

# Ministry (Quality: Good)

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- [ 0 : 01 ] Continuing our meditation upon the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, I'll read this morning the eleventh and twelfth verses.
- And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.
- The fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, the eleventh and twelfth verses. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.
- The substance of these verses and the context, as of course I have pointed out, is the ministry of the gospel.
- And it is set before us, first, with regard to its spiritual and divine appointment, that the ministry itself is an appointment of Jesus Christ for the good and profit of his church on earth and for the furtherance of the gospel.
- [ 2 : 13 ] And then secondly, we notice that the Lord Jesus Christ himself laid the foundations of the ministry of the gospel by his descending into this world, his suffering in it, his atoning sacrifice and precious blood shed in it, and his descending into the grave.
- And secondly, that having laid the foundations of the ministry, or of the gospel ministry, in that way, he confirmed it by his resurrection from the dead.
- For as the apostles said, if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, and yet in your sins, and we are found false witnesses of God.
- The confirmation of the ministry is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And then we notice that the Lord Jesus being ascended into heaven, and exalted to the right hand of God, that he might fill all things as given ministers.
- That is, by the Holy Spirit, he has appointed offices in the ministry, and appointed men to fill those offices.
- [ 4 : 07 ] And those offices come before us this morning in the eleventh verse. Now, it is not on my mind to dwell very long upon these different offices in the ministry.
- But just a few words of explanation you will be expecting, and I hope not be unprofitable. For it is very desirable that in reading the scriptures, we should at least seek to understand what the expressions therein really mean.
- Now, here are four or five distinct and different offices in the ministry of the word.
- When we speak of the ministry, we usually confine our meaning to the preaching ministry, or teaching ministry.
- But actually, of course, the ministry embraces every form of service in the Lord's name and cause, even a ministering one to another in helping and assisting and comforting and so on.

[ 5 : 45 ] But in this place, it would seem more particularly to intend the ministry of the gospel, preaching.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted in heaven as a perfect right to appoint whatever is seemeth good to him to his church on earth to observe and to fulfill.

And, as the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed nothing but what is for the spiritual good and edification and benefit of his church on earth, there should be real thanksgiving for such gifts to men.

and he gave some apostles. The meaning of that designation in this connection, of course, means the twelve that he called to be personal followers of him and who had the benefit of his instruction.

And, what is more, when the Holy Spirit was given, the apostles were especially inspired of the Holy Spirit to infallibly expound and lay down the fundamental truths and principles of the gospel as no other men have ever been.

[ 7 : 42 ] One of the apostles that the Lord Jesus called to himself proved a faithless man and showed his base, his unsanctified character by so yielding to his love of money as for thirty pieces of silver to betray his master.

And, as the apostle Peter said, and he said very, very much in very few words when he said that Judas by transgression tell that he might go to his own place.

very simple words that have ominous their meaning, his own place, the place that belonged to him to go to, to that base treacherous man, his own place.

but there was still to be the twelve and in due course the Lord from heaven expressly called the most unlikely man on the face of the earth to be an apostle and that was that blaspheming, persecuting, determined man, Saul of Tarsus.

And to show his sovereignty and the power of his grace and the exceeding greatness of his mercy, he chose that chief of sinners, that persecutor, to be a successor in the apostleship to Judas Iscariot.

[ 9 : 36 ] And Paul was not the least of the apostles for he labored more abundantly than them all. Now there were twelve apostles and there have never been any more.

As I've sometimes said, all the argument and all the claims and all the contentions about one, what men call the apostolic succession is just so much nothing.

There is no apostolic succession. There's no question as to where the apostolic succession is today. There is none.

The apostles had no successes. And to prove that, you've only to turn to the revelation where you'll find the church of God represented as a glorious and perfect city having twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the land.

There's never been more than twelve. the apostolic office was unique. Unique in this respect that they were all personal witnesses of the Lord's death and resurrection, it being especially revealed to Paul, and they were all inspired by the Holy Spirit so that they ministerially laid down once and for all the vital unchangeable truths of the gospel he gave some apostles.

[ 11 : 32 ] Then he gave some prophets. Now the prophets stood in a different category from the apostles and yet different from evangelists and pastors.

We usually think of prophets as being people who have given an inspired vision of the future. And of course with regard to the Old Testament prophets and somewhat though with regard to New Testament prophets in the time of the scriptures that was so.

