

Gifted Ministries

by Keith Malcomson

The Five-fold Ministries are gifts given by Christ to the Church after His ascension, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to equip the Church to carry out its mission and to edify believers until Christ returns.

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:4, Luke 16:19, John 21:15, Acts 18:24, Acts 20:24, Romans 2:18, 1 Corinthians 3:10, 1 Corinthians 12:5, Ephesians 4:8, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

Keith Malcomson preaches on the significance of the Five-fold Ministries of Ephesians chapter 4, also known as the Ascension Gifts or Christ's Ministry Gifts. These gifts are closely connected to Christ's ascension, exaltation, and His position at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. The sermon delves into the historical and spiritual context of Christ's descent into the lower parts of the earth, His victory over sin and Satan, and the transportation of paradise from the earth to the third heaven. It emphasizes the importance of gifted men, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, who are bestowed by Christ to represent Him in the Church and the world, continuing His ministry until His physical return.

Transcript

This article will deal with the Five-fold Ministries of Ephesians ch.4 which are otherwise called the Ascension Gifts or Christ's Ministry Gifts

Eph 4:8, "Wherefore he says, Having ascended up on high, he has led captivity captive, and has given gifts to men."

Ascension Gifts

The gifts spoken of in this verse are gifts given after Christ's ascension into Heaven. This is important because it shows us that they have a very close connection with Christ's ascension, exaltation and His being seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven.

Eph.4:9, "(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

Between His death at Calvary and His resurrection on the third day we are informed that he "first descended" into the "lower parts of the earth." We know that on the Cross He had already paid the price for our sin, made reconciliation for it, nailing the handwriting of ordinances that was against us to the cross, and purchasing for us eternal redemption.

It was also there that Satan was judged, bound, defeated, disarmed, destroyed and spoiled, being triumphed over openly. All of this was accomplished in the death of Christ by His Blood on the Cross at the place called Calvary. That is why His last words on the cross were, "it is finished." This one Greek word in the original, *teleo*, means to end, complete, execute, conclude, discharge, accomplish, and make an end of. (Mt.12:29; Lk.11:22; Jn.12:31; 16:11; 19:30; II Cor.5:19; Eph.2:14-16; Col.1:13- 14; 2:14-15; Heb.2:14).

At the point of physical death He did not descend down into Hades the place of punishment but down into Paradise the place of the righteous. Remember that this was explained by Jesus in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus, "...between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." The place of the dead before the resurrection was separated by a great gulf which no one could pass over. On one side the righteous awaited the Messiah in Paradise. On the other the wicked awaited eternal punishment. (Lk.16:19-31).

That is why on the Cross Christ was able to say to the repentant sinner, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." When this man died he descended to paradise to await Christ's resurrection. Christ joined him there shortly after as He prophesied of Himself, "So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Lk.23:43; Mt.12:40).

While in Paradise Christ proclaimed and made known His plan of redemption. On the third day all those who had died in the faith and who had been awaiting the Messiah ascended with Him. Mat 27:52-23, "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

What a mighty manifestation of His resurrection on the third day. "Many" of the saints (please note they were not sinners) arose physically from the dead and walked into the city of Jerusalem as witnesses to many. Christ had literally and physically taken "captivity captive." It was at this point that paradise was transported from the inner bowels of the earth to the realm of the third heaven. (II Cor.12:4).

But also the taking of captivity captive was performed spiritually. When He rose from the grave and ascended on High to the Father He led or took the spiritual captivity of sin, Satan and self captive. He displayed His victory over Satan openly for all to see. Men who were once prisoners led captive by Satan were now delivered by the ascended Christ who then went forth as preachers amongst the people as living witnesses of the resurrection.

Gifted Men

We are also told "...and has given gifts to men." From amongst those delivered from captivity He has "given gifts." This is a quote from Ps.68:18 which says "received gifts for men" or among men. Paul immediately goes on to say exactly what these gifts were: v11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"

So we here see the ascended Christ giving gifts from His plunder of men to represent Him in the Church and the world. These gifts are men, gifted men or men given as gifts to the body of Christ. These are Christ's ascension gifts. Let me give you an example. Saul the persecutor of the early Church is confronted by the risen Christ who because of the work of Calvary takes him captive and then gives him as a gifted Apostle to the Gentiles.

