

Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ (Quality: Good)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 1900

Preacher: Howard, Kenneth (1921-1992)

- [0 : 00] The first epistle of Peter, chapter 1 at verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.
- Who wrote this epistle? Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. This morning we looked simply and briefly at Peter, the man, this very human fallen character whom God took up and used to write this particular part of his holy word.
- We found, I think, it remarkable and also heartening and encouraging that God should so take and so use such a man. Because if he does it with one, he does it with whosoever he wills.
- And we found also a paradox that on the one hand Peter nails his colors to the mast and on the other hand he effaces himself in the message of his epistle.
- And from it we deduce the fact that there is no necessary contradiction between public Christian commitment and a self-effacing service to the glory of Christ.
- [1 : 30] Well, now, there is another aspect to this matter. Still asking this question, who wrote this epistle? We considered this morning Peter the man.
- But Peter was not only a man. Peter was an apostle. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Here is his office, his status, his official divinely appointed position.
- Peter the man, that's something that puts him in common with us. But Peter the apostle is something which in a sense separates and segregates and differs from us.
- So we must raise this afternoon this question. What is an apostle? That isn't a hypothetical question.
- It isn't a theoretical question. It isn't an abstract question. And it isn't an irrelevant question. There is a great deal of misunderstanding.
- [2 : 42] Misunderstanding which isn't academic. Misunderstanding which is responsible for more problems and more issues and more difficulties in modern Christendom than most people would admit.
- This is attributable to the fact that Christians and Christian churches do not understand the New Testament doctrine of an apostle.
- Peter. An apostle of Jesus Christ. What then is an apostle?
- Well, first of all, in answer to that question, I would say this. The title, the office, is unique, special, particular, temporal, and limited.
- Various names are given to the people of God on the pages of the New Testament. They're called servants, disciples, followers, Christians, apostles.
- [3 : 57] And in the names of many people, all these various designations amount to one and the same thing. If a man's a disciple, he's a Christian. If he's a Christian, he's an apostle. If he's an apostle, he's a servant.
- If he's a servant, he's a follower. Well, that is right with one disciple except Christian, follower, disciple, servant.

Yes, they are terms which the New Testament uses interchangeably of the Lord's people. But apostle? No.

This is separate. This is different. This is distinct. This is a special title. All the apostles were disciples. But not all the disciples were apostles.

Either then or now. This, you see, is perfectly clear from that passage that we read together in Matthew chapter 10, the first two verses, which gives us the account of the calling and the appointment of the apostles.

[5 : 09] When he, Jesus, had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Notice. Now, the names of the twelve apostles, when he called them, they were disciples. When he called them to him, they were disciples. When he sent them from him out, commissioned and empowered, they were apostles.

There were many disciples. Of the many disciples, he took twelve and he named them and he called them apostles and he gave them peculiar and special qualifications and powers and duties.

If you look at Luke's account of the same thing, the sending out of the twelve apostles, you find that Luke makes it still plainer.

Luke chapter 6 and verse 13. Where Luke says, When it was day, he, that is Jesus, called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles, Simon, Andrew, Peter, so on.

[6 : 39] There were a large number of disciples. There were only ever a small number of apostles. What is an apostle?

Though I say first of all, in answer to that, an apostle is the holder, not of an ordinary, but of an extraordinary office in the Christian church.

If you want it, in dictionary definition term, the word apostle, apostolo, means I send. Apostolos, in the Greek, is one sent.

And this term, apostolos, is used in the New Testament in a strictly technical way of these twelve men, whose number, yes, was somewhat altered later on, but of these men who were sent forth, specially separated from all the others.

The Lord had many disciples, many followers, many believers, many Christians, many who knew him and loved him. But out of that vast number, there was a small number, and a small number only, who bore the name, or carried the office, of apostle.

[8 : 02] So then, when we read Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, we must begin by remembering that this office was special, peculiar, extraordinary.

