

**Ephesians 4: 11 and 12; “Christ gave Some as Apostles”, Message # 28 in a series entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

Having spoken to you in my last message about Christ’s Ascension, and each of us who believes, being given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift, we will now go on to speak about the specific ministerial gifts which were given to the early Church, and the gift of pastor-teacher which is given permanently to Christ’s Church, to men throughout the Church age. 1<sup>st</sup> of all, We’re going to think together about the office and ministerial gifts of apostles, prophets, and evangelists, which Christ has given to His Church. And 2<sup>nd</sup> – We’re going to think together about the office and ministerial gift of Pastor-Teacher which was given to the Church by Christ for the duration of the Church Age. It is important that we understand these truths in relation to our own spiritual growth, and our whole church growing up together into spiritual maturity in Christ.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all, let’s think together about the ministerial gifts of apostles, prophets, and evangelists, which Christ has given to His Church.**

I want you to notice the wording of verse 11... “And He Himself gave”.... It is the risen ascended Christ Himself who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints. It is not that these were appointed by the church and they gave themselves to the work of the ministry, although it is certainly true that when their recognized ministry commenced, that they did voluntarily give themselves to that work. But the clear statement is that Christ Himself chose them and gave them to His Church to hold a recognized office in the church with His recognized authority establishing them in that office. He spiritually called them to their office and work and He raised them up to it.

I think that sometimes Christians do not understand that it is Christ Himself who appoints men to their office and their work was done in relation to both the Universal and all Local churches everywhere in all generations to the end of the world. The apostles, as an office and a particular number of men, a small number in total, were given by Christ as gifts to the Universal Church, to lay the foundation of the New Testament Church in truth, and to govern it in wisdom and righteousness by means of their word. They were responsible under Christ, for defining the duties and responsibilities of everyone in the churches, both then and now through their written word.

Some of the apostles, or men who were appointed by them and by the Holy Spirit, men like Mark and Luke, were called by Christ to write down the things which they received from Christ and His Spirit. They were written down by inspiration of God and they make up our New Testament Bible, a book for all to receive and live by. This was in accordance with the Lord’s appointment. Look over at Ephesians 2: 19-22. “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

So, you see here that Christ’s Universal Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This spiritual foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets by means of their having received direct revelation from God to their minds and hearts, as to what the Lord would have them to declare verbally, to the early Church. What was true and false, right and wrong, they delivered to the churches then. They in every way affirmed the existing Old Testament Scriptures as being the truth delivered to the prophets of old, in every respect. And then, for some of the apostles, Christ had them write down further explanations of the truth by the power

of the Holy Spirit, for the whole Church and for all men in all subsequent generations to receive and believe, and act upon; what would become the New Testament Scriptures. The apostles were given this particular authority and power which no one else has ever had in the Church. The confirmation of their office and their authority was their being given the sign gifts, the miracles which would perform which would attest to all men that they had been appointed by Christ, and given their office and mission by Christ. The word “apostle”, *αποστολος* in the Greek means “one sent on a mission”.

Our Lord formally appointed the twelve apostles at the beginning of His earthly ministry to their office and work. Luke chapter 6, verse 12 – “Now it came to pass in those days that Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” “And when it was day He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John ; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.” And in Luke 9: 1 and 2, we are told of their ability to do miracles. It says – “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.” “He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

So, the apostles were appointed to be the Lord’s spokesmen to preach and declare the kingdom of God; that is, to preach to the Jews first, during the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry, that God has a spiritual kingdom over which He sovereignly rules, and into which, all men are to enter through repentance of their sins and their believing in His Son, our Lord Jesus, whom He sent to be their Savior and Lord. This gospel of God and of Christ, the proclamation of His kingdom and glory, and the great salvation which would be found by believing in Him, was attested by the apostles’ casting out demons and healing the sicknesses of those who came to listen to them.

All of the apostles had to all be those who had seen the resurrected Christ. We see this in Acts 1: 21-26. “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 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.” “And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was named Justus, and Matthias.” And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ “And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias.” “And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” So there had to be 12 apostles, and they each had to have seen the risen Christ.

There was also an order of authority in relation to those who held office in the early Church in the days of the apostles. Look at 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 27-31. “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.” “Are all apostles?” “Are all prophets?” “Are all teachers?” “Are all workers of miracles?” “Do all have gifts of healings?” “Do all speak with tongues?” “Do all interpret?” “But earnestly desire the best gifts.” “And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

We see here that prophets were 2<sup>nd</sup> in order of authority to the apostles. And then there was a descending order of authority in the churches of that day depending upon what gift that you had been given; teachers, workers of miracles, those who had gifts of healings and those who spoke in tongues. John MacArthur says, and I agree with him – “It seems that the office of prophet was exclusively for work within a local congregation, whereas that of apostleship was a much broader ministry, not confined to any area, as implied in the word *apostolos* (one sent on a mission)” “Paul for example, is referred to as a prophet when he ministered locally in the

Antioch church (Acts 13: 1), but elsewhere is always called an apostle.” (end of quote) It appears that the office of evangelist was not what we would think of it today as being. In that day, an evangelist was an apostolic helper; one who would go and minister to local churches or establish local churches under an apostle’s direction.