These five gifts are given by Christ. They are his spoils of war. They are His personal bestowments. In I Cor.12:5, we read "there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." The word "administrations" is diakonia meaning ministry or service. There are diversities of ministries. There are various distinct ministries which are very different from each other but are given by the same one Christ.

Each one of these five ministries were in Christ in his earthly public ministry and are in Christ in utter perfection and unity. When He ascended He gifted men in this manner in order that they may carry on ministering on His behalf until He returns physically. Act 20:24, "...the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

In fact more than that; Christ is still carrying on His ministry through these vessels. Act 1:1, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach," When Luke wrote his Gospel it was just the beginning of what Jesus did and spoke. When he wrote the Book of Acts he wrote of what Jesus continued to do and speak through His Apostles and other gifted ministries. As these preachers went out in order to fulfil the great commission He had promised "...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

These ministry gifts or services are given to certain men within the Church. First we see in I Cor.12:18, that God has "...set the members every one of them in the body..." He has appointed or put in place every member or person in the Church in a certain specific place. Note he says this happens to "everyone." No one is left out if they are truly saved.

But he goes on to say in v28-29, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers...Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" So we then see that only "some" of these members are set into place in the body of Christ as Apostles, Prophets and Teachers.

Everybody is not called to be gifted in this manner. Everybody will not grow into one of these gifted leadership ministries as they mature. Only some are given to the Church with these distinct ministries to bring the whole church to a place where they minister to one another. Every member is to mature into a place of service to each other but not necessarily as one of the five gifted ministries. That is why the contemporary teaching that tries to make every member of the church a leader is so wrong. Such teaching utterly disregards the simple teaching of God's Word and the will of God Himself.

Grace & Gifting

You cannot make yourself one of these ministries and unlike the nine gifts of the Holy Ghost we are never told to seek for them or desire them. They are sovereignly bestowed; not learnt, taught, imparted by man or earned. Christ alone gives them according to His own discretion, wisdom and grace.

Each ministry is given grace "according to the measure of the gift of Christ" v7. Please note that it is measured out or given by degree. These five ministries are not given in fullness all to one man but are dispensed and dispersed to various men who ought to work in unity for the sake of the whole body.

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power." (Eph.3:7)

Paul is very clear in making known that he was made a minister by means of receiving the "gift of Christ" or the "gift of grace" which operated in him by the "effectual working of his power." In other words this gift operated by the energy of God's "power" or dunamis.

In Eph.3:8 we read, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" And again in Rom.1:5, "...we have received grace and apostleship." And lastly I Cor.15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

The grace of God is the ability of God.

Paul goes to great lengths to make it understood that those called to public ministry are granted the gracious gift of Christ which operates by the power of God. No vessel can minister apart from this gift or grace of Christ. And so the power of God operates through a vessel to manifest the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.

Five Ministries

Eph.4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"

Please note that there are five distinct gifted men or ministries mentioned in this verse. Of course some churches teach that there are only two or three of these gifts still in operation in today's church. Others believe that only four distinct ministries are mentioned here. We will deal with these arguments later in this article but first let's look at the biblical teaching concerning these gifted ministries.

1. Apostles - apostolos - "sent ones" - a delegate; an ambassador; commissioner; an admiral of a fleet of ships.

We of course know well enough concerning the twelve apostles who laboured with Christ during His earthly ministry. Initially these men were called "disciples" which means learners or followers. But once Christ separated them unto Himself by calling them aside from all their secular activities and sent them out to teach, preach, heal and to cast out demons they were then called apostles by Christ. (Mt.10:1-5; Mk.6:30; Lk.6:13-16).