What is an apostle? There is a second answer to be given to that question from the New Testament, and that is in terms of the qualifications of an apostle.

Or, if you like, the outward visible distinguishing marks and signs. If you like, what's the difference between an apostle and those who are not apostles?

Things not found in ordinary Christians, ordinary disciples, ordinary believers. What are the distinguishing marks of an apostle? How can you tell an apostle of Jesus Christ, such as Peter was?

Well, you would look for certain things which are sent down in the New Testament. And the first thing is this, an apostle had to be called as an apostle by the Lord Jesus Christ in person.

[9 : 23] No one else could appoint. That is clearly implied in the term apostle. One sent. He couldn't appoint himself.

Others could not appoint him. It is implied by our Lord in Matthew 10 and in verse 40 where later on in this same account of his sending out of the apostles he says he that receiveth you receiveth me.

In other words, the apostles could to a certain degree and a certain extent in place of the Lord himself. He that receiveth you receiveth me.

It was a way of the Lord's putting his imprimatur, his authority upon the words and works of his apostles.

An apostle first bore the distinguishing mark of being sent by the Son of God. Second, another distinguishing mark of an apostle is that he had to be an actual witness of the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 48] He had to have seen the risen Lord in the flesh. Now, that is clear from the appointment of Matthias of which we read in Acts chapter 1 and verse 21.

We read Peter saying of these men which have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John and to the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

It was a qualifying mark of an apostle that he had seen the Lord in his written body. Only such witnesses of the resurrection were eligible.

Then, of course, you find this confirmed. The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 9.1 Paul's apostleship, of course, was so often challenged by the Corinthians.

What does he say? Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord? He shows his qualifications.

[12 : 11] His certificate of appointment, if you like. He is an apostle. And then, what does the apostle John say? When he begins his epistle, his first epistle in the first chapter, and the opening verses, concerning the subject matter of the epistle, he says, that which was from the beginning, which we we, we, himself as an apostle, and his fellow apostles, which we have heard, and which we have seen, with our eyes, and we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, that which we have seen, and heard, declare we unto you.

qualification of an apostle, first, sent by the Lord, second, he was a witness of the modular resurrection period.

Distinguishing marks of an apostle, I'll give you a third. An apostle had to be given power and authority to work miracles.

this, of course, was the way in which they were commissioned. As we read in Matthew 10, verse 1, he called unto him the twelve, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

You read again in verse 8, he has their permission, these twelve, heal the sheep, tends the leper, raise the dead, cast out the devil. They are given the ability to do so, and then they are charged and commanded to exercise these miraculous powers.

[14 : 08] Once again, when Paul was called upon to defend his apostleship, one thing he did in order to prove his apostleship was to appeal to the fact that he had wrought miracles in the Lord's name.

2 Corinthians 12, verse 12, he says, truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, mighty deeds.

So Paul was the apostle who evangelized the Corinthians. So he's speaking of himself. A qualification of an apostle was such that he had this ability to work miracles, whether it was healing or casting out devils or raising the dead.

The signs of an apostle are sent by the Lord, seen the risen Lord, empowered to work miracles in the Lord's name.

signs of an apostle. And here's another, here's another qualification of an apostle. An apostle was one invested with the ability to bestow spiritual gifts, including the supremest of all spiritual gifts, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 37] there are many passages that are relevant to this, and it is a subject all by itself, which I cannot go into, but I simply cite the most obvious case out of Acts chapter 8, verse 14.

When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, then laid they, that is Peter and John, their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

And when Simon, that is Simon Magus, Simon the sorcerer, when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hand the Holy Ghost was given, he offered money, he wanted to be able to do the same, he wasn't an apostle, but he wanted up apostolic power.

The office of apostle was, I say, extraordinary and exceptional, and it had this very exceptional and unusual ability to bestow spiritual gifts on Christian people.

