

"Apostles Today?" Continued from page 1

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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, in the house (ie. 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.

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Apostles Today?—Elder James Groce

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

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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 principle of specificity applies in all the offices of the five-fold ministry. This is why Paul stated in 1Co 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

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Early Church: Oneness or Trinitarian?—Thomas Weisser

Trinitarians believe the early church was Trinitarian in theology. Their evidence for this theory is very weak.

The main scriptural reference to prove God is three persons is Matt. 28:19. This verse does not say God is three persons. It is primarily dealing with baptism in a name. It is given the title, "Great Commission." In reality it is only one of three commissions given in the Gospels. Luke's record clarifies what the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is. It says, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name [Jesus] among all nations beginning at Jerusalem."

Another document used to prove the early church Trinitarian, is the Didache. This word means the teaching of the twelve. The twelve apostles never saw it, but it is attributed to them. It is possible that most of this writing was produced in the second century. The part that Trinitarians look to to support their theory is Didache 7. In this paragraph baptism is promoted by either immersion or pouring in the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This part contradicts Didache 9 which supports baptism into the name of the Lord. The internal evidence points to a contradiction between Didache 7 and 9. The conclusion of honest scholars is that Didache 7 is an interpolation, or later addition to the original document. The biggest problem with dating Didache 7 in the second century is that baptism by pouring was generally unacceptable until the late third century.

The evolution of Trinitarian theology is a fact of history documented in creedal development. As creeds developed they added to and/or clarified previous creeds. The New Testament has not changed. One of the biggest problems Trinitarians have is that they recognize their doctrine's development over hundreds of years, but then they contradict themselves by saying their belief was embraced by the first century church. Both statements cannot be true. Either it developed over time, or it was there all along. Various ridiculous explanations have been made to explain this incongruity. One of the most hilarious I read was that Peter and Paul believed in the Trinity but kept it secret. We're talking about the most important doctrine in Catholic and Protestant Christianity. Apparently, the first century church didn't think it was important enough to comment on. They did contend for the fact that God (not the eternal son) was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. They did believe that God was manifest in the flesh. They did believe and teach that Jesus Christ was Emmanuel, God with us. I thank God for the New Testament teaching concerning God. The creeds were a product of that which Paul warns against. "Beware lest any man spoil [rob] you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." (Col. 2:8-10)

We Must Be Real—Galen Gregg

There is a short story which I probably had to read in some literary class about a gillion years ago, about a man who was trying to be successful in life. The man was busy all the time. He was constantly in motion. He had a great appearance; he looked as if he were successful. However, he never really and truly accomplished anything at all. He was unable to maintain a relationship—divorced and remarried repeatedly. His business efforts all failed, often for no apparent reason. The author made a real enigma of the scenario in that to all appearances he should have been very successful, happy, and admired . . . , but he was not. At the end of the story a freak accident causes a sharp object to deeply pierce his skin. Everyone is shocked and amazed when the man simply deflates as if he were a balloon. Nothing is left but a thin layer of deflated skin. The “man” was not really a man at all—he was just a thin, empty veneer. He was all appearance and nothing down inside. He was empty, a fake, just a façade, and not real at all.

God, help us to be real and true.

I am disturbed that we may read *Seven Habits of a Successful Man* and *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* or whatever other books are the current rage, and never really become what we need to be for God. I have read these kinds of books and probably will read more of them, but just reading them won't get it. We have to do something with ourselves that makes us more than an empty façade, just a shell of a man with nothing real inside. We must be real. We must be true.

Elijah and John the Baptist didn't look like much, but they were real. Paul despised what was quite a list of credentials so that he could be real—so that he could know Jesus. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. . . . Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. . . . and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him . . . That I may know him . . .* (Phil. 3)

Not long ago I was reading a book about concepts of greatness in men. The author was exploring the idea of heroes—men that are “bigger than life.” He used a term that really caught my attention; he said that one man became what he was because he had spent time “wrestling naked with the truth.” The words leaped out at me. The writer was trying to communicate the idea that this great man was strong and true and real because of inner agony and because he had struggled with his own will and his personal insufficiencies to the place where he came to grips with himself. The idea of “wrestling” communicates struggle—it was not an easy thing. The idea of “naked” means that he put away all efforts at image and public relations—he was just honest.

Once again, in the context of a situation where people failed to appreciate the intellectual and soul-searching struggle of a man for truth, the comment was made that his was “a naked thinking heart, that makes no show.”

Jacob wrestling with the angel is an example of this. He cared for nothing else at that moment but to have God's blessing. He was desperate and open and honest.

Let us be real. Let us be honest. Let there be no façade or pretense. We need to be praying men with real passion for the work of God. We need to be men who care deeply and have great and strong convictions. God forbid that we should be playboy preachers—that what we do is just a job or a way to fame. Let us shun selfishness and scheming to further our own agenda. This world screams for men who are pure and true and real through and through. It is a powerful and necessary thing.

My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure. (Lord Tennyson)

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. (Ezekiel 22:30)

I hope that God would not say this if any one of us were “among them.”