The first apostles were called the "twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev.21:14). After the fall of Judas, Matthias "was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26); after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost we read of "Peter, standing up with the eleven" (2:14); again we have the twelve, including Matthias, mentioned in ch.6:2. It is important to note that Paul himself said that Christ was seen after His resurrection but before His ascension by the "twelve" (I Cor.15:5). In Rev.21:14 we read "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." For all time this number will remain the same. In Mt.19:28 they were told "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." These men were uniquely called "the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

These twelve men were of a limited number and received a unique task. They were to be the pioneers in laying the foundation of the New Testament Church. The early churches were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;" (Eph 2:20). Upon them was laid the responsibility of raising up the first churches upon solid "apostolic doctrine" (Acts 2:42). They were set in the church "first" in time, order and rank, yet Paul says "God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death:" (I Cor.4:9). If church history is correct then all but one of these twelve suffered a martyr's death.

But were these the only apostles?

There were other apostles who were appointed after the ascension of Christ which we could call ascension-apostles to distinguish them from the "twelve." As we carefully search we will find Paul (Acts 14:14; 22:21), James (I Cor.15:7; Gal.1:19; 2:9), Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3; I Cor.9:5-6), Apollos (I Cor.4:6-9), Andronicus and Junia (Rom.16:7), Epaphroditus (Phill.2:25), Jude, Silas (I Thess.1:1; 2:6; II Thess.1:1), Timothy (I Thess.1:1; 2:6), Titus (II Cor.8:23), Tychicus (II Tim.4:12), and others.

There are at least 24 apostles mentioned in the New Testament, and maybe as many as 28. The New Testament Apostles pioneered and established new assemblies in new areas, laid the doctrinal foundation upon Christ the Rock and raised up new leaders. They frequently worked in teams with other giftings and rarely stayed in just one place, although they were identified with a local church body.

Many teachers have taught that the ministry of apostle was only for the first church in the first century and passed away just before 100 AD. This is clearly an unscriptural teaching. The ascension gifted apostles were granted to the church after the ascension and were to remain until the return of Christ. Scripture is clear in stating that they would remain till a certain point. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Eph.4:13). These five ministry gifts either stand or fall together. If one has ceased, all have ceased. If one continues, all continue. By saying "till" we know that all five continue "till" the same point in time.

Apostles are still needed in the body of Christ and have been given as individual men by Christ to the Church throughout church history, right down to our own day. Even if certain men who are gifted in this way are not officially recognized as apostles it does not nullify the calling or gifting. True ascension apostles are certainly seen to be so by the gifting they manifest, the function they fulfil and the fruit they leave behind. Although there has been much talk about the restoration of such ministries at certain points in history, the truth is that they have never been totally absent.

One great mark of true apostles that I want to finish with (although there are a number) is one which is greatly or almost totally neglected in this hour.

Concerning apostolic ministry Paul said, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." (I Cor.3:10). This is true apostolic ministry. They lay and establish the foundation of the local church and that foundation is the person of Christ Himself, not ministries, gimmicks, success, financial gain, numbers, enjoyment or strategies. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Paul even gives a warning to other ministries how they build on this foundation and what they minister into or add to the life of the church.

As an apostle, Paul was a "masterbuilder." This is the Greek word *architekton* from which we get our word architect. It means one who directs the work from a plan. Paul in a most unique manner received this master-plan from the risen Christ who then inspired him in the writing of 14 of the 27 New Testament books. Within these books we have a beautiful picture of what the church is to be.

The New Testament carries the master-plan which was the revelation from which all the apostles laboured in laying the foundation of the church-universal and the foundation of each local church as they founded them.

Even in the Old Testament everything was done "according to the pattern." Moses as God's apostle received on the mount, in the presence of God, the master-plan for the Tabernacle (Ex.25:8-9, 40; Num.8:4; I Chron.28:11-13, 19; Heb.8:5). It was to be built according to this pattern and no man was to add or subtract. The word pattern (Heb:- *tabniyth*) means structure; by implication a model, a resemblance: - figure, form, likeness. Moses on the mount had seen something of the heavenly order of things and received God's plan and a pattern which all other ministries would work according to for generations to come in building the House of the Lord.

