

The Kingdom of God The Government of God – Apostles, Part 2

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We have been looking at developing the character of God in the people of God, and the gift of God's government—those gifts are meant to develop our character. One of the reasons that we do not have power today, or are not able to demonstrate power today, is because our characters cannot sustain the demonstrations of power. God will then give us the suitability of character and He will then give us power. Now, that doesn't mean that we have no power, it just means that the greater endowments of power to accomplish the work of Christ will come as our character changes.

The five gifts of government: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—these five gifts were given to equip the saints. We have looked at whether or not there are apostles today, according to the criteria set forth by Peter on the day of Pentecost. And we see that the criteria that he set forth were for the selection of witnesses because the Jewish legal system, in the day of Jesus Christ and the apostles, required the testimony of twelve witnesses. It's where we get, historically, this concept of the jury of twelve. None of the Gentile apostles met either of the criteria and that's because the Gentiles had no such requirements of authentication of witnesses. How then did somebody become an apostle who did not see the Lord in the sense of: did not walk with him from the days of the baptism by John or was not a witness of His resurrection. How did he become an apostle?

Well, Paul is a perfect example for us to look at. If we will begin this study with a look at the book of **Acts** the **13th chapter** we'll begin to have an insight into this matter. Let me ask you this question. When did Paul become an apostle? That would be a helpful place for us to begin. I want to show you Paul fourteen years after the road to Damascus, the experience he had on the road to Damascus, and you will see that he is not yet an apostle. **Verse 1 of Acts 13** says, "In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers." I'd like for you to look at that in your Bible, because it's as plain as it might be stated. "In the church that was at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, that's two, Lucius of Cyrene, that's three, and Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), that's four, and Saul, that's the one we'll know as Paul. So, in the list of the five mentioned the last one is Saul the first was Barnabas and they were called prophets and teachers. (Inserted – actual verse—**“In the church at**

Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.” – **Acts 13:1**) They were not called apostles. And I will tell you this—you may not have known it before but now you will—there is no reference to Paul as an apostle up to this time. Yet the road to Damascus was—we encountered that reference in **Acts 9**—so four chapters before, and chronologically fourteen years before this. Now, why is Paul still being referred to at this point as either a prophet or a teacher? He, himself, would say that he was a teacher. Why? Because he was not yet an apostle.

Now, this is when he became an apostle: **"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."** Now, they were at Antioch and they sent them off, **"The two of them,"** that's Paul and Barnabas, **"sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues."** (Inserted – **Acts 13: 2-5a**) Until this time, they are sent on their way by the Holy Spirit; until this time they are referred to—both Paul and Barnabas are referred to—as among the prophets and teachers but *here* is the first reference to Paul as an apostle.

This is **Acts 14:4**, **"The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles."** Now, the only two people who were here, who would qualify as apostles, were Barnabas and Saul. But in case you say, “Well, some of the other apostles got in there.” No question that that's not true, but here it is, the “nail in the coffin”, as it were: **verse 14** of **Acts 14** and I warn you this was always in your Bible. **"But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes."** (Inserted – **Acts 14:14a**) There it is. Who are the apostles referred to in **verse 4**? They are named in **verse 14**, "When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this they tore their clothes." This is the first direct reference to Paul as an apostle in all of the New Testament.

Now, how did he become an apostle then? If he started out on the road to Damascus and fourteen years later in Antioch he's still being referred to as a teacher, when did he become an apostle? Well, first, he would later say there was a grace given to him from his mother's womb to preach the good news to the Gentiles. (Inserted – actual verse —**"But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,"** – **Galatians 1:15,16**) His calling was that of preaching the good news to the Gentiles and we will see, further on in this series, we will see that he had a second or an ancillary portion to his calling and that is that he was also called to suffer. (Inserted – actual verse—**"But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'"** – **Acts 9:**

15,16) The gifting that he had in which to pursue this calling to suffer, and to preach the good news to the Gentiles, the gift was that of an apostle. So we have gifts and callings. Your calling is your destiny. Your gift is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that supports your calling. That's simple enough and plain enough.

Paul began by being called from his mother's womb to a destiny that required an anointing or empowerment of apostleship. Now he had been functioning for many years teaching the good news. We know, for example, that after Barnabas found him in Tarsus and brought him back to Antioch that, according to **Acts 12**, they continued for a whole year in Antioch. That's where they were while they were fasting and praying when the Holy Spirit spoke. So the first thing that happened was to initiate the bringing forth of this anointing of apostleship that he would fulfill the destiny of going to the Gentiles. The first thing that happened, the first initiation, was that the Holy Spirit spoke. Now how would the Holy Spirit speak? Well, it says plainly, "In the church that was at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers."