It's The Little Foxes—D. S. Garza

There is a lot of wisdom in the age old adage, “nip it in the bud.” It means to deal with issues before they become big insurmountable problems. Many bad situations could have been avoided if they had been dealt with immediately.

Parents should not hesitate to nip things in the bud. It is far better to deal with a small child who lies, than to try to change a teenager who lies habitually. Little liars become big liars. And liars cannot be saved. If we are not willing to confront the little things—the little foxes that spoil the vine; we will have to confront big things later.

Jesus dealt with little things. In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” If we confront the lust that enters into the heart and mind, we may not have to confront the behavior that is incited by that lust.

Many regard television, America’s most popular babysitter, as a little thing; but television has destroyed many pure and innocent minds. And the internet has done much more harm in a relatively shorter time, and at pandemic levels. It’s a cesspool with no bottom. There is no satisfying what the eye wants to see.

Paul also dealt with little things. In Philippians 4:8, Paul admonishes the church, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.”

We need to make a big deal over the little things. It’s those little foxes that can spoil the things we have worked so hard for. We need to exalt the Word of God and emphasize the importance of its merit in spite of the fact that sinners consider the things we hold dear, insignificant and trivial. If we do not respond and deal with small things, we will be forced to deal with significantly more unpleasant things later.

Eve could have saved her offspring a lot of grief if she had made a big deal over the little things. But she may have reasoned within herself, that it was merely a piece of fruit. That seems to be the problem with so many people today; they do not understand the importance of obedience. Something that seems insignificant to man, may be very significant to God. A little rebellion breeds more rebellion.

David could have avoided so much grief and sorrow if he had dealt with Absalom when he sat at the gate. If he had just nipped it in the bud. If he had just rebuked or threatened his son Absalom while he was scheming his way into the hearts of the people. Because it was at the gate, while the elders of the city listened intently, that Absalom became more emboldened . . . more determined . . . more conniving because of the inaction of David. It’s those little foxes that destroyed the vine.

Apostolic Roman Bishops—William Chalfant

It is ironic that the Roman church today, which has unfortunately declined to the extreme from the teachings of the apostles, was at one time one of the staunchest apostolic churches, and was probably founded by the apostles Peter and Paul.

Many Protestants today resist the idea that Peter was ever in Rome, but the strongest of traditions seems to point to the fact that Peter was indeed active in Rome during his ministry. According to Ignatius, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Jerome, as well as a number of other ancient sources, Peter worked for a while in Antioch and preached to the circumcised in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia. He traveled to Rome as early as AD 42 though it is obvious he returned to Jerusalem from time to time. He had a relationship off and on with the Roman church until his execution in AD 67 in Rome. G. B. Rossi, in his *Bullettino di Archeologia Christiana* (1968), described a representation in the ancient catacombs in Rome of Peter striking a rock, “out of which flow the waters of cleansing through baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.”

The Ebionite apocryphal *Preaching of Peter* (AD 100-110) states that Peter preached and labored in Rome. Irenaeus and Papias say that Mark was Peter’s interpreter in Rome, and that Mark wrote his Gospel at Peter’s dictation about AD 45, which would be about twelve years after our Lord’s death and resurrection.

Eusebius says upon the authority of Gaius of Rome (fl. c. AD 215) and Dionysius of Corinth (fl. AD 170) that Peter visited Rome in the days of the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54), and Peter and Paul were martyred under Nero at the same time (AD 67). Gaius also attests to the Muratorian Fragment (c. AD 180), which gives the New Testament canon of the Roman church and states that “Matthew published a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the church in Rome.” Gaius states that Peter was buried along the *via ostiensis* in Rome.

Clement (d. AD 101) states in his epistle that Peter and Paul founded the church at Rome. Ignatius (d. AD 114), a reputed disciple of Peter, wrote to the Roman church about fifty years after Peter’s martyrdom, “I do not command you as Peter and Paul did” (*Epistle to the Romans*, AD 114). It is difficult to believe that these men wrote public “fabrications” during the lifetime of Christians who were alive when Peter and Paul were executed, for they would have been exposed by those who knew the truth.

What is the significance of the influence of the apostles Peter and Paul upon the Roman church? It is this: the Roman church was probably the last great metropolitan church which held to the Oneness teaching of God Almighty in Christ Jesus, and which continued to baptize in the name of Jesus Christ. There is solid evidence that succeeding bishops of Rome [e.g., Victor (AD 189-198); Zephyrinus (AD 198-217), and Callistus (AD 217-222)] held the Monarchian or Oneness teaching concerning the Godhead. All of them from the time of Soter (AD 166-174) rejected the Montanist teaching of the Holy Spirit as the “third Person” of the Godhead.

The Roman church was probably founded by two famous apostles and remained a bastion of Oneness teaching until the split in the district in AD 217, which was caused by Hippolytus, a trinitarian. After the death of Bishop Callistus, the Roman district fell into trinitarian hands and became the Catholic Church of history. Yes, it is ironic that the greatest bastion of trinitarianism today was once the greatest bastion of apostolic Oneness teaching. But now, they have discarded the “keys” of Peter.