

## What is the Government of God? V Functions, Not Offices or Ranks

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Last time we finished up in Eph. 4; let's go back there and review it again. I want to compare this, and I think you will find this very interesting, if not profound, from the point of view that once I explain it you will understand it. The truth is, even though I knew this, it never really came to me the way it did this past week in understanding one of the foundational Scriptures that is used by the hierarchical churches to justify their hierarchy.

Let's read the whole flow of it, because this becomes important. As we're going to see today, doctrine becomes a very important thing. And everyone who says doctrine is not necessary, just love, don't understand that

- the love of God
- the love of neighbor
- the love of the brethren
- even the love of your enemies

is a teaching of the Bible. A teaching is a *doctrine*; comes from the exact same root. Doctrine is a noun, teaching is the verb, which comes from the word: 'didaskalo'; or teacher: 'didaskalos'; or doctrine: 'didaskalia'

Ephesians 4:1: "Therefore, I, the prisoner of *the* Lord..." Here's something else that is also important to show the real reason for some of the trials and difficulties that we go through—because through those trials and difficulties, God is able to make those who go through it and look to God to learn great and profound lessons—which the Apostle Paul did; because he wrote the most exquisite, inspiring epistles—Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians—while he was in prison in Rome the first time, 61-63 A.D.

Verse 1: "Therefore, I, the prisoner of *the* Lord, am exhorting you to walk worthily of the calling to which you were called." Our calling is an *individual calling* by God. He is the One Who reaches down and does the work of calling.

Verse 2: "With all humility and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." That's an important thing to understand, because God has called us from various kinds of backgrounds, all different races, all different people together and things, and all of our experiences have been different. So, in order to love one another, that love begins with forbearance—forbearing one another in love—*that's the first step of love.*

If someone is not quite like you think that they may be, or if you don't have the kind of impression and you run by feelings of what a person is or looks like or does, *you are to forbear.* Especially, you need to give them space and time to come to themselves to understand the calling so that they themselves can yield to God in a personal relationship, to develop the conversion and the character they need. This is especially true for those who have been in the Church a long time and new people are coming in:

- they need some space
- they need some time
- they need to be able to learn and to think
- they also need to be able to make mistakes and realize they can be forgiven.

Verse 3: "Being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Unity does not come by command. Too many Churches of God command it. Too many religious organizations command it. That is the effect, the same effect as gangs. You watch some of the history of gangs on the History channel and also on the prisons on MSNBC and the National Geographic channel. Gangs demand, by command, subject to death, loyalty to the leader. They command their followers: in order to qualify for this gang, you must go out and do some criminal act. The women that are brought into the gang—gang women—must endure the sex and rape by every member of the gang in order to prove her loyalty to the gang, which then absolutely destroys the emotions of a woman. God didn't make her to do that.

So to take some of these strict things and say:

- we're going to keep unity
- everyone stay in the Church
- no one talk to anybody outside the Church
- you cannot even visit your own father and mother
- your own brothers/sisters
- your grandmother/grandfather

because 'they're not with us.' That is unity by fiat! Command of a man! The *unity of spirit leads us* all to love one another; *leads us* all to come to the *unity of the spirit* as Christ gives us that. We have to learn this, and we have to grow in it. It cannot be commanded.

Verse 4: "...even as you were also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who *is* over all, and through all, and in you all" (vs 4-6). Quite a statement—isn't it? As we have been saying, that's the first part of the Government of God—'***Christ in you, the Hope of glory' and the seed of God the Father***—so that God is directly involved in your life.

- you don't have to go through a minister
- you don't have to go through a man
- you don't have to confess your sins to a priest
- you don't have to go to an imam
- you don't have to go to an evangelist

With this kind of relationship, whenever we come together on the Sabbath Day:

- we have peace
- we have love
- we have joy

we have all of those things that are there—even in trying and difficult times—because we love God and love each other and support each other ***in the spirit of unity from God!***

Verse 7: "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We all receive, *directly*, grace from God the Father and Jesus Christ. {note booklet and sermon series: *The Grace of God*} It's not just the forgiveness of sin, that's the first step in the grace of God. But the grace of God really defines our whole relationship with God.

