

Sunday March 1st 2009
To the Church of Ephesus – Part Six

1). Eph 4:1 ¶ *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 ¶ with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

a). The 4th Chapter of the Book of Ephesians begins, as we saw last week, with the admonition that we should walk worthy of the calling with which we were called.

b). And that ‘calling’, also as we saw last week, is a heavenly calling – Heb 3:1 ¶ *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers [companions] of the heavenly calling,*

c). Our calling is to the heavenly realm of God’s Kingdom in order to attain, through faithful obedience, a position of rulership with the King of kings and the Lord of lords during the Millennial Kingdom.

d). In this we all have exactly the same calling, with exactly the same opportunity to translate our calling into an appointment as a joint heir with Christ.

e). This is by far the highest calling any redeemed human being could possibly have, and is of course inextricably linked to the ‘so great a salvation’, the most superlative salvation that the Godhead could devise for Their creation – beyond which there is nothing greater – it is of course the salvation of the soul - 1Pe 1:10 ¶ *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.*

f). So far beyond the limits of the realm of human imagination is this calling, that as a result we are admonished to walk worthy of it. Given what it is, this is a command to be taken very seriously. This is no small thing.

g). Peter, talking of the same thing continues in 1 Peter Chapter 1 v 13 as follows - 1Pe 1:13 ¶ *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former*

lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

h). Then here in the 2nd verse of Chapter 4 in Ephesians we are told to walk ‘with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love’.

i). And by comparing scripture with scripture we saw what this would look like - *Php 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

j). *1Pe 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

k). And I am sure we will realize that we don't have an opportunity to put this into practice until we want to have our own way because of our perceived self importance – we don't get to esteem others better than ourselves until we consider that we are better than others, or that we have a right to be treated in a certain way because of who we are – only here do we get the chance to humble ourselves. And this we will have to do if God is to exalt us in due time – do please remember though that this is always with a view to our fellow believers within the Body. This is not about how we relate to Joe Public in general.

l). The remaining 3 verses then speak of unity within the body and the reason why unity should exist – *3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

m). The thought here is that the unity that must exist between us will come from our individual pursuit of the Kingdom.

n). As we have seen so many times before, just as we saw in the first Chapter of Ephesians, God's plans and purposes from the ages of eternity past have been moving toward the enthronement of His Son, in the form of a Man, as ruler over the earth accompanied by many other sons who will be brought to glory. There is no other purpose to which God is heading, there is no other direction that the Holy Spirit is leading and there is no other conclusion to which the Word of God moves - *Ps 2:6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."*

o). Because of this we are all fellow travelers on the same journey, companions of the heavenly calling, with the same obligation to faithful obedience – a faithful obedience that does not exist in a vacuum, but rather exists within relationship – the relationship we have with each other where we do nothing through selfish ambition or conceit.

p). Our unity comes then through our individual faithful obedience in walking worthy of our calling. Encouraging one another, supporting one another,

having compassion for one another, bearing with one another in love – because we recognize in each other our own weaknesses – never condemning, never criticizing, never second guessing, because it is the same God Who works in each of us, but rather, choosing to love one another - 1Co 13:4 ¶ *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 ¶ Love never fails.*

q). What we see in this scripture is not a suggestion, nor is it unachievable – it is a matter of choice. We can choose to love one another after this fashion – and so we should given the enormity of what God has purposed for us.

r). If we don't see that purpose, if we don't grasp it, if we don't ever have it before us we won't love like this, because we will deceive ourselves into thinking that our particular circumstances make us the exception - 1Pe 1:17 *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*

s). It is then striving for the prize, being led by the Spirit having compassion upon our bodies of death that holds us in unity.

2). Having laid the foundation for the unity that is to exist between us in the opening verses of Chapter 4, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, then adds to our unity by drawing attention to the individual diversity that exists in the midst of our unity of purpose. In other words we are all heading in the same direction with the same end in view, but we don't all have the same function - Eph 4:7 *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

a). This grace being given according to the measure of Christ's gift is never an issue of being better than, because we know that God is without partiality, but is rather about the grace we receive in order to fulfill that which God requires of us – Lu 12:48...*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required;*

b). The best way I can describe this is to use myself as an example – God has given me the grace to be able to do the things I do – and particularly over the past few weeks ministering at funeral services. I am well aware that it is only by the grace of God that I am able to do this. God most probably has not given each of you the grace to minister in this way.

c). Now this does not make me better or special – it is not about what I do, but am I faithfully obedient in the doing of it?