What are the distinguishing marks of an apostle? Well, there's another. Let me give you still another. it was the prerogative of the apostles to teach and to pronounce and to define Christian truth and Christian doctrine and Christian ethics in an authoritative manner.

[17 : 28] In other words, the apostles actually possessed what the bishop of Rome claims to possess, infallibility, inerrance, the definition of what is Christian truth and what isn't, the definition of what is the Christian behavior and what isn't Christian behavior.

what is an apostle? How do I know, how do I identify an apostle of Jesus Christ?

How do I know the authentic from the counterfeit, the real, from the false? well, I've got to look for each and all of these New Testament distinguishing marks.

These are the qualifications. These are the New Testament distinguishing marks of an apostle. I am not to look for one of them nor two. I am not to look for any particular combination.

I am to look for all. All. Through the centuries, God has granted, through numerous of his people, one or another, it may be, of these marks of apostolic authority in measure.

[18 : 55] In measure. Men of unusual ability and power in the service of God. Not losers, wicked. I say God has given a measure of one or another apostolic gift.

But never since the days of the apostles in the first century has God given to any one man all these distinguishing marks.

ministry. So you see, an apostle is a very unique, a very extraordinary officer in the Christian church.

Let me repeat this, it is so vital. What are the signs of an apostle? They are that he was personally sent out as such by the Lord, that he was himself a witness of the Lord's resurrection, a bodily resurrection, they are that he wrought miracles and he had the power to work miracles in the Lord's name, that he had the ability to bestow spiritual gifts, including the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that he actually engaged in the definition and the writing of Christian God.

Now my friends, all these things were found in the man who wrote this epistle, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

[20 : 41] An apostle is a member of a unique, special, limited company. Appointed by the Lord, he saw the Lord, he wrought miracles, as Peter did with the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, Peter wrought the miracles.

Or when he raised the dead, yes, Peter raised the dead, Tabitha, Joppa. He exercised this exceptional authority, and the book of Acts is constantly recording this exceptional apostolic power.

no reading of the book of the Acts of the Apostles and the history of the early church can fail to highlight the unique, the elevated office of the Apostles.

Some men loved them, some men hated them, some men honored them, some men vilified them, but one thing people could not do with the Apostles is to ignore them. they had to be taken account of.

No one dared ignore them. And according to the record in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, Christ, the great head of the church, mightily use them. And, my friends, when you move out of the apostolic age, and you read the history of the Christian church, after the end of the first century, what you find is a difference which is colossal.

[22 : 20] The Apostles are conspicuous by their absence. You move into the second century and you come into a gray and a shadowy area.

There were good men, there were godly men, there were faithful men. But the Apostles are conspicuous by their absence. But even so, one thing is very remarkable and very notable.

In the second and the third centuries of this Christian era, and that is this, that when the early church came to decide which of the masses of religious writings with which their day abounded were Holy Scripture and which were not, the Holy Spirit led them to this test, that if a document, a manuscript, could be traced back to an apostle, or to direct and immediate apostolic influence, such as the influence Peter had on John Mark, or Paul had on Luke, only if a document could be traced to immediate apostolic influence, was it to be reckoned part of the New Testament.

only on those grounds could it be included in the canon of Scripture. So I repeat, the apostles, never to be compared in terms of authority or office or status with their Lord and head, they were unique.

They were extraordinary and wonderful men. They were in fact a special gift to the church in its formative age and period.

[24 : 12] Other gifted men were called to become disciples, believers. Others were called to hold distinguished offices, such as elders, or deacons, or pastors, or teachers, or evangelists, or prophets.

But in that crucial formative age of the church, towering about everyone and everything else in terms of authority of office, there was this small company, subject and subordinate only to the Lord himself, the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ and among them.

There was this man who wrote this epistle, Peter. an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now then I come to the point at which I say, well now, what are the implications of all this for us?