Verse 8: "For this *very* reason, He says *that* after ascending on high... [Jesus went to heaven for a purpose] ...He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.... [that 'captivity captive' is symbolic of sin, carnal restraints, traditions of men, etc.] ...and gave gifts to men. Now He Who ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He Who descended is the same one Who also ascended above all the heavens so that He might fulfill all things. **And He...** [Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church] ...**gave** some as 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; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**" (vs 8-13).

- There is the whole goal!
- This is what God wants us to become!

He doesn't want us to 'join' a church that is run like a gang with a hierarchical demand from the top

down, under intimidation and fear and threats, of all kinds of things that you do not know where you stand before God. He does not want that. We will see that this is what Christ *gave*. Do you all agree this is what ***He gave?***

Exodus 18 is very interesting, because this is where all the hierarchicalist start as the basis for their organization of the Church. The Hebrew means *leaders*, but the *King James* puts it as *rulers*. You know what happened, Moses came with all the children of Israel and Jethro, his father-in-law, came and brought him his wife and his children and so forth; and Jethro, who was the priest of Median, rejoiced for all the good things that God had done.

Exodus 18:12: "Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God. And Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. And on the next day it came to pass that Moses sat to judge the people. And the people stood by Moses from the morning to the evening. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, 'What *is* this thing which you do for the people? Why do you sit alone by yourself, and all the people stand by you from morning to evening?' And Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God'" (vs 12-15).

The reason they did was because they lived in Egypt. They were used to all the ways of Egypt. As we're reading this, we need to be aware of some essential facts, and I think you're going to be astounded that this has been here all the time, but ***we never really got it!*** And I put myself right in that category, too.

Verse 17: "And Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'The thing that you do *is* not good. You will surely wear away, both you and this people that *are* with you, for this thing *is* too burdensome for you. You are not able to perform it alone. **Hearken now to my voice**. I will give you counsel, and God will be with you. You be for the people toward God that you may bring the causes to God. And you shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall make them know the way in which they must walk...' (vs 17-20).

God was yet to give that through His laws and commandments, later when they got to Mt. Sinai.

"...and the work that they must do. And you shall choose out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of Truth, hating covetousness. And place them over the people to be leaders [rulers] of thousands, and leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens. And let them judge *for* the people at all times. And it shall be, every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small

matter they shall judge. And make it easier for yourself, and they shall bear *the burden* with you. If you will do this thing, and God command you *so*, then you shall be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace' And Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said" (vs 20-24). So he did that.

- Were the children of Israel ever converted?
- Did they ever receive the Spirit of God?

*No!*

- Why did you have to have this kind of organization in the wilderness?

*Because it was like a great traveling camp of 1,600,000 people-plus.*

- ✓ you've got to have it organized
- ✓ people were very
- ✓ rebellious even some of the leaders

*Yes, Korah's rebellion!*

- Who gave the advice?
- Did this come from God?
- Did Moses go up on Sinai and God said, 'Do it this way'?

*or*

- Did this come from a man?

*This came from a man to lead carnal people—not converted!*

This type of organization is great for a corporation, where you're making things; for an army, where you're leading fighters to shoot and kill and destroy; where you're leading a group of carnal people that have to be told what to do.

- Is that question the nature of the people in the Church?
- None of those things fit us—do they?
- We're not in the wilderness, living in tents—are we?
- We're not carnal, rebellious people who have to be told everything to do—are we?

*No!*

Our situation is entirely different. Each one of us has been called by God the Father and Jesus Christ. When we're baptized, we receive the Spirit of God. Compare that with Eph. 4.

Let's see the difference of the government that God gave in the Church, and the structure to do it came from Whom? *Jesus Christ!* It didn't come from Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. So therefore, anyone who attempts to use those Scriptures in Exo. 18 as a justification for a hierarchy is rejecting the structure that God has given here.

