstill, as the body will be bed-ridden (so to speak).

Since spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit, they will always minister the life of the Spirit to the Body of Christ, whenever exercised under His guidance in accordance with the Word of God. So even if a simple brother speaks but a few edifying words as he is led by the Spirit, such a one can minister more life to others in the Church, than one who might speak a great number of words with great skill, but by his own wisdom, power, and natural talent, rather than by the Spirit's leading, filling and power.

Remember, as we said before, spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit, whereas our natural talents are manifestations of our own life. Natural talents have their proper place in our work place and business, or in our outdoor activities and sports, but in the Church we are called to serve by spiritual gifts and not our natural talents.

Anthony Norris Groves said it this way—

“But if you say that, other things being equal, that man will possess the most influence, which has the most intellectual power [i.e. natural talent], most wealth, or most *prestige*, you cause Christian influence to be propelled onward by precisely the same powers and principles that prevail in the world. Whereas the Lord



puts his treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power, may be of God and not of men.”

“I know that ten thousand arguments, plausible and powerful in various degrees, may be brought against this view of the subject; but my simple answer is, the Lord hath spoken, what can I say?—The Lord hath acted, what can I do? Shall men be wiser than his Maker? Let us be content with our true dignity of being made children of God in Christ, who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”

“Now, *let me state*, I give no opinion *as to* how far the cultivation of “natural talent” may be allowable or desirable for a Christian in the pursuit of a worldly vocation; but the moment he approaches “the burning bush,” let him lay aside these shoes, for it is holy ground -Jehovah is there!”<sup>49</sup>

“Where is our holy dread, lest excellency of speech should destroy the efficacy of the cross? Where is that holy fear that the faith of converts might stand in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God?”<sup>50</sup>

Beloved, our goal should always be that we try to speak as we are led by the Holy Spirit (e.g. Acts 4:8; 6:10). Sometimes we might fail, but by His grace those times will decrease, as we learn to walk more and more by the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:16, 22-25).

And so we see that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers will always repair any deficiency found in the saints. They will repair any deficiency of the saints in regard to the Historic Christian Faith, when, and if, any begin to fall away. They will repair any deficiencies found in the spiritual walk of believers, who love themselves, rather than deny themselves. They will repair any deficiencies of a Church that has made an alliance with the world or the things in the world, thinking they have found a better way to

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<sup>49</sup> Anthony Norris Groves, *On the Nature of Christian Influence* (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2008) pg. 33-34

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 37-38

serve God. They will bring to bear the “mind of Christ” in such situations, being careful to direct the saint’s hearts back to God. They will repair any deficiency of the saints in their Christian witness, by emphasizing the need for full evangelism. They will repair any deficiencies that arise from sheep, which might begin to follow wolves in sheep’s clothing, or from sheep who are led astray by carnal and soulical Christians in the flock, who are challenging the role of a shepherd, wishing to draw away disciples after themselves. And, finally, they will repair any deficiencies of the saint’s biblical knowledge, and will instruct them in the basic doctrines of the Bible, being careful to always teach sound doctrine with edifying words of love and comfort. They will all remember Paul’s admonition to Timothy—”But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (I Tim.1:5 NASB).

These, dear brethren, are the gifts given to men by Christ when He ascended on high. He gave the Church gifted men to repair us when broken, to restore us when lost, to mend us when damaged, and to lead us on to perfection by leading us backward to the patterns left for us in the unchanging and eternal Word of God. Amen.

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And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; **and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.** Isaiah 58:11-12 KJV

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### **About the author:**

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