

Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher

by William Mark Bristow

Jesus said, “I will build my church.” Experience and history has shown that any lasting work for God upon this earth will only be through the church, and at the practical level, the local church. (Of course this refers to the congregation and not a building or institution, although buildings and organizations seem necessary (maybe “practical” is a better word here than “necessary”) as a vehicle for men to carry out God’s instruction.

The scriptures declare that God has set forth Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastor’s & Teachers. We would recognize those at large in the body of Christ whose gifts and callings are recognized by scriptural precedents. The above order set forth in Ephesians is the pecking order – and each Office would have within it those below it.

It seems clear. Just as The Nine Gifts may be resident as the Holy Spirit is resident in the Believer – yet not active at all times, these offices or callings may be conferred – but not active in “power” at all times – yet with respect at all times.

The active order of these offices in the local church seems established in 1 Cor 12. Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Evangelists, Pastors. And the working order seems from the bottom up – or that the local churches are built on Pastors, then Evangelists, then Teachers, then Prophets, then Apostles. All these ministries work through and stand on the office of Pastor in the Local Church.

In actual practical government of an area or district the scriptures are a bit unclear (its use of “Bishop” and “Elder” or “Presbyter” sometimes seemingly interchangeably) – but it seems to be that a Bishop was pastor over a number of churches, and that preaching Elders/Pastors led the local congregations assisted by Deacons (who also preached and ministered as the occasion arose). Elders and Pastors lean toward the meeting of spiritual needs while Deacons definitely lean toward the meeting of earthly and physical needs of the congregation.

For governance of the local church it appears that the local Elder or Pastor was the figure of authority, making major decisions by soliciting the wisdom of God – the wisdom of Apostles and Prophets and Evangelists associated with the local work, then with the support and prayer of Elders and Deacons and finally least of all the wishes of the congregation – decisions were reached.

Today we see two types of legal church government in the US, Congregational vote in a shared democratic government (with little scriptural precedent) – or – a local legal Non-Profit Corporation with a Board of Directors who govern – sometimes with the wisdom from a Board or Panel of Advisors. Grace Fellowship, Inc. is such a legal Non-Profit Corporation with a Board of Directors (7 in number) and a Board or Panel of Advisors (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists & Teachers associated with this work). The Pastor is the President of the Board of Directors and rules in the mundane and matters of course. Larger items are brought before the Board of Directors & the Board of Advisors where the Pastor is but 1 vote of the 7. In our case, the one

Board of Directors leads both the Monahans and Odessa congregations and has individuals from **both** congregations serving.

Wanting to be part of the larger whole, Grace Fellowship, Inc. is for many years part of the Full Gospel Fellowship of Churches and Ministries International, Inc. (Christ for the Nations in Dallas – with the late Gordon Lindsay – and the Voice of Healing ministries evolved into this affiliation of independent and inter-denominational churches and ministries with membership in the thousands and around the world.) www.fgfcmi.org I have spoken to you of our congregation – there are literally thousands upon thousands of congregations which follow this “closer to scripture” form of government.

Spiritual Authority in the Church

Eph 4:11, And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: ¹⁶From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

(Each office has within it – those below it.)

Paul called an Apostle – 1 Tim 2:7

A preacher (Evangelist/Pastor)

A Teacher

An Evangelist at Corinth – 1 Cor 9:1

Prophets – also teachers – 1 Cor 13:1

Who is an Apostle?

- 1) ***Does not build on another's foundation: Rom 15: ¹⁷I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. ¹⁸For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, ¹⁹Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: ²¹But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.***

- 2) *Congregations that HE built are the sign of his apostleship: 1 Cor 9:¹Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? ²If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*
- 3) *Signs and wonders are his calling card: 2 Cor 12:12, ¹²Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (Healings and miracles are the calling card of an evangelist. 1 Cor 12:29, Eph 4:11, Acts 8:6-7.)*
- 4) *Approved by Spiritual Leadership: Gal 1:¹⁷Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. ¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. ²⁰Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. ²¹Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; ²²And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: ²³But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. ²⁴And they glorified God in me. (Chapter 2) ¹Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*

What is a New Testament Prophet?

- 1) *Tells the church "What will be" so action can be taken. Acts 11:27, ²⁷And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. ²⁸And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: ³⁰Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*
- 2) *Brings the Mind Will and Purpose of God regarding Leadership and Ministry. Acts 13:1, ¹Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. ³And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*
- 3) *Building up the Body of Christ – with confirmation, preaching and teaching. Acts 15:29, ³²And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. ³³And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. ³⁴Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. ³⁵Paul also and Barnabas*

continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

4) Tells individuals “What will Be” Acts 21:10, ¹⁰And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. ¹¹And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

5) Must acknowledge the Word of God in precedence to what is ministered forth from his own mouth. 1 Cor 14,37 ³⁷If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

I think today we have a clear understanding by example of Evangelist (Billy Graham, Benny Hinn, Rinehard Bonke, etc.) The scriptural example is Philip in Acts Chapter 8.

Just as clear is the office of Pastor (Joel Osteen and John Hagee being shining examples on the mega-church scale – with dozens of shining local church examples.) And I think all of us have lived enough to see men who were not “God-called” who decided Clergy was a lovely profession – practicing Religion of man – whatever the pedigree over the door.

Teacher is also well demonstrated today with the likes of Kenneth Copeland, the late Kenneth E. Hagin, Sr., Joyce Meyer, Marilyn Hickey, etc.

We need not concern ourselves further as these offices are well known.

What are the responsibilities of a Pastor/Evangelist/Teacher in a service?

- 1) 1 Peter 5:2¹The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **2Feed the flock** of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; **3Neither as being lords** over *God’s* heritage, **but being ensamples to the flock.** ⁴And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.
- 2) 1 Thess 5:12, ¹²And we beseech you, brethren, **to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord**, and admonish you; ¹³And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.
- 3) Titus 1:9, ⁹**Holding fast the faithful word** as he hath been taught, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. ¹⁰For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: ¹¹Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. ¹²One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. ¹³This witness is true. **Wherefore rebuke them sharply**, that they may be sound in the faith; ¹⁴Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Wisdom for ministering in another’s pulpit:

- 1) Wait until God opens the door and/or you are invited. (If God really has a message – he will open the door for you – otherwise you have been obedient – it’s up to the one in charge.) I once ministered with Ruth Fisher (a longtime member of Kathryn Kuhlman’s staff) in the congregation of a Franciscan Monk. The rules of conduct being unfamiliar, Ruth handed a portion of the service to me and I was to continue ministering to the sick (in my case with) Words of Knowledge of healing, I felt I received a prophetic word of encouragement. Not knowing my limits, I simply walked over and asked the Franciscan Father if such would be appropriate. He gave me clearance to go ahead – and so I ministered out. Had he asked me to with-hold, I would have done so – and continued to minister in healing as Ruth and her team were invited to do.
- 2) Find out “the rules of the house” and either abide by them – or don’t go.
- 3) Never try to bring correction and rebuke to the leadership. Only an Apostle or a Prophet can rebuke another Apostle or Prophet, etc. (Nowhere in the New Testament do you see roving ministries – going to straighten out other ministries.)
- 4) Intercessors may see it all – and God may move on you to “prove” the leadership in a certain thing – but yours is to pray – not to usurp authority.
- 5) Be careful of anything that brings confusion – God is not the author of Confusion.