God's pattern for the Church is revealed in the New Testament and every true apostle will labour according to this pattern in laying Christ as the foundation of each new church. Today the church is overrun with new apostles who are rewriting the plan, inventing new strategies, and borrowing ideas from the world. Now we have apostles building churches patterned after a circus, a bar, a nightclub, or a ball game. How foolish! There has been an unbelievable emphasis on the restoration of apostolic ministry over the past two decades but most of it is summarised by the above.

Again let true apostolic ministry arise which will lay, through apostolic doctrine, a solid foundation even the person of Christ for each new church and who will continue to labour and build according to the divine revelation in scripture rejecting every new plan, strategy and gimmick.

This is but a brief overview of this gift as also with the following four.

2. Prophets - one who speaks forth that which has yet to come to pass

In the Old Testament the prophets were of course very predominant. They were called seers (I Sam.9:9, 11, 18-19), men who received divine revelation by visions. The Old Testament word for prophet, *nabi*, means to bubble up or pour forth. They were the mouthpiece of God. They spoke what they heard (9:15). Another means by which God's word and message came to them was as a burden.

The prophet is the messenger of God. A prophet gives a specific message to a specific people at a specific time. Frequently this is predictive but not always. He is a seer who speaks immediately with divine impulse. Most frequently he does not premeditate or plan his message but speaks what God speaks to him.

It is of interest to note the female prophetesses during the Old dispensation: - Miriam, (Ex.15:20); Deborah, (Jdg.4:4); Huldah (II Kgs.22:14; II Chron.34:22-23); Isaiah's wife (Isa.8:3); Anna (Lk.2:36-38).

Again we see that Christ gave this gift of prophet as a ministry in and to the church. Again it was an ascension gift and would remain operational in the church as an active ministry "until" the church reaches perfection. And as yet it most certainly has not!

Some people confuse the gift of prophecy with the ministry of the prophet. The gift of prophecy is one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit given to individual believers in the church, but the prophet is one of the five ministries given by Jesus Christ to the church.

The gift of prophecy is defined in I Cor.14:3, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Someone may be used in this type of prophecy but this does not mean that they are a prophet or that they are gifted to be in leadership. The NT prophet is a public ministry gift to the Church. Let's look at examples.

Barnabas was given his name by the Apostles. It means son of nabas or son of prophecy. Later when we see Barnabas and Saul amongst the leadership of five at Antioch we are told they were gifted as "prophets and teachers" (Acts 4:36; 13:1). This would certainly seem to strongly reveal that Barnabas was gifted as a prophet. Previously when Barnabas had first arrived at Antioch we are told that he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord...and much people was added unto the Lord." (11:23-24). This is as much the ministry of a prophet as prophecy itself.

It would seem that there are at least ten ascension-gifted prophets mentioned by name or referred to indirectly in the New Testament. These include Agabus (11:27-29; 21:10-11), Judas and Silas (15:32) and others (I Cor.14:29, 32). Barnabas and Silas were both later commissioned and sent forth as apostles.

Again we read in Act 15:32 "And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them." To "confirm" means to support or establish further. They were building upon what had gone before and strengthening the work yet further.

However to merely limit this gift to an exhortative preaching ministry would certainly be incorrect. Agabus warned that "there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar" (11:28). He gave a clear prediction which came to pass as spoken.

Again in Acts 21 we read of Paul with his company on an apostolic journey staying with Philip the Evangelist who had "four daughters which did prophesy." They possessed the gift of prophecy but in the next verse we read of "a certain prophet, named Agabus" coming unto them. Now this is the ministry gift of Christ distinct from that gift possessed by the daughters. He "took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." And so it came to pass even as he said.

In the Church at Corinth prophets are mentioned as second in the church to apostles (I Cor.12:28). When Paul teaches of the order to be maintained in church gatherings in connection with gifts, manifestations and ministries he deals with that of the prophets, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." (14:29). Paul instructs that two or at most three operations of tongues, interpretation (27) as well as prophesies through the prophets should be given in each service.

He says "let the other judge." The word "judge" means to discriminate or to separate it thoroughly; to exercise an unbiased testing, then judgement of it. The word "other" means just that, someone else, someone different, another person from the one who prophesies. In the context of this particular verse it may mean one of the other prophets, or in the context of the whole chapter it would mean another person in the gathering, but not necessarily one gifted as a prophet.

