

Divine Gifts

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Introduction

In this lesson, we focus upon God's grace and gifts, as discussed in Ephesians 4:7-13. The chapter begins with Paul's exhortation, "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." Disciples should diligently "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." To achieve this goal, we should manifest a proper attitude toward one another (vs. 1-3), and faithfully adhere to the Biblical pattern (vs. 4-6). Furthermore, believers must appropriate God's grace and gifts: those who walk in a worthy manner are redeemed by the blood of Christ Jesus, and are guided by the offices of revelation, oversight and instruction.

Ephesians 4:7-13 (NASB95) — 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

The Redemptive Work of Christ Jesus

The grace of God is seen in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:7-10). "He descended" points to his death and burial; "He ascended" refers to His resurrection and ascension. Through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, the Lord led captivity captive, gave gifts unto men, and now fills all things. This is the essence of the gospel, the good news of salvation (1 Cor. 15:1-8). Through obedience to the gospel we find forgiveness of sins and enjoy the hope of heaven (Rom. 6:3-4; Heb. 5:8-10).

Ephesians 4:7-10 (NASB95) — 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NASB95) — 1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which

also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Romans 6:3-4 ... 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (NASB95)

Hebrews 5:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

He Died

Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29-34). Christ suffered for us, leaving an example that we should follow in His steps. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds we are healed (1 Pet. 2:21-25).

John 1:29-34 (NASB95) — 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 “This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ 31 “I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” 32 John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ 34 “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

1 Peter 2:21-25 (NASB95) — 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

He Arose

After being buried in a rich man's tomb, Jesus Christ arose the third day, according to the Scriptures. This was the ultimate demonstration of His power and authority (John 2:18-22). He presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to the disciples over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Afterwards, Jesus ascended to the Father, where He now sits at the right hand of glory (Acts 2:22-36).

John 2:18-22 (NASB95) — 18 The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?” 19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” 20 The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Acts 1:3 (NASB95) — 3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Acts 2:22-36 (NASB95) — 22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25 “For David says of Him, ‘I saw the Lord always in my presence; For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. 26 ‘Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will live in hope; 27 Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 28 ‘You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.’ 29 “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” ’ 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

He Gave Gifts

Through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, Christ gave gifts unto men. Generally, these gifts include the forgiveness of sins, hope of heaven, and a shared relationship with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and fellow Christians (2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:7). Contextually, these gifts involve divinely appointed offices in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:15 (NASB95) — 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Ephesians 3:7 (NASB95) — 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

The Offices of Revelation, Oversight & Instruction

The grace of God is seen in the offices of revelation, oversight and instruction that God placed within the church (Eph. 4:11-13).

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NASB95) — 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Apostles

He gave some as apostles. The Greek word *apostolos* refers to “a messenger, one sent on a mission, an apostle” [Thomas 652]. BDAG defines it as “God’s messenger, envoy.”

Function

Apostles served as divinely appointed agents of revelation (Eph. 3:1-5; Gal. 1:11-12).

Ephesians 3:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

Galatians 1:11-12 (NASB95) — 11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Authenticity

In contrast with frauds and pretenders (2 Cor. 11:12-15; Rev. 2:2-3), the New Testament speaks of those who were true apostles (2 Cor. 12:11-13). They offered eye-witness testimony of what they had seen and heard (Acts 1:15-26; 1 Cor. 9:1).

2 Corinthians 11:12-15 (NASB95) — 12 But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

Revelation 2:2-3 (NASB95) — 2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.

Acts 1:15-26 (NASB95) — 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, 16 “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 “For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.” 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it’; and, ‘Let another man take his office.’ 21 “Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” 23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

1 Corinthians 9:1 (NASB95) — 1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

Call

Those who served as apostles were called directly by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:18-22; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1-2; 15:7-8; Gal. 1:1-2, 11-12).

Matthew 4:18-22 (NASB95) — 18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net

into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

Romans 1:1 (NASB95) — 1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

1 Corinthians 1:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

1 Corinthians 15:7-8 (NASB95) — 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Galatians 1:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

Galatians 1:11-12 (NASB95) — 11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Prophets

He gave some as prophets. The Greek word *prophētēs* identifies “a prophet (an interpreter or forth-teller of the divine will)” [Thomas 4396]. BDAG define it as “a person inspired to proclaim or reveal divine will or purpose, prophet.”

Function

Prophets also served as divinely chosen agents of revelation (2 Sam. 24:11-14; Hag. 1:1-6).

2 Samuel 24:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 When David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 "Go and speak to David, 'Thus the Lord says, "I am offering you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you." ' " 13 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider and see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me." 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the Lord for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

Haggai 1:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of

Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘This people says, “The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.” ’ ” 3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?” 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, “Consider your ways! 6 “You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.”