What is the object of going into this? What is the object of defining this matter of apostleship, this New Testament doctrine of the apostles? It isn't much use defining this if we don't apply it.

It isn't much use establishing principles from the word of God if we don't apply them, either to ourselves or to whatever it is they fit.

[25 : 39] The word of God is relevant to any day and any other. people to pieces.

I'm here to proclaim the truth, but there are two ways of proclaiming the truth. things. One is to set it forth in its own way. The other is to point out the error and show why the error is error.

There are two sides, the negative and the positive, always in Christian preaching and Christian teaching. Of course, the great psychological approach today is to say never be negative, never find fault with anything.

Smuggle it all over in the realm of religion with the ecumenical umbrella. Pretend there's no difference between it. Now, I say, in the interests of truth, in the interests of fact, let us apply this New Testament doctrine of the Apostles.

I could apply it to many things, but there are two that are relevant. First of all, this New Testament doctrine of the Apostles shows us to begin with, that there is no such thing as apostolic succession in terms of office in the Christian church.

[27 : 00] No such thing as apostolic succession. You are aware, I take it, that the Orthodox churches, the Roman churches, and the Anglican churches all have what they call difference, diocesan difference.

And you know, I assume, that they hold, it may be in slightly different ways, but it all goes back to the same root theory, that the office of apostle is continued in the church in the shape of a diocesan bishop.

The idea, the theory, the teaching, is that the apostles of the New Testament church appointed successors to themselves, and handed on the unique authority that they possessed to their successors.

And so it's gone on throughout history, from one generation to another, that the bishops have been and are the successors in office of the apostles appointed by the Lord.

to them. And this is what is called the principle of apostolic success. Now, this being the case, in those circles where this theory is held, whether the Orthodox, the Roman, or the Anglican, the gift of the Holy Spirit can be conferred in confirmation only by a bishop.

[28 : 32] Because a bishop has inherited the apostle's ability, to bestow the Spirit. Or again, since the apostles went round the various cities ordaining elders, that is, ministers, in charge of churches, only a bishop, has the power of ordination to the Christian ministers.

Because he has inherited, he has succeeded to the power and the authority of the apostles. Now, there are variations, of course, in this idea of apostolic succession, as it has developed over the centuries.

There may be people in any one or other branches of the church that hold it, who say, well, I do or I don't believe these particular things. But the basic thing is that it is there and that it is the authority of the apostle, which is regarded as a special grace of office, that flows on some supposed principle of inheritance through the apostles' supposed alleged successors, the missions.

And of course, it is in the church of Rome where you get the extreme of this wrong teaching, where you can't have a valid ministry, because a man isn't a priest unless the hands of a bishop have been laid on him, and the hands of the bishop are not valid unless he's in the apostolic succession.

And the grace is conferred to the priest by the laying on the hands of the bishop, and in turn it goes back in a kind of mechanical way to the apostles. That's the theory. No bishops, no priests.

[30 : 13] No priests, no sacraments. Because only an episcopally ordained priest is eligible to administer the sacraments. And in the Roman church, the sacraments are essential to salvation.

So no bishops, no sacraments, no bishops, no salvation, no bishops, no church. And this is what has come to be known as the historic episcopate.

The idea of apostolic authority being handed down in the church, in the line of a certain category of ox. And so, you see, you end with the position where the whole fabric of the church structure of the church of Rome, so called, is purification.

Purification. That is to say, when you test it by the New Testament doctrine of the apostles. And we are Protestant non-conformists.

It isn't fashionable to say that sort of thing nowadays. We're supposed to smuggle that all over and forget it. But Protestant non-conformists historically have rejected this whole idea, this whole notion of apostolic succession and of diocesan bishops in the church.

[31 : 37] This is why our forefathers left the church of England in the 16th and 17th centuries. And this is why it was done.

Let me simply pose a number of questions and you can answer those questions and you can see quite easily that the whole notion of apostolic succession is false.