We read for instance and this is almost the only reference to the prophets in the New Testament as to their work that there was one named Agabus a prophet who foretold that there would come a time of great dearth in the earth and as a consequence of that a collection was made for the support of the poor saints at Jerusalem but to foretell what would come does not appear to have been the sole sphere and purpose of the prophets now as far as is given to me to understand the prophets seem to be endued with such understanding in the things of

God as that they were able to preach with authority and yet not with an inspired authority as the apostles were now without dwelling you must remember that in those days there was no scripture no New Testament compiled and when the New Testament was finally compiled and became the standard of truth and doctrine it would seem that the office of the apostle the prophets gradually ceased to be exercised there is an enlightening remark by the apostle Paul with regard to the prophets which I think fairly clearly indicates what their work was he said if any man consider himself to be a prophet let him

I can't correctly quote it without referring to it it means this let him prove it by this that what he speaks is according to the commandments of the Lord they seem to have an ability to preach the truth when there was no new testament compiled but in as much as some claim to be prophets whose ministry was not truthful the apostle said now if any man claims to be a prophet let him acknowledge that these things are according to the commandments of the Lord there seems to be no reason to feel that the office of the prophets continued beyond the new testament days so we will leave that and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers some evangelists evangelists appear very much in the new testament and in the acts of the apostles in short they were men who were raised up to preach the gospel without being called to the specific office of pastors

[ 15 : 59 ] Philip was an evangelist and a very useful evangelist and a means of bringing the Ethiopian to the knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ and he baptized him I think Philip is the only evangelist mentioned by name in the new testament but there were many who were evangelists their work seems to have been more to carry the gospel where it was not known to evangelize rather than to watch over the flocks of God the nearest now that any come to evangelists is missionaries who preach the gospel in foreign parts and the Lord bless every truthful and every faithful man who labors in that way for it is the

Lord's appointment that the gospel shall be preached to every nation that is under heaven and therefore it must be and I say the Lord bless all who seek to evangelize the heathen for if evangelists had never come to this country how would the gospel have ever come to this country and been established here the fact that it is to be feared that all who are engaged in this work are not sound and truthful men does not alter it there are sound and truthful men who evangelize and the Lord bless them in their work and especially such of them as suffer for the truth's sake for they do some of them there's no question about it and I think evangelists mean as I have said all whose principal work is to evangelize rather than to watch over and to feed the flocks of God committed to their care the Lord gives some evangelists and there's a need for them and very very useful their work in the ministry has been all down the ages to evangelize is a very important part of the gospel ministry and some pastors the word pastor as you know literally means a shepherd a pastor's work is to shepherd it relates to a flock that is a good promise in the

Old Testament anticipating the gospel dispensation you find it in Jeremiah and I will give you pastors after mine own heart well and what will they do and they shall feed you with knowledge and understanding feed you now to feed is a pastor's principal work to feed not but that where the word is preached and those who are unconverted and unregenerate come under the sound of it it is a pastor's duty to labor and pray and preach for their conversion but just as conversion is the primary purpose of evangelism so feeding the flock of

God is the primary purpose of pastors he is no pastor who does not feed the flock and so the apostle Paul when he bade farewell to the elders of the church of this very certain Ephesian church gave them this parting charge and it's a charge that lies upon every pastor to this day it lies upon me it lies solemnly upon me feed the flock of God which is among you feed the flock of God which is among you that's a pastor's word for the flock need feeding if they are spiritual people nothing will satisfy a spiritual church but a feeding ministry and it's not to be wondered if hungry souls leave a ministry that doesn't feed them you can't blame them if they do for to be spiritually fed and nourished means so much to those who are hungry for the bread of life that you can't blame them going anywhere to find it and it lies very much at the door of a pastor if hungry sheep do not find food through his ministry there's no question about it brethren only spiritual people who hunger for the bread of life and can feed upon it can understand how much a spiritual ministry and a pastoral ministry means to them other people can't understand it it's impossible for them to understand it only those who are fed by a ministry know how much that ministry means to them the

Lord still gives pastors after his own heart to feed the flock of God and what to feed them with not ideas fancies theories more principles social affairs nothing of that to feed them with knowledge knowledge of the truth knowledge of Jesus Christ knowledge of his person grace love righteousness and blood to feed them with the knowledge of Christ that knowledge which is life eternal to those who have it that knowledge which produces faith energizes love unites the soul to him that's the knowledge of Jesus

[ 24 : 02 ] Christ brethren and it's a great thing to be fed with it and it's the duty of pastors to feed the flock to watch over them to care for them I don't know whether it's for me to say this or not being in this solemn position myself but if I might say this in an entirely detached way one of the greatest if not the greatest gift the Lord Jesus Christ can give to any church is to give them a pastor to watch over them pray for them and to guide them and to feed them and especially to feed them with the bread of life I say that in a detached way but it's true brethren the Lord

Jesus Christ can give a church no greater gift than to give them a pastor after his own heart and may I add this I feel the Lord gave this church to pastor after his own heart you know he was a pastor for over 52 years and in his measure and in his capacity I fully believe he was a pastor after God's own heart this church was fed by that pastor for over 52 years and you know how long I've been here and this is my present concern very much that the Lord will give this church another pastor a pastor after his own heart to feed this flock when my work here is done and I commend it to you all to pray for this for there comes a time when every pastor's work is done no man is immortal the time will come when everyone must lay down their charge and go to their account and go to their rest my brethren