Authenticity

The authenticity of a prophet came from their divine call and their faithful adherence to heaven’s message (Exod. 4:13-17). True prophets spoke by divine direction, and their message was consistent with others who served in the same capacity. In contrast, false prophets follow their own spirit, speak from their own inspiration, but in reality they have seen nothing (Ezek. 13:1-7). Furthermore, their teaching contradicts divinely revealed truth (1 Kings 13:11-19; 1 John 4:1-6).

Exodus 4:13-17 (NASB95) — 13 But he said, “Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will.” 14 Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses, and He said, “Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 “You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. 16 “Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him. 17 “You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”

Ezekiel 13:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, ‘Listen to the word of the Lord! 3 ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing. 4 “O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins. 5 “You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the Lord. 6 “They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, ‘The Lord declares,’ when the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word. 7 “Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The Lord declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?’ ” ’ ”

1 Kings 13:11-19 (NASB95) — 11 Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father. 12 Their father said to them, “Which way did he go?” Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. 13 Then he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it. 14 So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” And he said, “I am.” 15 Then he said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.” 16 He said, “I cannot return with you, nor go

with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. 17 “For a command came to me by the word of the Lord, ‘You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.’ ” 18 He said to him, “I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’ ” But he lied to him. 19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.

1 John 4:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Call

Biblical prophets were called directly by God (Deut. 18:15-19; Jer. 7:25-26).

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (NASB95) — 15 “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 “This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’ 17 “The Lord said to me, ‘They have spoken well. 18 ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 ‘It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

Jeremiah 7:25-26 (NASB95) — 25 “Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. 26 “Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers.

Evangelists

He gave some as evangelists. The Greek word *euaggelistēs* refers to “an evangelist, a bringer of good news” [Thomas 2099]. BDAG define it as a “proclaimer of the gospel, evangelist.”

Function

Evangelists serve as agents of proclamation. Their duty is to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:1-2; Col. 4:2-4).

2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Colossians 4:2-4 (NASB95) — 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Authenticity

Their authenticity comes from their fidelity to the Word of God (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:3-5).

Acts 20:24 (NASB95) — 24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 (NASB95) — 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Call

The call of an evangelist/teacher comes from within rather than without. Such individuals are subject to a direct divine summons, but act out of conviction and a sense of duty (Acts 8:1-4; 1 Thess. 1:6-10).

Acts 8:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 (NASB95) — 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Pastors

He gave some as pastors. The Greek word *poimēn* is used of “a shepherd” [Thomas 4166]. BDAG define it as “(1) one who herds sheep, shepherd, sheep-herder; (2) one who serves as guardian or leader, shepherd, fig. ext. of 1.”

Function

Pastors serve as agents of oversight in a local congregation. As Paul and Barnabas revisited the churches they had previously established, “they had appointed elders for them in every church” (Acts 14:23). Speaking to the Ephesian elders, the inspired apostle said, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:17, 28-32). Peter offered similar exhortations to elders of local churches (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Acts 14:23 (NASB95) — 23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:17 (NASB95) — 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28-32 (NASB95) — 28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 32 “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

1 Peter 5:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Authenticity

The authenticity of an elder/bishop/pastor involves their qualifications, which are discussed below, and commitment to serving the flock (Jer. 3:15-16; 23:1-4).

Jeremiah 3:15-16 (NASB95) — 15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. 16 “It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares the Lord, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again.

Jeremiah 23:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the Lord. 2 Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the Lord. 3 “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. 4 “I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord.

Call

Elders must meet the qualifications set forth in the New Testament (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). This call also involves a desire to serve: “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 (NASB95) — 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6 namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Teachers

He gave some as teachers. The Greek word *didaskalos* suggests “an instructor” [Thomas 1320] or “teacher” [BDAG].

Function

Teachers serve as agents of instruction, guiding their audience in the word and ways of God (1 Tim. 2:3-8).

1 Timothy 2:3-8 (NASB95) — 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

Authenticity

Like evangelists, their authenticity is reflected in their adherence to truth and rejection of error (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

1 Peter 4:11 (NASB95) — 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Call

Like evangelists, teachers must be diligent to present themselves approved to God as workmen who have no need to be ashamed, but rather those who accurately handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:14-18).

2 Timothy 2:14-18 (NASB95) — 14 Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

Conclusion

Speaking of miraculous spiritual gifts, Paul said, “God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (NASB95) — 27 Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

The age of miracles was of limited duration, lasting until the truth of the gospel was fully revealed (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NASB95) — 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

As possessors of the perfect law of liberty (James 1:21-25), and recipients of “the faith” once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), we now enjoy the abiding gifts of revelation, oversight and instruction (Eph. 4:7-11). Thanks be to God for His wonderful provision!

James 1:21-25 (NASB95) — 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Jude 3 (NASB95) — 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Ephesians 4:7-11 ... 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.” 9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (NASB95)