Did the Lord by whom the apostles were appointed command them to appoint successors to themselves? Did he? If you can find it in the New Testament let me know.

Did any of the divinely appointed apostles himself speak about handing on his special powers to another in his place?

No. The only apostle to have a successor was Judas Iscariot. And the reason Judas Iscariot had a successor was because although he was called to the office he was never called by grace.

[32 : 42] And when he went to his own place the Lord led Peter and called Peter by lot to appoint another and the lot fell upon the times.

Then surely if you look at those distinguishing marks or those distinguishing qualifications of an apostle that I have already enumerated surely they make it quite impossible for there to be any successors in office.

I simply raise the question. Which of the bishops, any bishop, Roman, Orthodox, Anglican, which of the bishops saw the Lord in the flesh? Which of them was witness of the resurrection?

Which of them was actually appointed by the Lord? Which of the bishops works miracles? Which of them wrote scripture?

And is it a fact that history confirm that only bishops have been able to convey and confer the gift and the power and the operation of the Holy Spirit on Christian people through the centuries?

[34 : 02] One is only to raise those questions, you see. To see that the whole notion of apostolic succession in terms of office is baseless, roundless, perfect.

But we need to stay with that, which is legitimate enough and fair enough deduction from Holy Scripture. We have the explicit statement in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 20 that the Christian church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

Now, what's the apostle saying there? Well, what the apostle says there is this, that the foundation of the Christian church is two things.

First, the written word, and second, the living word. The written word, the apostles being the writers of the New Testament, the prophets being the writers of the Old Testament, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

And then the living word, Jesus Christ is born of stone. In other words, what we are explicitly told in Scripture is that the foundation of the church, the gospel, the faith, is laid.

[35 : 35] And my friends, one thing you do not do with the foundation is go on laying it for the rest of your life. When it's laid, it's laid. You don't put another one on top of it.

When it's laid, you use it. When it's laid, you take advantage of it to do whatever the next thing is in terms of superstructure. the foundation of the gospel is laid in the word written through the prophets and the apostles and through the living word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the prophets and the apostles were specially given for this purpose. The prophets for the Old Testament age, the apostles for the New Testament age. Their offices were abnormal, were extraordinary, were unique, special, temporary, unrepeatable.

In that sense, we don't need any apostles beyond these. They, by the Spirit of God, laid the foundation. They are not repeated any more than the foundation is repeated.

But all the church is built, founded, structured, upon what they said and what they did. The canon of Scripture is closed.

[36 : 54] There is nothing to be added. Nothing, then, I say, is plainer than that the apostles of the New Testament had no successors in office.

They needed no success. There's no such thing as apostolic succession in the form and shape of diocesan bishops or anything else. there is apostolic succession, if you like, in the sense and in the measure in which the church continues in the apostles' fellowship and doctrine and breaking of bread and prayer.

In the sense that the church continues building on the foundation already laid by the apostles, yes, there is no further office by which any man succeeds the apostle.

Any attempt to imitate the special office of the apostles results, and you can test this historically, in the overturning of the final authority of Holy Scripture, that it has happened again and again and again.

it results in the introduction of unscriptural innovations in the church. There is no question whatever. The church of Rome has many scriptural doctrines and beliefs and practices.

[38 : 24] What about the unscriptural doctrines and beliefs and practices? How did they come in? Well, in short, they came in at different points in history where certain ideas which had been practiced were brought forward and then people said, well, we ought to make these official.

How can we make them official? Oh, the bishops authorized. That's how transubstantiation came in. That's how indulgences came in. That's how the worship of Mary came in.

That's how penances came in. That's how seven sacraments instead of two ordinances came into the church. All because bishops, upon the supposition that they carried with them apostolic authority, said, yes, we will add this to what the original apostles said.

Now, I say it is vital to understand the New Testament doctrine of apostles. I am not saying there have never been godly men as bishops.

