

APOSTLES TODAY?

Eph. 4:11 *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”* I am persuaded that all five divisions of the ministry are still in effect as stated in Eph. 4:11. It is also my opinion that sometimes we tend to overlook the "specificity" of the ministries. We often think of some of the particular offices as being all inclusive and existing everywhere and all-at-once. But consider the pastor, for instance, he fills the office of "Pastor" as a function of the five-fold ministry, however, he is a "pastor" only to a select congregation—and only there does his office have the authority, and execution of said office, in other words, he is not the "pastor" of ALL congregations.

I think this same principle of specificity applies to all the offices of the five-fold ministry. This is why Paul stated in 1Cor. 9:2; *“If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.”* An apostle may not be EVERYONE'S apostle—he may function, in the will of God, as an apostle to a select people, event, place or time. This, I feel, holds true for the prophet also as well as for the evangelist and the teacher.

Probably, in my way of thinking, the one ministry with the widest orb of specificity as pertaining to his calling would be the evangelist—and yet he is not EVERYONE'S evangelist just as the prophet is not everyone's prophet nor the teacher everyone's teacher. They seem to operate in *specific places, times and events to a specific people* as God directs. Paul recognized his "specificity" as to the Gentiles—even though he certainly preached to the Jews also, as we well know—but his FOCUS was to the Gentiles—“by the will of God,” as he himself declares. The other Apostles (these men were unique in that the people, time, place and events were unique) were Christ's Apostles to the Church (to the Jew first). We do not have apostles today in the same "specificity" of the original apostles because we no longer have the SAME people, time, place and events as they were apostles to—BUT we still have apostles TODAY for specific people, places, times and events. We must remember that Paul called Jesus—THE APOSTLE—HE is the single OVERALL Apostle to all people in all places, times and events. Heb. 3:1 *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”*

Stated in house terms, I see: **The Apostle**, as the man who, builds the house. (the man who laid the foundation—set the walls—etc.) [That's why Jesus Christ is Our Apostle—“upon this rock I will build my church...”] **The Pastor**, as the man who, lives in the house and is responsible for it—the caretaker.

The Evangelist, as the man who, at the request of the house caretaker, comes to paint, and clean and make additions to the house. **The Teacher**, as the man who, at the request of the house caretaker, comes to illustrate how certain items work, operate, function in the house (i.e. the AC). And, **The Prophet**, as the man who, comes to inform the caretaker of termites or dry rot in the house, etc. The Apostle is more "government and structure" minded, while the pastor is more "caretaker" minded and the evangelist is more "remodeling" minded, while the teacher is more "to give understanding" minded and the prophet is more "discovery" minded. But they all are "house" (church) minded.

Eph. 4:12, *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”*

Again the "specificity" of the situation—people, time and place is the all important factor in the equation. As we well know a man may function as an evangelist and then fill the office of a pastor or a pastor may, due to the will of God, become an evangelist.

This transformation process also functions in all the five offices of the ministry. However, what "deeds" a man did as a pastor or as an evangelist remain historically in that mode (his pastoral history or evangelist history)—this, again, is true of the apostle and the teacher and the prophet.

We also recognize that of all the offices the titles that men take to themselves freely are those of "Pastor," "Evangelist" and sometimes "teacher." BUT the titles of "apostle" and "prophet" are the two offices that only the other three offices deem to call any man. Those titles are not self-claimed but rather they are deemed as such by others—they are titles given not taken. In other words, those two offices are so honored because they do operate in very special situations. That's why we frown exceedingly on any man that would call himself by the titles "apostle" or "prophet" and, I believe, rightfully so.

The difference in operation of position and operation of person is one wherewith the first is performed in plurality and the latter is operated more in singularity. In other words, by calling oneself a pastor, evangelist and sometimes a teacher is a claim to unison with others in that same calling or position but if one were to call himself a prophet or apostle, he sets himself in a singular position of person. The prophet, unlike that of the pastor, for example, requires a man to stand out in distinctiveness of person—not, like the pastor who standouts in position.

The work of the prophet and apostle therefore are not callings wherewith the men in those positions herald themselves by claiming the titles on themselves—their titles are said not BY themselves but by other members of the ministry ABOUT them because of their works.

If we "cement" any of these offices into permanent occupancy, I think, we have erred. Again, for instance, a man, while pastoring, may fulfill the office of a teacher to another pastor's assembly—he may also even function as an evangelist or..... as a prophet elsewhere—same would hold true for the evangelist or the teacher.

Therefore, the ACTION of some of these offices can be intermittent and brief. It is like a man who is a banker that fixes a water leak for someone—he is more a plumber, for the moment, than he is a banker to the householder.

It is GOD who directs these encounters and it is HE who justifies them also. We don't need necessarily to always be able to NAME the function as much as we need to recognize that they exist and function as HE wills.