

## Ephesians, Part 8

As we finished the last section of Ephesians, Jesus had ascended higher than all the heavens. When the Lord ascended on high, sin, Satan, demons, and death had been conquered. Christ ascended in order to fill the whole universe. This was the assumption of the authority and power that God's Son possessed when the Father gave Him a name that is above every name, (Philippians 2:9-10; Ephesians 1:21). As a process of Christ's ascending and liberating captives, He gave gifts to men. In his letters, Paul delineated four lists of gifts given by God: Gifts from Christ (Ephesians 4:11); Gifts from the Father (Romans 12:4-8); Gifts from the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10); and Gifts from God (1 Corinthians 12:28). None of the lists of gifts is comprehensive, but together they promote unity, edification, and maturity of the body of Christ. Here in Ephesians 4, Paul lists five ministry gifts that are given by Christ to the body of believers.

### *The five ministry gifts*

**Ephesians 4:10 NIV84** He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

The resurrected and glorified Christ gave gifts to men. It is important that these gifts were given by the victorious Christ.

**Ephesians 4:11 NIV84** It was he who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors** and **teachers**,

*These gifts are given to the body of believers to preserve unity and fully equip the church.*

God can use natural talents, but natural talents are not spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are special gifts given to believers by God.

**Ephesians 4:12-13 NIV84** to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The diversity of spiritual gifts are given from God. 1 Corinthians 12:28 expands this list of gifts given in Ephesians 4:11 with miracles, gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and varieties of tongues. On the surface, this addition appears to be a different form of ministry. These various forms of ministry in the church have the capacity to perfect and fully equip the saints to do the work of ministering, so that the church is built up. Just as our human body has many members, so the ministry in the body of Christ has many members and functions. Romans 12:6 tells us the many members in the body of Christ have been given gifts, faculties, talents and qualities that are unique and have different functions. These various gifts differ according

to the grace God has given us. Since we are members of one another and have various gifts and functions, we should use what God has given us. When the body of believers fulfill their function, the whole church is edified.

*Five gifts from Christ are mentioned here.*

### *Apostles*

An apostle is a representative, an ambassador, a person who is sent out to represent another. In the strictest interpretation, Apostles were divinely called and commissioned by Christ before His death. Apostles and prophets are called the foundation of the Church along with Jesus Christ the Chief Cornerstone, (Ephesians 2:20). The first twelve apostles were given for the establishment of the church, (Revelation 21:14). After Jesus' resurrection, the eleven met in an upper room in Jerusalem and determined that someone should replace Judas Iscariot. Peter referred to the Psalms 69:25 and said, *"May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it."* Then he referred to Psalms 109:8 and said, *"May another take his place of leadership."* The consensus among them was that the one who took Judas Iscariot's place should be someone who was with them the whole time and witnessed Christ's resurrection. After prayer for the Lord's guidance, Matthias was added to the eleven apostles, (Acts 1:13-26). The twelve apostles were chosen directly by Christ or the direction of the Holy Spirit and were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord. Then Paul was directly called by Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles, (Galatians 2:7-9, Romans 1:1). All of the 24 named apostles were especially gifted with the working of miracles and spiritual gifts that were necessary for extending the church, opening fields of ministry to unreached peoples, and overseeing larger sections of the body of Christ. Some of the apostles mentioned in the New Testament were also prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers, (Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28). From the time Jesus called the 12 disciples, they were given authority over demons and power to do miracles, signs and wonders. This included authority to heal every disease and sickness.

**2 Corinthians 12:12 NKJV** Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

**Hebrews 2:4 NKJV** God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

**Matthew 10:1-4 NIV84** He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

In this broad sense, every generation has individuals to whom God gives

special grace and sets them apart for this special ministry.

## *Prophets*

Prophets receive direct revelations from the Lord and openly proclaim them to the church. The ministry gift of prophets is different than the spiritual gift of prophecy. The ministry gift is a calling or office and the spiritual gift is temporary. God may use anyone with the spiritual gift of prophecy, but the prophet is a ministry gift that is similar to the Old Testament prophet. These individuals are specifically inspired to deliver direct revelations from God. They speak the utterances of God as He supplies, (1 Peter 4:10-11). The prophet is uniquely gifted with insight through the Holy Spirit to foretell God's future actions and proclaim with clarity and inspiration what God has already said. Several prophets were active in the New Testament church.