One cannot but respect men like Tranmer and Ridley and Latimer and Hall, and in nearer our own time, J.C. Ryle, one can respect all those individuals, as godly men, but that doesn't alter the principle.

[39 : 41] Doesn't alter the principle. The apostolic succession principle hasn't a quick of a heart in terms of Holy Scripture.

One reason why I'm saying all this is this. We're living in an ethymenical age. The church of Rome will never abandon the historic episcopate.

And the World Council of Churches in all its schemes and designs for union and reunion is ready to introduce this historic episcopate idea in order to reunite Protestantism with Roman Republicans.

The Reformation is regarded as an unfortunate accident. The sooner it's reversed the better. That's the policy. And the only way it can be done is on the retention of this principle of apostolic succession.

Now my friends, if we're opposed to Ecominism, at least let us know why. We're opposed to apostolic succession. We're opposed to the historic episcopate. Because the New Testament doctrine of the apostles is not a thread of warrant to the idea at all.

[40 : 59] With the New Testament doctrine of the apostles before us, we may magnify the office of the authentic apostles of the Lord.

And we shall honor them best and their Lord most if we recognize that they were special, unique gifts to the church in its formative stage.

in that special age when the canon of scripture was in process of being gathered. They were men for their day and they were not the people.

Well, that's one application of this New Testament doctrine of apostles. I'll give you one other which is equally relevant and equally contemporary. and that is in connection with what is most commonly known nowadays as the charismatic movement.

It was always called Pentecostalism and arose by any other name is just the same. In connection with Pentecostalism. Today there's this concentration of interest on the spectacular and the ecstatic and the miraculous.

[42 : 15] We're told from these quarters that everything that was available to the New Testament church is available today. That even the experiences and the powers and the functions of the apostles is all available today to those who will take them and to those who will use them.

This is the message. This is the reason why the church at large is in such a poor state we're told from these quarters. Because we have neglected and we have forgotten and forsaken the apostolic powers.

Now I can't go into all this of course. I'll take just one thing. We are told for instance that the church has failed in her commission to heal the sick. So there we're going to revive it.

That commission they tell us is laid down in Matthew chapter 10 and verse 8. Well what do we read there? Heal the sick. completely out of context they take those three words.

Heal the sick. The apostles did it then. We can do it now. It is they say as simple as that.

[43 : 34] Oh you know remember what Spurgeon said? A text torn from its context becomes a pretext and so it does.

Look at this very passage in which these words are found. Verse 8 in Matthew 10 heal the sick. Go back to verse 5. What have you got?

Well in verse 5 you see that the commission to heal the sick was given not to the generality of disciples. It was given only to the twelve apostles. Then if you go back to verses 2, 3 and 4 you are told the names of those men to whom this special power was given.

Alright we are told well the apostles did it then we can do it now. So we are told. Well the apostles did discharge their commission.

They did heal the sick. the charismatic claim is that we are all apostles. Or we can be all apostles. Or we can all have apostolic power.

[44 : 45] We can all do what the apostles did. And not only that we are charged with doing it. This is the message. Now that God does heal their activists.

And so forth is true in every generation. that is not in dispute. What is in dispute is the idea that the apostolic commission to work miracles has somehow been handed on to the charismatic movement.

But my friends look look again at this scripture this very scripture from which they claim to derive their authority.

if the apostles commission in Matthew 10 8 heal the sick is a continuing commission then so is the rest of the verse.

So is the rest of the verse. And what does the rest of the verse say? Heal the sick? Cleanse the lepers? Raise the dead? Cast out devils?

[45 : 55] devils? The apostles did it? Did it all? But you see it's a verse that proves too much for the charismatics.

And what is the rest of the verse like? Heal the sick? Cleanse the lepers? Raise the dead? Cast out devils? The apostles did it?