Let's look at what is given as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and some pastors and teachers in Eph. 4:11, and let's first of all understand that

these are functions. These are not offices such as a pope or cardinal or bishop. Let's look at some Scriptures which show that, which show this very thing.

2-Timothy 1:6: "For this reason..." Because of the face that he saw in Timothy and also in his mother and grandmother—Lois and Eunice, he says:

Verse 7: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound-mindedness."

Though we have to face some fearful things, should the congregations of God be intimidated by fear, through the minister, to make them obey the minister? *No! No!* And too many people go to church with fear, trepidation, being afraid—God does not want that. Should we be fearful of the things which are going to take place in the world? *Yes!* But how are we to handle that? *Trusting God in faith for His Spirit and His power, and being 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves.'* And you have to learn that your whole life through.

Now notice v 8: "Therefore, you should not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but jointly suffer with *me for the sake of the gospel*, according to *the power of God*, Who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling—not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which *was given us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time*; But has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who has annulled death, and has brought to light *eternal life and incorruptibility through the Gospel unto which I was **ordained a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles***" (vs 8-11).

What was the Apostle Paul? A preacher, an apostle? or a teacher? *All three, depending on what he was doing!* An apostle means this:

- one who is sent by Jesus Christ
- one who is taught by Jesus Christ
- one who is to be witness to His resurrection
- one who is to preach the teachings of Jesus Christ

They were given powers to what? *Heal the sick in miracles, raise the dead, preach the Gospel*—in power that Christ gave them as apostles. However, they were also elders. This becomes a very important thing to understand. They were elders, as well as teachers and preachers.

Let's see how this is borne out by Peter. This is very interesting because Peter, as you know, is claimed by the Catholics to be the very first pope—which he was not! And by the way, to all of those celibate popes, you better read the Scriptures,

because Peter was married; Jesus healed his mother-in-law. His mother-in-law was in the same home as he was.

We'll talk about authority, because, yes, there is authority that the ministers are to use, in a proper way, proper authority in a proper way—not through a hierarchy to put fear and intimidation in the people, to coerce them into doing something. It's very important to understand that anyone who preaches or teaches: *ask God to inspire you to inspire the brethren.* That's the important thing! Your teaching is to inspire, so that with the Spirit of God in you, you can be inspired. That connects with the Spirit of God, which is in all of the brethren, and they *desire* to do the will of God. You cannot enforce righteousness within a person. You cannot shout it in, kind of like these big 'boom-boxes' and it vibrates through your whole being. You can't stand up there and shout and let all the vibrations of your words sort of pierce into that person's body and VOILA! they're going to do what you say. *Not so!*

The way that people obey God is to love God, be taught how to love God and to be inspired *because they want to do it.* They want to do it because it is what God desires. If it's what God desires, then you know God loves you for doing it; and it builds everything into the *unity of the faith*, by the Spirit of God. *It's not command and control!* And it's not how to be successful in this world. It's greater than that. *It's how to be successful in overcoming sin, self and Satan!* With the help and power of God.

So, you watch any of these self-improvement things, and they have a lot of self-improvement things that they do. *That is not spiritual growth!* They can do this without the Spirit of God. If you don't know the difference between that and what God wants the brethren to do, as a minister or teacher, and you try using all of these methods, you can have success to a certain point, but they never break through the barrier of the spiritual understanding and the spiritual love and the spiritual desire. This is what becomes very important.

Notice how we know that the office an apostle is not an office, but a function; because in 1-Peter 1:1, he says: "Simon Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ..." Notice how he views himself when he's talking to the other ministers:

1-Peter 5:1: "*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder...* [he considered himself an elder first, and an apostle next] ...and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: Feed the flock of God *that is among you...*" (vs 1-2). We read there John 21 where Jesus said three times, 'Do you love Me, Peter? *Feed My sheep.*' 'Do you love Me,

Peter? *Feed My lambs.*' 'Do you love Me, Peter? *Shepherd My flock.*' Did Peter learn the lesson? *Yes, he did!*

"...exercising oversight **not by compulsion...** [that you're forced to do it or we use compulsion to make it work] ...but willingly..." (v 2). That applies not only to what the elder is to do willingly; not because God said so 'I'm going to do it'; but because you love God, you love Jesus Christ and you want to do it. If you do, then God's Spirit will be there to help you.

