

Walk Worthy

“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”

EPHESIANS 4:1-5:21

LESSON 4 – GIFTS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH – EPH. 4:11

PASTOR PHILLIP M WAY

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Ephesians 4:11

- ▶ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...
- ▶ In seeing last week that Jesus has the Divine Right to bestow free gifts of grace upon those who are a part of His body, the church, we know that we are each given spiritual gifts to use in order to edify the Body and minister to (serve) one another. But at times, in the study of spiritual gifts, there is a category of gifts that are overlooked. Today we will look at that category of gifts given by grace freely to the church by Her Master.

Corporate Gifts of Grace

- ▶ These corporate gifts, given to the whole body, are men! Jesus has given as a spiritual gift to His church those men who lead and serve in the church. In our text from Ephesians 4 we see that there are a number of offices, or positions/roles, to which He calls and appoints men to serve His bride.
- ▶ “He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”
- ▶ Have you ever thought about the apostles, prophets, evangelists, or even your own pastor as a spiritual gift? Well, each of these are indeed gifts given to the church, so let us study the Scriptures to see what it is exactly that Christ has given us.

Apostles and Prophets

- ▶ Apostles - The word apostle means literally “one sent on a mission.” This is a person appointed to a task or sent on an errand. It is a word used to describe several people in the New Testament including disciples, Barnabas, Paul, and others. But here, in our text in Ephesians 4, it is referring to a particular group of men given to the church for a specific reason by Christ.
- ▶ The requirements given for one to be an Apostle according to Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor 15:7; and 1 Cor 9:1 and 15:8 include the requirement that an Apostle was one called and appointed personally to the office by Christ, who had also seen Him physically and visibly after His resurrection.
- ▶ The Twelve Apostles are Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Matthias.
- ▶ Are there only 12?

Apostles and Prophets

- ▶ To answer these questions we need only to look to the Scriptures. Revelation 21:14 tells us that there are twelve foundations to the New Jerusalem, one for each Apostle. Matthew 10:2-4 gives us the names of the Twelve, including Judas (see also Mark 3:13-19 and John 20:19-21). Acts 1:15-26 gives us the account of Peter leading the Apostles to find a replacement for Judas.
- ▶ Paul was called an Apostle also, but was not one of the Twelve. He was chosen by Christ as the others were. He was qualified by Christ to meet the requirements of the office so that he might serve the church as an apostle. Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, saved, him, and appointed him as an Apostle. (see Acts 9:1-9; Gal 5:15-17; 1 Cor 15:7-10).

Apostles and Prophets

- ▶ Prophets - Jesus refers to the Prophets on a number of occasions in order to provide a summary of the Old Testament. These were men called and appointed by God to give His Word by means of direct revelation to His people and His enemies while Israel was under the Old Covenant. There are also prophets mentioned in the New Testament who did the same, they preached, taught, and counseled people with words that came directly from God, revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. For examples of prophets in the New Testament, see Acts 13:1, 21-28 and Ephesians 3:5. And since the list of prophets is indeed long from the Old Testament we will leave that for your own study!

Apostles and Prophets

- ▶ Responsibilities of Apostles and Prophets
- ▶ The question then remains, what were the Apostles and Prophets given by Christ to His church in order to do? From Scripture we learn that there were three basic responsibilities for these gifted men in the church.
- ▶ First, the Apostles and Prophets laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20; Acts 2:42). Secondly, they were appointed by Christ to receive, declare, and record (write down) the Word of God (Acts 11:28, 21:10-11; Eph. 3:5). And third, they were called and empowered to give confirmation of this Divine revelation through signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 8:6-7; Hebrews 2:3-4).

Apostles and Prophets

- ▶ So we see that in this first category we have men called, equipped, empowered, and qualified by Christ who were responsible ultimately for laying the foundation of the Church (of which Christ is the cornerstone) with the Word of God.
- ▶ They handled direct revelation and through the working of the Holy Spirit minister to and serve the church even today through the Word that they wrote by Inspiration.

Evangelists

- ▶ The next office, or calling that is mentioned as being given to the church by Christ is that of Evangelists. Some believe that these are men who preach to great crowds of people exhorting them to be saved. Others assume that this is a special class of people who have been given a gift of evangelism. But evangelism is not a gift. The Bible never tells us that certain people have been given the gift or ability to evangelize better than others. In fact, it is the role of every believer to evangelize the lost.
- ▶ We also must note that here the gift is not the ability to preach or evangelize. The spiritual gift is those who are called and equipped by God specifically to serve the church as evangelists. Notice that this is a gift given to the church, not the world! And while evangelism is aimed at the world, it starts and ends with the church.

Evangelists

- ▶ The term evangelist is the Greek word *evangelidzo*. It is a word that is used 54 times in the New Testament and it means “to proclaim the good news.”
- ▶ That good news, the *euangelion*, is mentioned 76 times in the New Testament.
- ▶ We see then that the role of the Evangelist is two-fold as they bring the lost to Christ, and as they teach and equip the church to do the same.
- ▶ We note that God Himself was the first Evangelist (Gal 3:8). Others who are called Evangelists include angels (Luke 2:10), Jesus (Luke 20:1), and the Apostles (Acts 8:4). Today we understand that those called to and fulfilling this role also include missionaries and church planters (Acts 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:5; Acts 8:4-40).