d). Ben Zeigler has been given the grace to be a husband and a father and God may require no more of him than that. As Ben and I would stand before the Lord in that Day we are not judged according to weight of our job description but

according to how faithful we have been with what we have been given. And if we have both been faithful to the same degree we will receive the same reward.

e). Do you see how this works?

f). This means then that no one in the Body is insignificant and no one is less valuable than the next. And within God's economy we all have an important part to play. It is a lie to believe that what we do doesn't matter.

g). We should also realize that our function in the Body is not about doing jobs in the 'church', although this may be a part of what we do – our function in the Body of Christ has to do with a life of faithful obedience in every aspect of our day.

h). This is how we find the Body described in - 1Co 12:14 *For in fact the body is not one member but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 ¶ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*

i). We may believe that what we do apart from a corporate setting has no impact on anyone else, but we shall see later that this is not so. What we do individually with regards to dying to self and walking in the Spirit has a direct bearing on everyone else. We may not get to this today but we shall get back it.

3). So as Paul begins to draw attention to our diversity he begins with the different but complimentary ministries set in the Church, given as gifts by Him, for the purpose of bringing the individual members of the Body to maturity - Eph 4:7 *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended" --what does it mean but that He*

also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

a). Without taking away our individual responsibility for our own spiritual growth, we will realize that the resurrection of Christ made possible the sending of the Holy Spirit - Joh 15:26 ¶ *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.*

b). To guide us into all truth.

c). And made possible the giving of ministry gifts towards the achievement of that same end.

d). What we see then is that God has provided everything that we need to enable us to be successful in our race of faith.

e). Before we deal with this in any detail let's spend some time making sure we are clear about apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers.

4). Firstly we need to see these offices within their historical setting and then within our own setting.

a). Historically, these offices were placed in the Church at the inception of the Church, when, through the Church, the re-offer of the Kingdom was being made to Israel.

b). The Apostles are those who Christ had appointed to go out with the gospel of the glories of Christ. Those who had been eye witnesses of His resurrection, and those to whom He opened the scriptures on the day following His resurrection, beginning on the Emmaus road - Mr 16:14 ¶ *Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

c). And into this group we would also have to add Paul, who although not an eye witness of the Lord's resurrection, as were the others, did have a personal encounter with the risen Christ in His glory on the road to Damascus and did receive from Him the revelation of the 'mystery' 'kept secret since the world began' – 1Co 15:7 *After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy 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 was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet*

not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

d). The Apostles' purpose then would be the preaching of the gospel and setting in place the foundations – beginning with the crucified Christ – on which the Church is to be built. The very thing we have already seen in - Eph 2:19 *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

e). The very same thing we see in the Book of Acts - Ac 2:42 ¶ *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

f). We would realize then that the Apostles were given to the Church for the specific function of setting in place the foundations upon which the Church is to be built – their message being authenticated by their eye witness experience of Christ's ministry, death and resurrection. The very thing we see recorded in – 2Pe 1:16 ¶ *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 ¶ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;*

g). There are now no more eye witnesses, nor do there need to be. The witness of those who were there is preserved for us in the scriptures and it is now down to us to believe the veracity of their report. Anyone today who has a need to call themselves an 'apostle' clearly is not – Remember what the Lord said to the church of Ephesus in - Re 2:2 *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;*

h). Now Prophets, historically, have a particular association with the nation of Israel, most especially with regards to the nation's coming restoration and the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ - Lu 24:44 *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."*

i). And we have already seen reference made to the ministry of the Prophets with regards to the Church in a scripture we looked at today from 1 Peter – let's read it again - 1Pe 1:10 ¶ *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and*

searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

j). So let's understand something here. The Prophets spoke, and recorded the word that God gave them. They spoke nothing but that which God had given them. And through them came His complete revelation to Man. There is nothing in the NT that cannot be found in the OT. When Jesus comes into the world the first time He is described in - Joh 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,*

k). If God still had something to say beyond that which He had said from Moses to Malachi then His word was incomplete at the time of Christ's first advent and therefore Christ would have had to be born incomplete in the flesh. Either, Christ is complete, the whole word being made flesh, or Christ is incomplete – such a thought is ridiculous.

l). The word prophet literally means a 'foreteller' – one who tells beforehand. And again, everything God requires us to know about 'things to come' He has already said. Every time scripture is used to reveal the fulfillment of God's purpose, 'prophesy' takes place in a literal sense. But the one speaking the scripture is not a prophet.