Did it all? But you see it's a verse that proves too much for the charismatics. They have attempted to exorcise or cast down devils and we are well aware with what dire consequences they have done in some cases even themselves becoming subject to diabolical powers that have ended in mental derangement and all manner of psychological problems.

It's a dangerous thing to dabble with devils. cast out devils. The apostles did it. We can do it. Who said so? But listen, what about the next bit?

Heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead. I notice they don't say very much about that. And I haven't yet heard them claim that they've done it.

[47 : 16] But why not? If the commission is a continuing commission, then all of it is a continuing. So you see, this whole charismatic muddle, closed from a failure to understand and to respect the New Testament doctrine of the apostles.

Well, what then are we to learn from all this? Well, I submit that it calls us to a balance, the side view of Christian truth and Christian faith.

Look at the extremes we've seen this afternoon. Apostolic succession, in the form of the historic episcopal, creates a spiritual monopoly, limits apostolic power to a priestly caste, a thing that is worth havoc in the history of the church.

That's one extreme. The opposite extreme, the charismatic extreme, is to say what? Nothing the apostles did. We can't do.

We are apostles. It is one extreme to another. Neither of those extremes justified by the text of scripture. What then is the balance of scripture?

[48 : 46] Well, I will put it like this. First of all, let us recognize that in the Christian church there is spiritual equality. Neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female, Greek nor Jew, all one in Christ Jesus, rich or poor.

Makes no difference. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. There's a priesthood of all believers, violence, and there is absolutely no difference whatever in terms of the ground on which any sinner goes to God.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, goes to God as a sinner on the same ground as any other man, a sinner. And if he saved, he's saved by God and grace.

Spiritual equality. Here we are alive at all unto God. It is thy creed raisinah. Whatever we are, whoever we are, spiritual equality.

Now that's one thing. Now over against that, there is no equality of office or function in the Christian church.

[50 : 02] No equality of office or function. Surely that's obvious. You remember what Paul says to the Corinthians, one body, many members. The hand cannot say to the eye, the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee.

One body, many members. Each has its own function. The Lord gives his church officers of different kinds, different sorts, different duties, different responsibilities.

None can say to the other, I have no need of thee. So here are two principles that have to be held in balance, in tension. It isn't one or the other, it is both.

There is spiritual equality. We're all, whatever we are, sinners saved by grace and greater life. But within the church, whatever office we hold or none, whatever gift we have or none, there is no absolute equality.

foolish young man wrote an article in one of our magazines a year or two ago on the 18th century revival in England and pointed out that while George Whitfield was out preaching to the thousands on Kennington Commons, Dr.

[51 : 25] Gill was sitting in his study writing his commentary and said the young man he ought not to have been there, he ought to be out preaching with us friends. Why not? Dr.

Gill didn't have an evangelist calling. He didn't have an evangelist gift. And George Whitfield didn't have the learning and the ability to write a comedy.

Inequality in the body of the church in which there is a basic spiritual equality. In other words there is unity which manifests itself in diversity.

Well there I'm a believer. Thanks be to God for his apocalypse. Thanks be to God that he ever gave the church such men. Thanks be to God for what those men did under the superintending hand of his Holy Spirit in their oral ministry, in their written ministry.

Thanks be to God that we have the word of God. Because of the ministry of the apostles and the prophets. They did their work, they had their day, they passed on their way to their reward.

[52 : 42] God has founded his church in that sense upon them, his own blessed son being the chief cornerstone, that we neither inherit their office, nor do we call them not.

and this epistle before us, this epistle of Peter, contains not the private opinions of the man Peter, it contains the ipsissima verba, the very words of the Holy Ghost of an apostle of the Lamb.

the Lamb has all the glory, and may that same Holy Spirit help us to learn these things and understand them, and so lead us in the right way, and save us from the erroneous ways, that have, and still do, disperse, the professed Christian Peter, and a apostle of Jesus Christ.

Thank God for Peter, thanks Peter God, ten thousand times for Jesus Christ. Amen.