If it does mean the other prophet is to judge, then be sure that this one scripture in no way forbids other leaders, ministries or believers from ever testing a prophet's word. I would certainly say it is wise but scriptural for any gifted local leadership to "judge" such words in the actual service, and it is for practical order that one do so. In fact the rest of scripture, Old and New, teach that it is the responsibility of all to test such words. "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things" (2:15), again, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (I Thess.5:19-21).

All true prophets will adhere to the authority of God's written Word and nobody, no matter what their ministry or gifting is, are allowed to function outside of its instruction or restrictions. "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." (I Cor.14:37).

"And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."(32) The movings, stirrings and giftings which the prophet correctly feels when being moved to prophesy or speak, are "subject", that is subordinate or submitted to him. These movings or urges are under his control. Nowhere does the Bible reveal that the prophet is a ranting ecstatic lone-ranger. No, he is God's mouthpiece, spokesman and messenger who speaks to the edification of the body.

Every time a prophet speaks in a gathering it is not always by a prophesy but when he does prophecy it will manifest the secrets of the heart (25), bring revelation (30) as well as being a means for the believers to learn (31). When in right order this gift will greatly edifying the body of believers and move the work of God forward.

3. Evangelists - a messenger; a proclaimer of the good news of salvation.

It is not until Acts 21:8 that we distinctly read of someone, and in fact the only one by name, marked out as having this gifted ministry, "Philip the evangelist." Even though Philip was functioning in this ministry gift of evangelist since ch.8 it is only years later that he is recorded in scripture as an evangelist. There are possibly two reasons for this.

First, the emphasis and importance is not placed upon a title, it is placed upon the actual function of the gift by the grace and power of God. We would do well to concentrate on obedience to God today and not to spend our time trying to work out our "calling" which has become so popular. Thank God that Philip was more interested in serving God than having a noted ministry.

When we first see him in the church at Jerusalem he is marked out by the believers as a man of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (6:3). He was a faithful consistent member of the church who was willing to be chosen to look after the problematic situation amongst the widows in dispensing food to them in order that the apostles could be fully released "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Someone who cannot see the great importance of such commitment to prayer and the word by others and who is not willing to serve faithfully in it can forget public dynamic ministry as an evangelist.

A second maybe more likely reason is that by ch.21, Philip seems more settled in married life and in the local church at Caesarea. This ministry-gift of evangelist is not primarily given to the world but to the church. He is to stir local believers and churches to follow his example in reaching lost souls with the gospel.

In ch.8 we read of the great persecution which broke out at Jerusalem and which resulted in the believers being "all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles." (8:1). As they were scattered they "went every where preaching the word" (v4). This word "preaching" is euaggelizē. It literally means to announce or show openly the good news, or as we use it today, to evangelize. To evangelize or to share the gospel one-to-one was the responsibility of every Christian and still is! It takes no special call or gifting, apart from the Baptism in the Holy Ghost to be empowered as a personal witness.

However the next verse says "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." This word "preached" is actually a different Greek word, it is kērussō. It means to act as a herald or a public crier or to publish abroad. Now this is the calling of an evangelist. He is called as a public audible herald of the gospel on street corners and in towns and cities. All believers are most certainly not called to this but a few are gifted as such. But to be an evangelist is more than this.

His preaching was confirmed with widespread salvation and joy (v6, 8), miracles (6), the demon possessed delivered and the sick healed (7). He preached the person of Christ (5), the Word of God (14), and the kingdom of God (12). A city was changed. This was a man functioning by the gift of God.

Then in v14 we see Peter and John, in apostolic ministry, coming to lead the new believers into the baptism of the Holy Ghost as well exposing a false convert and establishing the new believers as a church in the city. This shows the limitation a single gift but the interdependence of all these ministries. After this powerful revival Philip did not settle down and try to pastor or teach the converts, instead he returned to Jerusalem.

Not only did he gladly preach to a city but also to an individual. "...the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." He immediately obeyed and waited in the desert until an Ethiopian Eunuch travelled past in his carriage reading the prophet Isaiah. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." This led to the conversion and baptism in water of this man who then returned to his country. Again thank God that he thought more of the leadership of the Holy Spirit than numbers!