If there are some prophets around, it's a dead ringer that God is going to say something. By the way, you will note that there were prophets still in existence at this time. The prophets did not end with John the Baptist. In Antioch, among these five, were some who were prophets. We will later see that Silas, in **Acts 15:32**, the Scriptures will say, "And Silas who himself was a prophet." (Inserted – actual verse—"**Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.**" – **Acts 15:32**) So, there are prophets in the New Testament that are decades after John had been executed. So the idea that the last of the prophets was John, that's unbiblical, that's foolishness. Biblically, it says otherwise. Prophets were present in the church in Antioch, plainly stated in **Acts 13:1** and the prophets spoke. So the first thing that we note is that there was a prophetic utterance. The Holy Spirit declared who Paul and Barnabas were. They had been doing something else, but the time had come for them to do the thing that they were put here to do. The way that the Holy Spirit was going to work through them was as apostles—their being apostles—and He was going to work through them. The Holy Spirit spoke and said, "Separate them." They were local, now they are going to be trans-local.

That tells us something about the work of an apostle. The work of an apostle is trans-local. It's done from one place to another to another. An apostle only in his early days becomes resident within the place. By definition, an apostolic ministry is mobile. It requires you to move around. The government of the church, locally, is by elders. The government of the church trans-locally is apostolic, by apostles. The Holy Spirit spoke and said, "Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." and the two of them were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit and they went off to do the work.

Now, here is another apostle in the New Testament. I want to show it to you. This is from

I Thessalonians, chapter 1. I Thessalonians 1:1 says **"Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ."** So, who are the writers to the Thessalonians? Paul, Silas and Timothy. So when the Scriptures say **"We always thank God for all of you"** which is **verse 2**, who are the ones speaking? Paul, Silas and Timothy. So **chapter 2, verse 6**, they say, **"We were not looking for praise from men"** who are the **"we"**? Paul, Silas and Timothy, **"Not from you or from anyone else."** (Inserted – actual verse—**"We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children."** – **I Thessalonians 2:6,7**)

"As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you." who are the **"we"**? Paul, Silas and Timothy. Here are three other apostles. So the question is, how did Timothy get to be an apostle? Well, first you see the commissioning of Timothy in the **16th chapter** of the book of **Acts**, and here it is. In **Acts 16:1-5** it says, **"He,"** meaning Paul after the breakup with Barnabas, **"He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."**

So Paul replaces Barnabas with Timothy and Silas. Now he writes to Timothy to tell him about Timothy's own gift. And we know Timothy is an apostle because we just read it in **I Thessalonians**, where he said, **"As apostles of Christ we..."**—Paul, Silas and Timothy. Now, Paul writes to Timothy and he says in **II Timothy, chapter 1** at **verse 6**, **"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."** Now we saw the place where he laid hands on Timothy, but there were some others who laid hands on Timothy as well, and they were some elders. He says in the first book of **Timothy**, the first letter that he wrote to Timothy, that he wrote to him to fan into flames the gift of God, which was confirmed upon him by the laying on of Paul's hands and a prophetic utterance when the body of elders laid hands on him as well. (Inserted – actual verse—**"Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you."** – **I Timothy 4:14**)

Now, the point being: that this young apostle first—the first criterion is that he is doing the work. In Lystra and in Derbe Timothy is doing the work. Just like Paul, who for a whole year in Antioch with Barnabas, did the work. The test that one is an apostle is that, well before they are identified as an apostle, that they are doing the work. The question will be, **"What is the work?"** We will come to that in a minute. They are doing the work

of an apostle. The second criterion is that there is a prophetic utterance. That is that the Holy Spirit speaks and identifies who the person is. And the third criterion is that there is the laying on of hands confirming: a) that the person is known to be doing the work and b) that the Holy Spirit has spoken. The same things that happened with Paul for his emergence as an apostle were exactly the same steps that occurred with Timothy when he emerged as an apostle.

So, there you have it. How does someone today become an apostle? Number one: they are doing the work. We do not have anything to give to anyone. If the Holy Spirit hasn't given it to you, you don't have it. And the test that you are able, that you "are" this thing in the kingdom, is that you are doing the work. That's a fact. If you are not doing the work, then you are not the thing that is spoken, and you are that which you are doing. Long before you know what you are, you will have been doing it. If people want to know what is their calling look at, and understand what it is that they have been doing because you do it inherently. You respond to who God made you to be even when you don't know it.