m). So how would we understand 'prophets' being given to the Church upon the Lord's ascension? Well in the very way we have just seen – through the opening to our understanding of the things they were ministering to us. Things that could not have been revealed apart from the Lord's resurrection and ascension. As everything contained in their writings concerning the whole scope of the 7th Day was contingent upon the Lord's resurrection - 1Co 15:13 *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.*

n). Perhaps we could say it this way – the prophets were given to the nation of Israel and within that which they were given to record were things that went beyond God's exclusive dealings with that nation. Then, because of Christ's resurrection, that which had already been given to Israel was then opened to us and the full scope of what God had said through them came into play.

o). Again, as with the apostle, there are no prophets today – there is nothing more that God has to say about His plans and purposes. And those who would have a need to call themselves by that title clearly demonstrate that they have not heard a word God has said.

p). Evangelists and pastor/teachers are somewhat different though – the word ‘evangelist’ literally means, one who preaches the gospel, the one who declares the good news – and we find two examples of this in the NT – firstly with regards to Philip - Ac 21:8 ¶ *On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.*

q). This is the same Philip we see in - Ac 8:5 *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.*

The same Philip who opened the scripture to the Ethiopian Eunuch – and secondly with regards to Timothy - 2Ti 4:5 *But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

r). In these examples we would see both the gospel of grace and the gospel of the glories of Christ. We would see both Philip and Timothy ‘sent’ with the complete message of the gospel. But being sent does not make them ‘apostles’, because they go to preach that which they have learned through the Apostles’ doctrine. As we would go to California, or Texas or Kenya we could be seen as going as evangelists. And quite clearly because this involves preaching the gospel in its entirety, the evangelist is a ministry for all generations within the Church.

s). The message of the Pastor/Teacher would be much the same as that of the evangelist, with the exclusion of the gospel of grace – but this ministry would be with regards to a particular group of believers on a consistently regular basis within a particular location, although there may be more than one location.

t). The word ‘pastor’ literally is shepherd and it would be the role of the shepherd to tend to a specific flock. This is exactly what we would see at this precise moment. And clearly in every generation within the church the flock needs a shepherd – and this must be seen within the context of the teaching of the word – providing the necessary pasture and the necessary water through which the necessary direction is found to take us from the wilderness to the sheepfold.

u). It would be entirely wrong to see the pastor/teacher as the leader of the church – this is not the way this office is presented in scripture. Pastor/Teacher is an office given to the Church with a view to progress towards spiritual maturity, the oversight and governance of the Church, the leadership role if you will, is entrusted to Elders who are appointed to that task - Tit 1:5 ¶ *For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—*

v). Within our setting here there are four elders and two elders over the church in California, all with equal responsibility and equal accountability. A plurality of eldership is the scriptural model for church governance – Ac 20:17 ¶ *From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.*

w). Now because all elders are intimately involved in the process towards maturity and are a part of the 'church' they would of necessity fall within the remit of the office of Pastor/Teacher – but this denotes a diversity of function, such as we were talking of earlier, not a delineation of importance. I hope that this is something that is clear for us.

5). And as we continue with our scripture we will see that these ministry gifts were given into the Church, following the Lord's resurrection and ascension for specifically stated reasons – reasons to do with the outcome of His resurrection and ascension – Eph 4:11 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

a). The focus here then has to do with the process of proper preparation through spiritual maturity firstly with regards to the saints and the work of ministry.

b). Equipping = Greek – 'katartismos' = from 2675; complete furnishing (objectively):--perfecting.

c). Secondly for the building of the Body of Christ

d). Edifying = Greek – 'oikodome' = feminine (abstract) of a compound of 3624 and the base of 1430; architecture, i.e. (concretely) a structure; figuratively, confirmation:--building, edify(-ication, -ing). [Lit. 'house building']

e). And this work of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher has a specific timeframe – [un]till. And of necessity as we will never reach that place of completeness in this life, this must be with a view to both the whole 2000 year dispensation of the Church and the time we have allotted to our individual race of faith.

f). It would be as recorded in - Col 1:28 *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

g). And this presentation of 'every man perfect' will be at the Judgment Seat where the judgment of our works will show whether our faith has been brought to its completion.

h). At the resurrection/rapture of the Church there will no longer be a need for ministry through apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers.

i). In the same way that there will no longer be a need for the ministry of Christ as our High Priest. In that Day all opportunity to avail ourselves of all these ministries will be over. Common sense would tell us to make full use of all that God has given us while we still have an opportunity to do so. There may not be much time left - Eph 5:15 *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

j). We will continue with these verses next time.