It is after this that we read "But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea." (8:40). That is, he covered all the coastal cities of Israel from the South through to Caesarea in the North. Years later we still find him settled, but now surrounded by a family. He "...had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (21:9). His ministry had not been at the expense of his beautiful family. It was a home in order but with much gifting.

One of Paul's last instructions to Timothy was "...watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (II Tim. 4:5). Although Timothy had been sent forth and gifted as an apostle, Paul here exhorts him to do the "work" of an evangelist. These were days of apostasy, days when Timothy must contend against false doctrine and error in the church, but while fighting that battle he must not forget the task of winning men to Christ Jesus.

Evangelists come third only after apostles and prophets. They come before teachers and pastors in this list. Again the need of evangelists and of those who will do the work of an evangelist is very great. While men call for a restoration of apostles and prophets and others hold fast to the ministries of teachers and pastors there is a very real need for the function of the evangelist in the local New Testament church.

When this ministry is lacking or not allowed to function, the church is in danger of looking inward instead of outward. Just let a true evangelist minister into an inward looking church and he will challenge, stir and provoke them to look out upon the harvest fields.

4. Pastors - ποιμν = 'Shepherds'

In the New Testament the Greek word ποιμν is translated 17 times as shepherd but only once as pastor. So to be correct and biblical the ministry gift of Christ to the church should be clearly understood as "shepherds."

Beginning with Abel a great many godly men were shepherds in the Old Testament. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as David and Moses were all shepherds. The sheepfold has been the greatest training ground for the greatest of men and ministries in the Old Testament. The local church in the New Testament will also be the greatest training place for great men and ministries.

Since the Reformation it has been normal amongst Evangelicals to consider the pastor to be the man who oversees the whole of each local church, maybe with a few elders under him to help or with an assistant pastor at his side. Such a belief presses the conviction upon all church leaders that they must be gifted as a pastor. This belief also turns bible colleges into pastor factories.

First of all, nowhere in the New Testament do we see the necessity of a gifted pastor being the leader or only leader of the local church. At Antioch it was gifted "prophets and teachers" who were in leadership. We know that Peter was of course an apostle, but when exhorting elders in Galatia, Asia and elsewhere he says "...but who am also an elder" (I Pet.5:1). He puts himself on exactly the same level as these elders, not over them or under them, and states that he functions exactly like them in some local church situation, probably Jerusalem. We see already from the above passages that apostles, prophets and teachers were overseers in local New Testament churches.

I believe that it is scriptural to say that an elder might be gifted as a pastor but this is not always the case. An example is found in I Pet.2:25, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." This verse makes a distinction between a shepherd (pastor) and a bishop (elder). Although they are very closely associated, and the most effectual elder would be gifted as a pastor (shepherd), yet these are not the same. In the local church there needs to be a full orb ed ministry, and a gifted pastor will not alone provide this.

But let's concentrate for a moment upon the ministry of the pastor.

Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 are filled with warnings and rebukes to neglectful and deceitful Shepherds (pastors). But there is also much instruction for good shepherds who desire to serve God faithfully. Good shepherds will feed the flock, gather them and visit them, they strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up the broken, seek and search out the lost sheep, rule with gentleness and goodness and make them dwell safely.

The Lord gives some very powerful promises to his true flock through Jeremiah in an era when true shepherds were lacking. He says, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (3:15). "And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them:"(23:4). "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie

down." (33:12). Please note that it was not the lack of shepherds but a lack of the right kind of shepherd!

Christ was called "the good Shepherd" (Jn.10:11), the "great shepherd" (Heb.13:20), and the "chief shepherd" (I Pet.5:4).

I think one of the outstanding gifted-shepherds of the New Testament was Simon Peter. In John 21 we see Simon returning to his nets and taking the others with him (v23). He had failed his master in life and ministry by his denials and saw this as his only resort. True gifted leaders can as easily lead others back to their nets as out onto the streets of a city to preach.