"...not in fondness of dishonest gain..." (v 2)—because handling tithes and offerings are going to be money that's going to be handled, and it has to be handled rightly.

"...but *with an eager attitude; not as exercising lordship over your possessions...*" (vs 2-3). I've heard ministers say, 'These are *my* people.' *No! They belong to Jesus Christ, they don't belong to any man!*

"...but by being examples to the flock of God" (v 3). How do you be examples to the flock? Say, 'Well, when I come to church I'm going to set the example.' *No! It's the very example that you set because of the way that you live!* You are not conscience that you are setting the example by saying 'I need to watch my behavior because I need to set an example.' That's wrong! You are an example because:

- you love God
- you teach the way of God
- you love the brethren
- you teach the brethren
- your life is exemplary because of Christ in you

—not because you set an example. Understand the difference. That's very different. It gets down to this: *What you are speaks louder than your words.* We've seen the hypocrisy in the pulpit compared to the private lives of those who were speaking. *Yes, indeed!* This is what he's talking about here. "...but being examples to the flock of God."

- that they can see God working in you
- they can feel God's Spirit when you're teaching
- they can connect with the love of God that you have

This doesn't mean that if there are people bringing in false doctrines and heretics that you don't have the power and authority to deal with it if you're a minister or elder. *You do!* And *even brethren do!* If you hear someone saying something that is not right, you can say, 'Well, you'd better

read your Bible or no, that's not the way that the Bible is. You can just let them know. You are to be skilled in what you know in the Bible so that you yourself can help others before they get off into heresy and wrong teaching.

Verse 4: "And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, *eternal* crown of glory." At that time, not now; not driving in Rolls Royce; not being exalted in huge, high offices; not wearing two-thousand dollar suits; not buying ten-thousand dollar crystal gifts to leaders of the world—none of that!

Verse 5: "In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all *of you* be subject to one another..."

- there's the mutual help
- there's the mutual guidance
- there's the mutual correction

that comes along. Not one over the other, and 'Oh I better not ask a question because he's so important.' No, that's not true.

Now, I'll just have to mention here that because I'm a very intense person, some people are somewhat afraid of me, maybe even afraid of me to a pretty high degree, because I am intense. I firmly believe what I've learned from God and led of God's Spirit to do so; but I am not mean and nasty. If you have a question, it's a legitimate question and I will certainly answer it or whatever it may be. And you can talk to me because I am talkable and will respond. However, just to look at me, and...one minister said, 'Fred Coulter, you look like a burnt blanket with two holes.' So, I know I'm very serious-minded and I know I'm very intense in what I do, but nevertheless, we need to understand what else that needs to come with it.

"...all *of you* be subject to one another, being clothed with humility **because God sets Himself against the proud**, but He gives grace to the humble.... [Paul is talking to the elders, and he's talking to the younger elders] ...gives grace to the humble... [we're going to see how humble Paul became] ...Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time..." (vs 5-6). When is the 'due time' to be exalted? *Resurrection!* Serving the people is not an exaltation, it's really a demotion, because, as Jesus said, 'The one who is greatest is the one who serves all.' If it's a pyramid, it's an upside down pyramid—not a top-down pyramid as in a hierarchy.

Verse 7: "Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time; casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you. Be sober! Be vigilant! For your adversary..." (vs 7-8). Doesn't Satan like to get to

ministers; because if he can get to one, he can effect how many brethren?

"...*the* devil is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour. Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in the world" (vs 8-9). Notice how that is.