I pray the Lord will give this church a pastor after his own heart to feed you with knowledge and understanding there's just one other expression in the text the first of these two verses and teachers now it's not very clear to my mind whether the apostle means that pastors are teachers or whether he means teachers is distinct from pastors well it's no matter really because pastors and teachers agree very well anyway for a pastor must needs be a teacher I've always felt from the very beginning that if a pastoral ministry is to hold together and satisfy and build up a church especially over a long period of years there must be an element of sound teaching in the ministry sound teaching

I'm sure no ministry will build up a church without instruction but still if we might give this a little further meaning and teachers we might I think quite soberly and scripturally understand that the Lord does give some to teach who does not call to be either evangelists or pastors now then let this last expression include all who are useful as teachers in the world the Lord bless their instruction to young and old for it is by teaching that the mind is instructed and it's through the instructing of the mind when the blessing of the Lord rests upon the word that truth reaches the heart so he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers so much then for the gifts of ministers in the ministry now for a few minutes longer this morning we turn our attention to the purpose of all this it is for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of

Christ for the Lord has never raised up and sent men to no purpose merely to fill an office there's a purpose in it there's a work to be done and we have it in these three expressions in the text and for a few minutes I will dwell upon the first for the perfecting of the saints now to understand these things as the apostle meant them in this epistle you must take into consideration the background you must remember that the Ephesians had been idolaters they had been worshippers of the great goddess Diana they are utterly ignorant of spiritual things at all and of the gospel of Jesus

[ 30 : 52 ] Christ but the apostles ministry in that un promising place was greatly blessed by the Holy Spirit and numbers as many as the Lord had eternally purposed to save at that time were brought to a knowledge of the truth they were converted to God and they were born again of the Holy Spirit and they became new creatures in Jesus Christ but they were very ignorant they're in a different state of mind than we are most of us have been accustomed to being instructed in the word and truth of God all our days what we needed is that the Lord would make what we already knew to have a more powerful effect upon our hearts but we were not ignorant of the letter of the truth they were they were entirely ignorant well now it was not sufficient that they should be converted they must be instructed and that is the first part of this perfection it means instruction for the perfecting of the saints in spiritual knowledge and understanding of the truth if anyone were to say well I don't think that concerns me particularly if I believe in Jesus

Christ that's sufficient look my friends you wouldn't say that if you were really a believer in Jesus Christ you know you wouldn't say that well now what would you say you would say I wish I knew more about him I wish I knew more about him I wish I knew him more I feel that although I believe that God has brought me to look to and believe in Jesus Christ I seem to know so very little of such a blessed person such a wonderful name as Jesus Christ is you'll sure to feel that if you believe in Jesus Christ yet you couldn't do do you know enough of the gospel its profound truths its blessed doctrines its holy principles do you know enough of the gospel to satisfy your souls you may be sure you know nothing if you think so now we need perfect things and I do feel this that there's an especial need of this today when the apostle laid this down he had something in his mind and that was this that they should not be carried about by every wind of doctrine and slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive uninstructed people are easily misled they cannot see the difference between truth and error what to believe and what to reject what is sound and what is unsound what is

God's teaching and what is man's ideas they can't see the difference if they're not instructed and therefore they're easily carried about with every wind of doctrine brethren that's the case today there are winds enough of doctrine today and people are carried about with them and unless we're established in the knowledge of the truth we're an easy prey to error an easy prey see then how great is the need of this perfecting of the saints in spiritual knowledge of the truth and understanding of divine things then and I mustn't continue any further this morning I'll just mention this this a perfecting of the saints with regard to their experience of the truth in the effects of it in their hearts as well as their understanding of it as it is in the scriptures there's a perfecting of the saints in experience some of you need that don't you you feel your experience is imperfect in the things of

God and I can quite understand it because everyone's experience is imperfect especially in the first part of their spiritual life but I think all along we feel that their experience is still imperfect there are some points in gracious healing and enjoyment that perhaps we must feel well we have not yet come to that now I was saying on more this morning if the Lord is pleased to bless the ministry whether of evangelists or pastors perhaps especially the pastors there is an instructing in the truth of being established in the knowledge of it and in the experience of it for the

Holy Spirit works effectively all true experience in our hearts through the word of truth the perfecting of the saints the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ one last word to you this morning there are some I feel before me this morning who need the first work to be wrought in their hearts you need the Lord to give you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth before ever you come to be built up in it you need the Lord to give you faith to believe in Jesus before you have any experience of the gospel in its power and blessingness in your heart what you need is that you should be brought to look unto Jesus and be saved for you're at the ends of the earth really spiritually you need to look unto him and be saved all the ends of the earth you need the Lord to work saving effectual conversion in your souls the Lord grant that it may be so with you oh may he graciously work in you all that is so essential to your salvation but most of you listening to me this morning need the

[ 40 : 05 ] Lord to still instruct you and still to nourish you and to deepen in your heart his gracious work you feel that word in the psalmist is a suitable prayer for you or that the Lord would fulfill it there will perfect that which concerneth me forsake not the work of thine own hands and you might add this word of your own to it forsake not the work of thine own hands in my own heart and in my own soul and there I leave our meditation this morning and changing a ghost and stand