Christ comes to him again and re-commissions him by pointing to his love for his Lord. This love to his master would be revealed in his love for Christ's flock. First He says "Feed my lambs" then twice says "Feed my sheep." He was to care for the lambs, the new converts and young Christians as well as the sheep, the mature believers (Jn.21:15-17).

Christ first says feed (bosk■) my lambs and sheep which means to provide food for them. Then He says feed (poimain■) my sheep which is a more extensive term meaning to tend as a shepherd. Peter had a deep personal and experiential revelation of the Shepherd heart of Christ "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (I Pet.2:25). Again his constant call to the elders or leaders of the churches was "Feed the flock of God which is among you," (5:2).

In v3 we see one last vital point, "...being ensamples to the flock." The western shepherds go behind the flock and drive them in a certain direction with the help of dogs, but in the east the shepherd walks in front and the sheep hear his voice which they know and trust and so follow him.

As we very well know, Peter was not one of the most soft and gentle of characters. He was a strong, hardy fisher man. If he had taken one of today's church tests to discern his ministry, his personality type would have disqualified him out-right from pastoral ministry. But in God's economy he was granted the gift, heart, grace and ability to be a shepherd (pastor) to the flock and to care for them with great mercy and tenderness.

5. Teachers - an instructor; (doctor; master; teacher; scribe)

Eph.4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;" There are many who believe and teach that in the church the "pastors and teachers" are one ministry, not two. They take this from the above verse basing everything on the use of the word "some." Because it does not say "...and some pastors; and some teachers" they infer that these two are specially linked in one man. They say that you cannot pastor a church without also being an enabled teacher.

Now this may well be logical but it is not scriptural. Every single other time that the term "teacher" is used in the Book of Acts and the Epistles it is never joined to that of "pastor." To infer that these two are one would be to lose all sense of correct terminology and the meaning or definition of words, not to mention definition of ministries. When the bible says pastor it means pastor, when it says teacher it means teacher. These two gifting are distinct, but of course God can grant the same man both gifts making him a shepherd-teacher.

A teacher is one who teaches in such a way as to cause people to learn God's Word. It is not just the accumulation of knowledge or diligent study for long hours. It is the ability to raise up a people in the

church who have been taught.

In Nehemiah ch.8 we read the first and only time in the bible where the word pulpit is used. "And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood" (v4). This pulpit was made with the express purpose of teaching the Word of God. To his left and right stood thirteen other men with the same ability and ministry as Ezra. "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:" (5). We then read one of the best definitions of the teaching ministry that I know of, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (8).

First, they did not just take a scripture and preach. They took whole sections of the Word of God in which reading the text was vital. This reading was done "distinctly" which means, to make clear, to determine the meaning, or translate. Adam Clarke gives the meaning of this word as 'to expand; they analyzed, dilated, and expounded it at large.' It means to make clear by revelation, explanation or translation. It is this very word and ministry which later gave rise to the sect of the Pharisees as defenders and expositors of the Word. The term exposition comes from this, meaning an opening up of the scriptures.

Secondly, they "gave the sense" of the written word. Mr Strong interprets this as intelligence. It is the process of making the listener a learner; to make the listener to consider and mull over these things in his mind. It is the impartation to the individual by the previous process of distinct teaching.

And lastly, "caused them to understand the reading." This means to separate mentally or to distinguish. The instruction of the teacher leaves the individual in a place of understanding. Paul reveals the result of such instruction or at least what was meant to be the result in the following scriptures, "And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law." (Rom.2:18-20).

Ezra had received a clear call to this ministry "...all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not." (Ez.7:25). The above teaching went on from sunrise to mid-day, maybe six hours. A prophet, evangelist or pastor will rarely teach for such extended periods, but teachers do.

Paul was undoubtedly one of the greatest gifted teachers of the New Testament. He twice states clearly that he was not only appointed and ordained as a preacher and an apostle but also as a teacher (I Tim.2:7; II Tim.1:11). After years of preparation and of preaching in obscurity he appears out of nowhere by the request of Barnabas to come to Antioch where he "taught much people" alongside Barnabas, for one whole year (Acts 11:26). After this we get a view of the Church in Antioch in 13:1 with five men in leadership who were individually gifted as "prophets and teachers." As said before Barnabas was a prophet but Paul was a teacher functioning in a local church.