Here's a promise for every one of us, v 10: "Now, may the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *you* have suffered a little while, Himself perfect you, establish, strengthen, *and* settle *you*. To Him *be* the glory and the power into the ages of eternity. Amen" (vs 10-11). That's quite a profound section of Scripture!

Now, how was Saul before he is called to be the Apostle Paul. Well, he was the high priest's right hand man. He was the head of the Jewish gestapo at that time, against the Christians. He got valid orders from the high priest to go out into the synagogues; and if anyone believed in Jesus Christ or kept the way that the apostles taught, he was authorized to arrest them, put them in chains, bring them back to Jerusalem and yes, many of them were executed because of what he did. That's who he was: persecuting the Church; causing the death of those who were of the saints of God.

Let's see how he handled that. And I've often wondered how many dreams he had reverting back to the time before he was called and remembered all of the angst and all of the torture and all of the pain that he caused the true Christians when he persecuted them. I wonder how he felt, especially when we read Acts 7 & 8, or Stephen's tremendous witness to the hierarchical priests and Sadducees, scribes and Pharisees, and said, 'You always resist the Holy Spirit.' And they got mad, they gnashed their teeth at him, they took him outside and stoned him, and Saul was standing right there, consenting with it, right along side the man who held Stephens cloak.

Paul saw Stephen die. And what did Stephen say as he was being stoned, he said, 'Father, lay not this charge to them. I commend my spirit into Your hands, Lord Jesus,' and he died. I just wonder how many times that Paul, after he was converted, dreamed that dream; and thought, 'Thank you, God, he's going to be in the resurrection'—and repented of his hateful, rotten attitude that he had toward the Church.

It took a lot of conversion to convert the Apostle Paul—didn't it? *Yes!* And how much time did he spend learning? Well, it was about three years in the desert in Arabia that he was taught directly by Christ in dreams and visions to know what to bring—the Gospel—to the Gentiles. So, he really

went through a lot. We find in 2-Cor. 12 that to keep him humble, God also sent—periodically—a messenger from Satan the devil to buffet him. That's why he suffered so much at the hands of other people, and also of the Jews. To this day, some rabbis say, 'Jesus we can understand, but Paul we'll never forgive!'

Let's see how Paul viewed himself. He certainly didn't bring that kind of authority and that kind of structure into the Church of God at any time. We'll see that—we've already seen part of it.

1-Timothy 1:12: "And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has empowered me, that He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry..." Being in the ministry is not a promotion like it used to be. 'Let's make this man a local elder and see how he does, and if he does good then we'll promote him to a preaching elder.' In the meantime this man knows the political structure, so he's very good and he treats the minister very nice and he has great conduct when he's being watched. Finally, he is elevated.

Have you heard that? 'We're going to elevate this man to be a preaching elder; and then we will elevate him to be a pastor; then we will elevate him into being an evangelist.' Well, the truth is, all the elevating you do, unless it is God Who is doing the increase in responsibility, rather than elevation, it doesn't make a bit of difference, and isn't worth ten cents.

Remember, there was a man who was a carnal attorney in the Church, who, because of politics, got way, way, way up there, and next to the so-called apostle in the Church, and he was ordained as an evangelist—but he never quit being carnal and a liar. So all that kind of thing is not from God. And it isn't from Jethro either, but is *of the self!*

The man who called himself an apostle, at first he absolutely rejected it when someone gave a sermon and proffered it. Later he began to accept it. And then when his wife died, the attorney, who was this carnal lying attorney—who was his 'embraced traveler' with him around the world—kept feeding his ego and he then was the *only* apostle—God's only apostle on earth. That really got him and the whole church in trouble.

Let's see about the Apostle Paul here: "...counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry. Who was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent person; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with *the* faith and love that *is* in Christ Jesus" (vs 12-14).

How do you overcome a terrible past? *With grace, faith and love!* That's how you do it. So whatever your past is, how terrible it ever may have

been, you go to God and have Him forgive you through His grace, and you believe in faith that that is so. You develop a loving relationship between you, God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Verse 15: "*This is* a faithful saying, and worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, **of whom I am chief.**" He didn't exalt himself. But when it was necessary to come against carnal people within the Church, he did exercise the authority necessary to teach them what they need to do.