*The list of prophets in Acts and the Epistles demonstrate that the gift of prophets was very active in the early church.*

- Agabus and others – Acts 11:27-28
- Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen – Acts 13:1
- Judas and Silas – Acts 15:32
- Agabus and Philip's four virgin daughters - Acts 21:8-10

**Acts 11:27-28 NKJV** And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

**Acts 13:1 NKJV** 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.

**Acts 15:32 NKJV** Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.

Judas and Silas were also listed among the apostles.

**Acts 21:8-10 NIV84** Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

*The mention of additional apostles and prophets shows the continuation of these ministry gifts in the church.*

## *Evangelists*

Evangelists are especially gifted to preach the Gospel to gather and establish converts and new works. "Evangelist" are mentioned three times in the New

Testament. Philip was called an evangelist in Acts 21:8. Paul instructed Timothy to do the work of an evangelist in 2 Timothy 4:5. Evangelists were equipped to speak with convincing words and to do miracles, (Acts 8:5-13).

**Acts 8:5-8 NIV84** Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

### *Pastors*

The gift of pastors is the calling and gifting to guide, protect, and feed the church, give wise counsel, correction, encouragement, and consolation. The pastor is an under-shepherd to the Chief Shepherd, Christ Jesus our Lord. Many combine the gift of pastor and teacher. The terms pastor and teacher are not interchangeable. One may be a teacher without being a pastor but it is impossible to be a pastor without being a teacher. The office of a pastor / teacher is very broad and includes bishops, overseers, and elders. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and elders were pastors in the New Testament.

### *Teachers*

Teachers are divinely empowered and equipped by God to explain the Bible, interpret its meaning, and apply it to the believers. The pastor-teacher is to nourish the saints with the Word of God and equip them for service. Anyone may be able to teach or instruct.

**Hebrews 5:12 NKJV** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Teaching or instructing other believers is something that should not be entered into lightly. The ministry gift of teacher is held in the same esteem as the prophet and pastor. The teacher should likewise make their calling and election sure.

**2 Timothy 2:15 NASB95** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

### *Gifts for maturing and equipping believers*

**Ephesians 4:12 NIV84** to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Christ has given gifts to equip believers so that they may then serve others and the body is built up. Ministry or service is supposed to be the function of the entire body of believers. Each part of the body has a particular function. We must develop and utilize the practical skills required to carry out God-given tasks. The development of ministry gifts is accomplished by utilizing what God has given. The body of believers is fit for the work of the ministry. As the body ministers, the church will be built up. Every believer shares in the growth and development of the church. The ministry is the full-time work of the whole church.

**Ephesians 4:13-16 NIV84** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

#### *Why is it important for believers to mature?*

Maturity fosters unity, fills us with the fullness of Christ, keeps us from error, establishes us in truth, promotes love for one another, and develops purpose and function.

#### *God's purpose and goal is the maturity and unity of believers.*

*These verses depict the progress in maturity.*

1. Unity of faith and knowledge – attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
2. Stability – no longer infants, tossed back and forth with every kind of teaching by deceitful schemes.
3. Integrity – practicing the truth in love, grow up in all things into Christ.

#### *Immature Christians are not prepared or fully formed and functional.*

As the Church properly matures, it will grow together and support itself as each one does their part. God has specifically gifted the Church so that it may mature and be strong in Christ. God has a goal and function for each member of the body of Christ. Each part of the body must come to maturity for the Church to function properly.

#### *What is the difference between a functional and dysfunctional believer and church?*

According to this text in Ephesians 4, a truly functional church rises to the measure of the fullness of Christ. In relation to that, the body is in proportion

to the head. Christ is the head of the church.

**Ephesians 4:15-16 NIV84** ...we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

We are to grow up into Him who is the Head. When we achieve that degree of maturity and function, each part of the body will fully and properly function and nourish the other parts of the body.