Even after Paul was separated and sent out with Barnabas as an apostle, upon their return to Antioch they resumed their normal function according to their gift in the local church. "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also." (Act 15:35).

Paul defines the teaching ministry as distinct from prophesying, ministering, exhorting and ruling. (Rom.12:6-8). He instructs that teachers ought to wait upon their teaching; this means it will take time in study, meditation and preparation, yet it is a gift given by the grace of God. It is not just saying the first thing that comes to mind.

Such gifted ministries will be enabled of God to teach intensively for a year like Paul at Antioch, for six months like in Corinth (18:11) two years like at Ephesus (19:9) or two years like in Rome (28:31).

When in Troas (Acts 20) he gathered with local believers on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread and preach unto them. He "continued his speech until midnight" when a young man named Eutychus fell out of a window and was killed. Paul stopped, raised him from the dead and then "talked a long while, even till break of day." That is the ministry of a teacher.

In Paul we see a man ministering in a local church as a teacher but also as a travelling teacher. The ministry of the teacher will build up all the local eldership in their ability to teach. Also the mature ladies in their ability to teach the younger.

One other man who fits the bill of teacher was Apollos. "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures...This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." (Act 18:24-25)

Aquila and Priscilla having heard him recognised his great ability and spirit but also where he was lacking. And so "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." This says much for their wisdom but far more about his humility. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." (I Cor.8:1). Mere knowledge will make a man proud but the love of God in the heart of a true teacher will make him edify or build up the Church.

We later see the fruit of Apollos's ministry at Corinth. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." (I Cor.3:6). Paul pioneered the Church as an apostle but Apollos built it up as a teacher. His ministry is likened to that of watering. The Hebrew word for teachers used in Isaiah 30:20 and elsewhere is *yarah* meaning to water or rain. This again is a beautiful picture of the teaching ministry in the church.

Paul says "in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (1Cor.14:19).

The word Paul uses here for "teach" is *katēche* from which we get our word catechize and catechism. Theophilus had been taught in this manner and so also had Apollos (Lk.1:4; Acts 18:25). Amongst the Jews this was an essential part of teaching and instruction (Rom.2:18). It is the act of instruction through questions. Although this may have a more technical, concentrated and intensive meaning it does reveal the value of the asking of questions in the teaching ministry.

Again Paul says "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Gal 6:6). The same word is translated here as "taught" and "teacheth." Again the asking of questions can be a very useful and fruitful as part of the teaching ministry in the local church.

The Purpose of Gifted Ministries

Eph 4v12, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

"Perfecting" = restoring, putting in order, fitting, repairing. This is a process which leads to a finished goal. This is the primary purpose why God set or placed these ministries in the body of Christ. These five ministries were appointed in order that everything in the church might be well arranged or put into its

proper place; or that the church might be "complete" lacking nothing.

They are to perfect the saints, that is the individual members of the body of Christ, those who are saved and sanctified in Christ by His finished work on Calvary. But to what end? "For the work of the ministry." The Amplified Bible brings this out more clearly.

"His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church)," (Eph.4v12).

So each member is being perfected so that "they" may do "the work of the ministry." It is not at all the job of these five ministries to do ALL the work of the ministry. No not at all. It is their task to bring the whole church to the place where it is able to minister effectively.

When the prophet ministers he wants to raise up a people who will have a knowledge of the will, purpose and direction of God. When the evangelist ministers he wants to see a people come forth who will be burdened for a lost world and who will go everywhere evangelizing. The pastor or shepherd wants to see a people who will care for each other. The teacher wants a well taught people who will stand against error. Each of these ministries if functioning and if received will be like Christ Himself in fullness ministering to the perfecting of the church.

And finally in closing,

"TILL we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" (Eph 4:13-15)

The end goal of this is that we may grow up into fullness in our Head Christ Jesus that He may have a complete, perfect body, called the perfect man, in order to express His fullness.

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