(go to the next track)

Verse 16: "But for this reason I was shown mercy in order that in me first Jesus Christ might demonstrate all long-suffering, for an example to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life." Showing that if there is true repentance, even what he did is a forgivable sin. Think of that! So that those can all be wiped away. He remembered it from the point of view of the lessons that he learned from it. But those sins before God and what he did was all wiped clean.

Let's see how he considered himself when compared with the other apostles. 1-Corinthians 15:1: "Now I am declaring to you, brethren, the *same* gospel that I proclaimed to you, which you also received, *and* in which you are now standing; by which you are also being saved... [which shows that salvation is a process] ...if you are holding fast *the* words that I proclaimed to you; otherwise you have believed in vain. For in the first place, I delivered to you what I also had received: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He was raised the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas, *and* then to the twelve. Then He appeared to over five hundred brethren at one time, of whom the greater part are alive until now, but some have fallen sleep. Next He appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all He appeared to me also, as one who was born of a miscarriage.... [that's a pretty humble statement] ...For **I am the least of the apostles, and** am not fit *even* to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (vs 1-9).

Now stop and think for a minute!

- What category does that place self-proclaimed apostles in?
- Who were not chosen of God?
- Who were not taught of Christ?
- Appointed themselves?

Like one man said, 'God appointed me to be the apostle for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.' And someone asked him, 'What about the two witnesses?' He said, 'Well, apostle is over a prophet, so I'll be over the

two witnesses.’ Well, I think God has some surprises for him, and I think God’s judgment is not too far behind in coming on a lot of these men who exalt themselves and make themselves important. Paul never did that. The apostles never did that. We saw Peter never did that.

Verse 9: “For I am the least of the apostles, *and* am not fit *even* to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.... [he remembered that he did it] ...But by *the* grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me has not been in vain; rather, I have labored more abundantly than all of them; however, *it was* not I, but the grace of God with me.... [What then is the importance of this?] ...Now then, whether I or they, so we preach, and so you have believed” (vs 9-11). The important thing is the Truth of God, and the writing of these Scriptures for us. That’s how Paul viewed himself.

Now, let’s see some very important things of how Paul looked at himself. I think that’s very important: all the aspects of being a steward.

Ephesians 3:1: “For this cause I, Paul, *am* the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the ministry of the grace of God that was given to me for you; how He made known to me by revelation the mystery (even as I wrote briefly before, so that when you read *this*, you will be able to comprehend my understanding in the mystery of Christ), 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 by the Spirit**” (vs 1-5).

This was when God gave the revelation that He was re-creating Himself through the human beings that He is calling, so that they can be born again into the Kingdom of God. They understood eternal life. But they didn’t understand the fullness of it until this point.

Verse 6: “That the Gentiles might be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel... [not just to the Jews and Israel] ...of which I became a servant... [though he says in the beginning, ‘Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.’] ...according to the gift of the grace of God, *which was* given to me through the inner working of His power” (vs 6-7).

When anyone is ordained as an elder, they receive an additional gift of grace to serve. It is not an elevation in power and status and office.

- it is to *serve*
- it is to *teach*
- it is to *encourage* and *up-build* the Church

Notice how he thought of himself. Here he is

in prison, in terrible circumstances, looking back at his whole life and everything. Yet, God is there inspiring him to write the most inspiring epistles of all that he has written: Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

Verse 8: “To me, **who am less than the least of all the saints...**” Did he exalt himself? *No!* Did he think he was some great special thing? *No!* The only thing that was, was that he was serving Christ and teaching the words of Christ and teaching the brethren. Everything else doesn’t count. What does it matter?

“...who am less than the least of all the saints, was this grace given, that I might preach the gospel among the Gentiles—*even* the unsearchable riches of Christ; and that I might enlighten all *as to* what *is* the fellowship of the mystery... [which is Christ in you] ...that has been hidden from the ages in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ” (vs 8-9).