Timothy was an evangelist. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4, verse 5, Paul tells Timothy that he should be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” Keep helping the local churches that I have sent you to, to understand the things that I have taught them. Keep spreading the gospel in those regions and cities which I assigned to you. The deacon Philip also appears to have been an evangelist, helping the apostles in the early Church in terms of preaching and spreading the gospel. In Acts 8: 4, it says that “Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them. It appears that both Philip and Timothy were directly accountable to the authority of the apostles, whereas it appears that those who are called evangelists today are sometimes not under any church authority.

I believe that since the original office and ministry of an evangelist was directly connected to their having apostolic direction given to them in relation to what they were doing in terms of their preaching and ministering to local churches, that any ministry of an evangelist in our present day needs to be conducted in connection with their being under authority to the elders of a local church. Evangelists in our own day should not simply be trying to be modern day “apostles” to the churches in general, or preachers who have no accountability to an particular local church. Since there are no apostles today, an “evangelist” should be a member of a sending church, just like the missionaries sent out from Antioch, in Acts 13: 1 and 2.

Even Paul and Barnabas who were separated and called to the missionary work which the Holy Spirit sent them on, they reported back to that church in terms of their labors and the results of their labors and thus they established the truth that they were under authority to the church in Antioch. They were under proper local church authority for conducting the work that they were doing. Since the apostolic office is no longer exists in terms of men who hold that office and personally oversee such work, then those who are evangelists today, should want to engage in their work in connection with their being under authority to the elders of a local church.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Let’s think together about the office and ministerial gift of Pastor-Teacher which was given to the Church by Christ for the duration of the Church Age.**

Verses 11-13a – “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” Now, notice that this is an on-going office in all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certain men of His choosing are appointed to be those who pastor (or shepherd the church) and teach (that is, instruct the church). It is not as though there are 2 offices, one of pastor and another of teacher, that are being talked about here. It is one office with a dual responsibility; of shepherding and teaching. God does give the gift of teaching to some men who never end up being raised up by Christ to become a pastor. And those men may be recognized by the pastor and the church as gifted to teach and may use that gift according to their appointment to do so.

How are pastor-teachers raised up in the local church, seeing there are no apostles in the church today? They are raised up when the existing eldership and the church, recognize the gifts and graces which have been given to the man, gifts and graces which the Holy Spirit has given to him making it evident that he is qualified to be an elder. It is the Holy Spirit who makes men overseers. Acts chapter 20, verse 28 – “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” The word “shepherd” there in verse 28 is ποιμαίνειν (poimainein). This is what it means to be a pastor. It is to shepherd the flock. This verse was

addressed by Paul to the “overseers” at Ephesus. The word in the Greek there is επισκοπους (episkopous). From this we can conclude that overseers (Bishops or elders) are the same office as pastors. They are all called to the same office of pastor-teacher. All men who are raised up by Christ and be elders in the church must have the gift of teaching.

We know this from several places in Paul’s teaching. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3: 2 – “A bishop (overseer) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach...” Look with me also 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5: 17 – “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” Laboring in the word and doctrine are laboring at preaching and teaching. Now, we should understand that all elders who are teaching the church should labor hard at it. But here in this verse we find that some actually do it, and they ought to be rewarded with honor for it. Those same elders that are called to preach and teach are called to rule or govern the church according to that teaching. They explain and when they need to, they enforce Biblical truth, and doctrine, with discipline as a means of guarding the church.

All the elders of the church are called to rule. Some rule well, and they are worthy of double honor. The word for elders here in the Greek is presbuteros, from whence we get our word – presbyters, or Presbyterian, where they have, in that denominational church a body of ruling elders). These “elders” that Paul is speaking of here are men who have been called of God in a particular church and they rule well in that church. That is, they have called and have been appointed by the that church to shepherd the flock, (the word in the Greek is Poimenos), and they also have been appointed to “govern”, (the word - προεστωτες (preostotes) here in this verse, means to take the lead or rule well, they are to be considered worthy of double honor.

If these qualities, of a man’s being able to teach and living a godly life, and learning how to use his gift to counsel and help people by using the word of God, applying that gift both in teaching and privately in using his gift to truly help people, then the congregation of any local church, having evaluated them in this holy way, can proceed to nominate that man to the office of bishop. A bishop is the same thing as an elder. He is a person who would has the wise discernment necessary to be a good pastor and a wise shepherd of God’s people, His sheep. We find an instance of elders being raised up under the supervision of the apostle Paul, in Acts 14, verse 23. “So when they (Paul and Barnabas) had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

The words in the Greek, “So when they had appointed” refer to the apostles appointing elders in relation to their taking a vote among the individual congregations there. The word in the original Greek is χειροτονησαντες (cheiro-tone-santes), which means that each congregation voted to approve of the man appointed, by the stretching out, or lifting up of their hands. That is what the word signifies. And thus, they were installed into the office of pastors over those churches. Isn’t it good to know that Christ Himself gives the particular men that He Himself calls and appoints, to the churches? Each congregation should be able to see how Christ’s grace has formed that man into a person whose character qualities and gifts can be greatly used to teach, to strengthen and build them up, so that they will be equipped to glorify God together as a church.