So, Paul was doing the work of an apostle, Timothy was doing the work of an apostle, then the Holy Spirit confirmed that they were, and their time had come to be known, selected and set apart for that work because the work is trans-local. Those who have known their work are the ones who are qualified to confirm that they are capable. So an apostle confirmed Timothy because Paul knew what it was like to be an apostle. No apostle apparently confirmed Paul because, until that point, he was the first of the Gentiles to be so recognized. But once there are apostles, the indications in Scripture are that at least an apostle participates in the recognition of another apostle. That is for a good reason. In the kingdom, no one ought to have to make his own way.

If you have authority in the kingdom, you have authority for the blessing and the benefit of others. If you appoint yourself as an apostle or if someone who is not, himself, an apostle appoints you, then you both will find yourselves in the place of always having to justify your being called that thing. Whereas if someone who is an apostle identifies you, then as Paul was able to do to Timothy, he was able to say, "I write to you to fan into flames the gift of God that is in you by the laying on of my hand." In other words, "I confirm that you are an apostle and I know what it is to be an apostle because I am one." No one in the kingdom ought ever to have to justify his or her existence. Somebody else should confirm, by the laying on of hands, who you are. And that's how Paul became an apostle. That's how Timothy became an apostle. With the only exception that I noted—that Paul himself was the first of the class therefore, it was impossible for another to confirm him.

What then is the work of an apostle? What distinguishes the work of an apostle? How does this work of an apostle equip you? Well an apostle is meant to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. That means that God shows them what the kingdom

is like. And because they are endowed with the understanding of the kingdom, they are able to explain the kingdom to others. That's one of the three things that an apostle is. Secondly, they are able to bring order to the relationships of people in the kingdom. For example, an apostle will come in. If there are no believers an apostle will come to a city and, if there are no believers, that apostle will do the work of an evangelist. Why? Because that is how you get believers. People who are not saved become saved. But once there are people who are saved then the apostle begins to instruct and teach the things of the kingdom.

Jesus sent out the original twelve to make disciples. And that's what the apostles do. When the apostles have done that to a certain extent—that now there is a body of believers and some leaders have emerged among the body of believers—then the responsibility of the apostles is to appoint the elders. In **Acts 14:23** it speaks of how Paul and Barnabas go back through the towns and villages to which they had gone, appointing for them elders in all the cities and confirming the saints. (Inserted-actual verse—**"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."** – **Acts 14:23**) Paul writes to Titus and to Timothy in **I Timothy** and in the book of **Titus** and he specifically says to Timothy, he specifically gives to Timothy the criteria for the appointment of elders. (**I Timothy 3:1**)

If any man desires the office of a bishop, he says, he desires a good work and he gives him the criteria. (Inserted – actual verse—**"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."** – **I Timothy 3: 1-7**)

And then he says to Titus (**Titus 1:5**) "for this reason I left you in Crete to set in order the things that were lacking and to appoint elders in every city." (Inserted – actual verse —**"The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."** – **Titus 1:5**) So the work of the apostle is to teach people how to have orderly relationships, righteous relationships, and as the church matures, the body matures, and leaders emerge to appoint elders. When the apostle comes in, one of the main works of the apostle entering a city—entering a country—is to demonstrate works of power. One of the reasons why the people in the church today do not believe that they are capable of exercising power is because the gift that was given to teach us that we can exercise the power of Christ, has

largely been banned from the church. It is the apostles to whom the gift of the demonstration of power comes. So if you receive an apostle today, you receive the equipping of order in your relationships, demonstrations of power and the understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Vital characteristic traits—vital for the development of your character in respect to hope, in respect to confidence, in respect to maturity, in respect to faith. These are vital.

What are the other gifts of the Spirit and how do they work? What about the gifts of prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers? How do they equip the saints for the work of the ministry? Well, we will need more time in which to explore that, so I hope you will join me as in subsequent messages we discuss the role and function of prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers and understand how the character of God's people is developed by these five gifts and why they are necessary for the equipping of the saints.

I'm Sam Soleyn. God bless you. I'll see you again.

Scripture References:

Acts 13: 1-5a

Acts 14: 4

Acts 14: 14a

Galatians 1: 15,16

Acts 9: 15,16

Acts 15: 32

I Thessalonians 1: 1

I Thessalonians 1: 2

I Thessalonians 2: 6,7

Acts 16: 1-5

II Timothy 1: 6

I Timothy 4: 14

I Timothy 3: 1-7

Titus 1: 5