This is something, brethren! Look as the attitude that he had. This is the attitude that all need to have who are called to be teachers or preachers or whatever it is. If you’re evangelizing, then you’re an evangelist. If you’re not evangelizing, then you are an elder and you may be teaching. Or you may be pastoring. But all ordained as elders and apostles are in a special category that they have to have been taught by Jesus Christ, personally.

I’m sure Barnabus was because he was probably traveling along with all of those who were following Jesus and His teachings, because he was a Levite and he came from the island of Cyprus. Then that makes a total of 14 apostles—doesn’t it? Twelve, Judas fell, Mathias replaced him; then Paul (or Saul) and Barnabus were called to the work—not to the office—which He wanted them to do. This is what becomes very, very important, and what needs to be done.

Now we’re going to look at some certain things, and we’re going to emphasize some certain words and things that are all the way through, here, that are very important for us to understand. First of all, I want to focus in on the word ‘charge.’ The word ‘charge’ comes from the root word *command*, but in a specially direct way.

1-Timothy 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ according to *the* commandment of God our Savior... [Jesus Christ is God and He’s our Savior] ...and of *the* Lord Jesus Christ, *Who is* our hope, to Timothy, *my* true son in *the* faith: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs 1-2).

Notice this, because this also gives an understanding of some of the authority that Timothy,

as an elder, was to exercise. And, as we'll see a little later in 2-Tim. 4, he was told, 'Do the work of an evangelist.' He didn't say, 'Come here and I'll ordain you as an evangelist; I'm going to elevate you in rank.' He said, 'Do the work of an evangelist.' That means he was an elder; when he was evangelizing, then he was doing the work of an evangelist.

Verse 3: "When I was going to Macedonia, I exhorted you to remain in Ephesus, in order that you might *solemnly* charge... [There it is, right there!] ...some not to teach other doctrines." You have authority, in the flock that you are shepherding, to make sure that there are not other doctrines and false teachings being taught.

In a hierarchical church where they have great authority and control, they have made it this way: no one is to teach anything unless the committee at headquarters approves it—then you can teach it. That's not true. Whatever is Truth::

- you have to have the skill and expertise in studying the Bible
- you have to prove the Truth
- you have to know the Truth
- you have to understand the Truth
- you have to understand that God leading you in the Truth

If it's something that has not been understood before, you understand it, there's no reason why you can't preach it.

For example: There was a minister recently who was in a hierarchical church and he asked the question of headquarters: 'Headquarters, I just read Matt. 18 and have studied it thoroughly, and it says that if any of you have a dispute you go to him alone and you solve the problem. And if that doesn't work, then you take one or two others with you so that in a the mouth of two or three witnesses everything may be established. And if that doesn't work, you tell it to the Church.' The Church is *the Body of Christ; the local congregation!* It may not be the whole church, it may be to certain, select ones that may be known for their wisdom and their spirituality. But then you make it known to them and then they render the decision. And if he doesn't follow that decision, then he is to 'become like a heathen and publican to you'—in other words, no longer in the Church.

This hierarchical church interpreted those Scriptures to mean you take it to the ministry, and the ministry makes the decision. Well, the ministry may be involved, but is the Church the ministry? Or, are those within the Church, *some* of them being ministers? He was disfellowshipped for asking the question, because he went against the hierarchy, and

the strict regimentation that was there. The hierarchical government was teaching something wrong and he found out what was right, and because that took away authority from the hierarchical structure, he was told to leave because they thought that that was heresy—rather than study it and learn it and understand what it is, they got rid of him, because they didn't want to get rid of their authority.

That's a wrong use of stopping people from preaching other doctrines. If it is a teaching of the Bible, we're all to be subject to it—are we not? *Without a doubt!* Isn't that basic knowledge, which should be known? *Yes!* But the hierarchy cannot admit that because it would lose power. The hierarchy is teaching the false doctrine and kicking out someone who is teaching the true doctrine.