Pastor-Teachers

- ▶ Some break this last group into two separate groups, but the word used indicates that this is one office within the church. There are several words used to describe the function and responsibility of pastor-teachers, so let us look then at this gift given by Christ to His church. (Note that Christ appoints these men in the church. They are His gift to the Body.)
- ▶ Three words describe the same office. Here are the three as they are used in a few verses: elders, overseers (bishops), and pastors.

Pastor-Teachers

- ▶ The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly – 1 Peter 5:1-2
- ▶ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. – Acts 20:17
- ▶ 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. – Acts 20:28
- ▶ This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. – 1 Timothy 3:1

Pastor-Teachers

- ▶ There are three Greek words that are translated as elder, overseer, shepherd, and bishop so let us look at what the Bible says about those who would be called and qualified to be given by Christ to His church as pastor-teachers by examining these words.
- ▶ Overseer, or Bishop - translated from the Greek word *episkopos* it is a word that means “overseer, guardian, decision maker, or manager.”
- ▶ Elder - The word *presbuteros* is translated “elder”. It speaks of a man who is older or mature.
- ▶ Pastor, or Shepherd - the third word used is the word *poimen* which is translated “pastor.”

Pastor-Teachers

- ▶ Overseer/Bishop - Here are a few verses where the word is used:
- ▶ 1 Peter 2:25 speaks of Christ as the “Overseer of your souls.”
- ▶ Philippians 1:1 refers to those who were appointed as elders of the church at Philippi.
- ▶ 1 Tim. 3:1-2 introduces us to a paragraph of Scripture that tells us about the qualities necessary for a man who is given as a pastor to the church.
- ▶ And Acts 20:28 makes reference with this word to the Ephesian elders.
- ▶ Roman and Greek cultural usage of the word *episkopos* finds an overseer being the authority figure representing Caesar in a conquered territory (like Pontius Pilate for instance). The term signified the person’s authority, their accountability to a higher power, and their task of introducing a new order of life.

Pastor-Teachers

- ▶ Elder - In Acts 14:23 we see that a new local church is planted by the appointing of elders. Churches all over Asia are identified as having a leadership structure consisting of elders (1 Peter 1:1; 5:1-2).
- ▶ Paul sent for the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17), and he also served as an elder in the church as well as being an Apostle (Acts 13:1). And we see a meeting of these church leaders in Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4.
- ▶ These were men who are mature in the faith, some older in years but all “older” regarding spiritual maturity and character. Biblically, the elders (plural) rule the church by unanimous decision led by the Spirit and guided by the Word of God. (1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:3; Phil 1:27; Phil 2:2).

Pastor-Teachers

- ▶ Pastor/Shepherd – *Poimen* means “a shepherd, one who cares for, protects, and leads.”
- ▶ In Heb. 13:20-21 Christ is identified by this term as our shepherd. And interestingly 1 Tim. 5:17 shows us the labor involved in pastoring, speaking about the work of shepherding by referring specifically to the effort of the work, not the amount.
- ▶ 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 give us the required qualifications for these men who would shepherd the church of God.
- ▶ The pastor then is a shepherd, serving under and appointed by Christ to lead, feed, and protect the flock, the local church. The pastors model of course is Christ, who Himself is the Good Shepherd.
- ▶ In examining these terms then we see that they do describe one man in one office, that of a pastor-teacher. The term elder refers to who the man is (his identity as mature in the faith), the term bishop refers to what he does (his job as overseer), and the term pastor refers to his heart as he does the job (his character as a shepherd)!

The Congregation

- ▶ There is also a mention, by the way, of the Church's response to God's gift of these men. The congregation is duty bound before God in obedience to His Word to:
- ▶ 1. Obey them, being submissive to them while remembering and following their faith (Hebrews 13:7, 17). The source of their authority is the Word of God rightly handled.
- ▶ 2. Recognize him and his authority, esteeming him highly in love, maintaining peace in the Body (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).
- ▶ 3. Count him worthy of double honor, remember that he is worthy of his wages and to be supported by the ministry (1 Tim 5:17-18; Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:9-14).
- ▶ 4. Do not receive an accusation against him unless it is made by two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).

Conclusion

- ▶ Now that we see that there have been these men, called, appointed, qualified, and empowered by God to lead and serve His church. We see that these are indeed spiritual gifts of grace. Each of us has been given this gift in the church with which we have joined ourselves in covenant.
- ▶ Next time you see your pastor, an elder, or missionary, thank him for the work he does, and tell him that you praise God in gratefulness for this gift He has chosen and given to your church!
- ▶ Next week, in lesson 5, we will look at Ephesians 4:12 as we begin to study the work that evangelists and pastor-teachers are to be doing in the church. They have been given by Christ to the church for “the equipping of the saints.”