

This morning, we are continuing in our journey through the Book of Ephesians.

We are continuing to look at Ephesians 4:7-16

Let's read **Ephesians 4:7-16** *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."⁹ (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until 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 fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ 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; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 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.*

Last week we started to explore Function over Form as it relates to the Church. We looked at the role that grace plays in the foundation of the function of the Church – both as individual parts of the Church/Body and the gathering of the Church/Body.

We talked about how, in the Western church, the emphasis is often on Form – Structure – Hierarchy – Organization, etc. Over the last few decades in particular there has been a definite shift in how many see the Church in America in particular. The shift has been focused more on a business model for developing and evaluating the Church. We need to remember that Biblical Function should drive Operational Form, not the other way around.

This morning, let's focus on **Ephesians 4:11–13** *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until 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 fullness of Christ.*

First, I want to give a 30k foot overview of the 5 grace gifts listed here and hopefully clear up a little confusion some people might have about a couple of the roles.

When most people read this list, few have an issue with Evangelist, Pastors, and Teachers. We use these terms often to not only describe functions in the Church, but also, and in the Western world, actually positions or vocations in the Church.

Some folks have a harder time wrapping their brains around the Apostles and Prophets part of these verses.

Some say that Prophets were mostly an Old Testament thing and Apostles mostly an Early Church thing. Some go as far as to say that neither of these exist in the Church today.

I don't think we need to spend a lot of time on this because the Bible itself is pretty clear about these two roles.

Let's take a few minutes to look at this biblically.

One of the biggest objections I hear from people about whether or not there are still Apostles or Prophets is based on the unique role that the Prophets played in the Old Testament and the original 12 Apostles played in the New Testament.

There are only 12 "Apostles of the Lamb"

Simon Peter (brother of Andrew)

Andrew (brother of Simon Peter)

James (son of Zebedee and Salome)

John (son of Zebedee and Salome)

Philip

Bartholomew

Matthew (Levi)

Thomas (Didymus)

James (son of Alphaeus; brother of Judas Lebbaeus)

Judas Lebbaeus (Thaddaeus)

Simon Zelotes (the Canaanite)

Matthias

They were handpicked by Jesus and had a specific role in the establishing of the Church and in eternity.

Establishing the Church:

Ephesians 2:19-22 *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a*

holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Eternity:

Revelation 21:10-14 *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. ¹²It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Some folks like to debate whether Paul really should have been the 12th instead of Matthias. Ultimately, we'll have to wait to look at the 12 foundation stones to really know ☺ but here are a couple of Scriptures to ponder.

Remember, before the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, many times people would come before the Father with lots, fleeces, etc. and ask Him to reveal His will through the outcome.

Acts 1:23-26 *So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.*

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identified "The 12".

1 Corinthians 15:3-11 *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

We know additional apostles besides “The 12” exist because Christ, after His ascension, appointed “some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers...*until 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 fullness of Christ” (**Ephesians 4:11-13**). Are we there yet? Have we all attained to the unity of the faith? Or mature manhood? Or the fullness of Christ? Clearly, the apostolic ministry will continue until Christ returns!

Why would you just take two of the roles out of the list and leave the others?

The Bible identifies many people who functioned with an apostolic gift.

The Greek word for Apostle is Apostolos. Some translations use the English word messenger instead of apostle, so you may not have thought of these people being identified as apostles. Here’s where Apostolos is used to identify individuals in the New Testament:

Acts 14:14 Paul and Barnabas

Romans 16:7 Andronicus and Junias (Female)

2 Corinthians 8:23 Titus

Galatians 1:19 James, the Lord’s brother

Philippians 2:25 Epaphroditus

1 Thessalonians 2:6 Silvanus and Timothy (from 1:1)

Some say Apollos by inference in **1 Corinthians 3:22** and **4:6-9** though Apostolos not used

If there were only the 12 Apostles of the Lamb, there could be no false apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 *But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

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

Likewise, the New Testament clearly identifies the function of the prophetic role.

We looked at this a little more in depth when we went over the gift of prophecy in our Gifts of the Spirit Series. The New Testament is very clear that the gift of prophecy and the role and function of the prophetic gift is still in operation.

Here's a few verses to refresh your memory.

Acts 11:27,28 *Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.*

Acts 13:1-3 *Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

Acts 21:8-11 *On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. ¹⁰ As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"*

Here's a little diagram that might help you remember the function of these roles:



I hope this little brief study helped clear up any misunderstanding or confusion you may have had concerning “modern day” apostles and prophets. Of course, many people have abused these gifts and added extra-biblical baggage and created a scenario that the Bible doesn’t teach. As in all things, we must base our theology, doctrine, and beliefs on what the Bible teaches not as a reaction to what may be abuses.

Today we need people to be operating in their grace gifts more than ever so that the Body will be built up and strengthened...not deceived and tossed about.

This is at the heart of the Function of the Church.

Unfortunately, this principle has been twisted an unbalanced “Clergy” vs. “Laity” environment has evolved in the Form of the Church.

We’ll talk about that a little next week and see God’s heart for the Function of His Church in this area.

Hale Pule Question

How are you availing yourself to opportunities to be equipped to be all that God intends for you to be?

Are there more ways you can intentionally cooperate with the Father’s desire for you to be equipped to serve His Purpose?