The reason that occurs is because the evangelist in charge of this group, who is presiding over them, says that 'take it to the church' means *take it to the ministry*. Well, how can a ministry—and we've seen this in hierarchical things—1500 miles away, ever understand all the facts going on in a local fellowship group or congregation to make a decision on it in the first place? My experience has been that if you write it up and send it in, you can never give all the facts, you can never make it known the way it really is known, because that's just the nature of writing something up. So it has to be done in the local area with all participating.

So, there's a charge, v 4: "Nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which lead to empty speculations rather than to edification from God, which *is* in faith." Isn't that interesting? *Edification from God!* If you're taught the Word of God, and you're reading it as it's being taught, who is edifying you? *God is!* It's His Word! The one reading is just the mouthpiece.'

Verse 5 "Now the purpose of the commandment... [which is the charge] ...is love out of a pure heart... [Everything comes back to the love of God and pure heart—which means *lack of hypocrisy* or *personal agendas*.] ...and a good conscience... [because you're yielding to God and repenting] ...and genuine faith" (vs 4-5).

Now, let's come over here to v 18, because I want you to understand the structure of 1-Timothy. "This charge... [meaning everything he has written in this epistle] ...I am personally committing to you, *my son Timothy*, in accordance with the prophecies that were made long ago concerning you; in order that by them you yourself might wage a good war, holding to *the faith* and a good conscience. For some, having cast aside a *good conscience*, have made shipwreck in regard to the faith; of whom are Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I turned over to Satan in order that they may learn not to blaspheme" (vs 18-20).



1-Timothy 6:13: “I charge you in the sight of God, Who gives life to every *living* thing, and Jesus Christ, Who *in* testifying before Pontius Pilate gave the exemplary profession of *faith*, that you keep this commandment... [meaning *everything I have written* you] ...without fault *and* without rebuke until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs 13-14).

That’s something! That shows what Paul was doing here. This is when they really understood that the return of Christ—as we have explained in some of the commentary in the Bible and the New Testament—was not going to take place during the lifetime of the apostles; but was going to be way off in the future. And so, in 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and Titus, Paul is setting up the basis and the structure; the *modus operandi* for preaching and teaching a local congregation for the long-haul.

Anyone who wants to know how to work out your eldership and how to teach: study 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and Titus—and learn it and know it—because this is the authority that is given to the ministry from the Apostle Paul, through Jesus Christ giving it to him. We’ll just a little brief verbal review of Revelation 2 & 3. Did not all of the seven churches, except Smyrna, which was persecuted; and Philadelphia, which faithfully held the Word of God, did they all not have some subversion from those outside, who came in to *bring the teachings of men!* And even in the case of Pergamos, which was located in Pergamos where Satan had his throne, they brought in terrible pagan practices and authoritarianism. They brought in the structure of a pagan priesthood. What did the Roman Catholic Church do? *They looked at the structure of the Roman Empire and how it was set up*, and that’s how they set up the ministry of the Roman Catholic Church!

*The Government of God in the Church* begins ‘**with Christ in you, the Hope of glory,**’ in every single individual—because that comes from God the Father and Jesus Christ. ***Everything to be done in the Church is to up-build that for the ‘perfecting of the saints!’***

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Ephesians 4:1-13
- 2) Exodus 18:12-15, 17-24
- 3) 2-Timothy 1:6-11
- 4) 1-Peter 1:1
- 5) 1-Peter 5:1-11
- 6) 1-Timothy 1:12-16
- 7) 1-Corinthians 15:1-11
- 8) Ephesians 3:1-9
- 9) 1-Timothy 1:1-5, 18-20
- 10) 1-Timothy 6:13-14

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- John 21
- Acts 7 & 8
- 2-Corinthians 12
- 2-Timothy 4
- Matthew 18
- Titus
- Revelation 2 & 3

#### Also referenced:

- Booklet & Sermon Series: *The Grace of God*

FRC:bo  
Transcribed: 2-5-09  
Reformatted: 10/13