# APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

DAN DUKE

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Dan Duke

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# FOREWORD

Following the great success of his first book in Portuguese, Pastor Dan Duke presents his latest work. What impresses us is not the subject, relevant as it is; nor its treatment, full of revelation; nor its presentation, faithful to the Word; but his discernment of the spiritual moment in which we live.

The church of Jesus Christ lacks the knowledge conveyed here, and God's servant needs someone who can courageously show him the needs of the present. Without a doubt, Pastor Dan made an excellent choice, or rather, followed the Spirit's leading, in writing with such clarity, simplicity, and insight on a subject of such importance.

What God is doing in these days is wonderful, and it is a great privilege to take part in this unique moment in the Lord's work.

It is a time for the restoration of lives, as well as of values and teachings from God's Word that are being obscured by the clouds of unbelief, indifference, indiscipline, inconsistency, and apostasy sweeping through our churches. Thus, this book was born in God's heart and will impact your life. Delight in exploring God's Word and discovering how to serve the Lord and experience His good, pleasing, and perfect will. God bless you.

Pastor Ciro Otávio

Igreja Batista da Floresta

Belo Horizonte - MG

# DEDICATION

*This book is affectionately dedicated to my son, James. You have made your share of the sacrifice required for me to fulfill my calling as a missionary among the nations of the world. Thank you, son. You have grown into a fine young man. I could not be more proud of you.*

*Dan Duke*

## Dedication - translated from the Portuguese version

*This book is lovingly dedicated to my son, James. You have shared in the sacrifice made so that I could fulfill my calling as a missionary among the nations of the world. Thank you very much, my son. Today you are a fine young man. I could not be more proud of you.*

*Dan Duke*

# INTRODUCTION

God is moving. Revival is sweeping the earth, and thousands are being touched by the fire of God, which is kindling a new passion for Jesus. Churches that were previously dead and lifeless are springing up with new life and joyful freedom in the Holy Spirit. Worship is finally receiving the prominence it deserves. Church members who have been Christians for years are being powerfully renewed in their faith. Fresh experiences with God are available to every thirsty and hungry soul.

All this is happening in conjunction with the restoration of the foundational ministry of the apostle. Apostolic ministry is being restored to the church. God has carefully been restoring the fivefold ministry to His church. As the Bible says, "The first will be last, and the last will be first." This is also true of this process of restoration. Apostolic ministry is first in rank, order, and authority, and the last to be restored.

# CHAPTER 1

## Are There Apostles Today?

> *"But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. Now what does 'He ascended' mean except that He also descended into the lower regions of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things. And He Himself gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*
>
> Ephesians 4:7-13

The Scriptures are very clear. Jesus gave all five ministries, including apostolic ministry, to the church in the form of men, and He told them: until something happens. The full order of ministry gifts, including the apostolic, will continue to function in the church until the saints are perfected and mature and attain the measure of Christ's full stature.

Until this process is complete, the ministry of the apostle will be not only necessary, but crucial. Anyone can look at the church today and see that we have not reached this level of maturity and stature. The ministers themselves have not attained Christ's stature, much less the average church member. Some have said that the maturing process will be completed only in heaven. That is a convenient answer, but it is not consistent with Scripture. Jesus is coming back; that is certain. But whom and what is He coming for? The Bible is quite clear: He is coming back for a mature church, without wrinkle or spot or any such thing, but holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:27). We have never seen a church like the one described, but we will! We must see it! The Scriptures cannot lie. Jesus is coming according to His Word, and He is returning for a mature church. The only provision for the perfecting of the saints is the fivefold ministry listed in Ephesians chapter four: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.

The church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the Cornerstone. If apostolic ministry has been abandoned or denied, then something is missing from the church's foundation. This is exactly what has happened, at least in practice, and it explains why apostolic ministry is being restored. Apostolic ministry is foundational to the move of God. In fact, there will be no genuine, lasting move until the apostle and the prophet come onto the scene. Today God is restoring apostolic ministry. For so long, the church has operated like a poor paralyzed person who can barely move and struggles to do the most elementary things.

Likewise, the church has had nowhere near the impact it should have. It has not shaken the nations as God intended. The reason the church experiences a lack of power is that it has been operating with a fraction of its resources and has been seriously out of divine order.

When Israel's king, David, decided to bring the ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, its original place, he paid close attention to every detail that would ensure success. The Bible says he sought the advice of the captains of thousands and of all the people. David mistakenly believed that unity and popular agreement were all that was necessary for God to move. He planned a great event, organized a parade, and even had a new cart built especially for the occasion. Everything was planned and organized. David attended to every conceivable detail, and then they set out with the ark. Everything was going well, and the ark was certainly moving. They were having a move of God!

Everything went well until they reached the threshing floor. When David and the great procession helping him bring God's ark to Jerusalem reached the threshing floor, the march came to an abrupt halt. The Bible says, “The oxen stumbled.” In Scripture, the ox is a type and picture of today's ministers and workers. The apostle Paul compares New Testament ministers to the ox treading out the grain in 1 Corinthians 9:9-10. The oxen stumbled. Certainly David could not have foreseen this situation; it was something beyond his control. This is a principle we must recognize and accept: when God is moving, no man is in control. The oxen stumbled then, and the same thing happens today. Many ministers, or oxen, are stumbling today for the same reason: they are pulling a burden of “ministry” God never intended them to pull. Today's ministers are called

and anointed to carry the ark, not to pull a man-made cart centered on religion. A cart is made of boards and wheels. The church must not be governed by boards of directors and the congregation's "big wheels," who seek to rule or intimidate through power or money. The time has come to abandon the cart and carry the ark of God's presence. This is the only way God's ark will enter our cities, as we shall soon see.

This experience was a bitter test in David's life and leadership. This great failure and disappointment drove him to seek God in the Scriptures, moved by profound desperation. Much of what we do in church today amounts to tradition and culture. It is not necessarily wrong; it simply does not follow the pattern. Part of the restoration of apostolic ministry is a return to the patterns established by Scripture. This means change. Change in the church is not a very popular subject. We have become so good at our programs that if the Holy Spirit were removed from most churches, no one would notice. Everything would continue exactly as it always has. Have you ever stopped to notice that Jesus did not do the same things every day? As He went from village to village, He healed the sick in one place, preached in another, and taught in the synagogue of another town. In some towns He conducted "deliverance services," casting out demons. When was the last time your church had a deliverance service? Are there fewer demons today than in the past?

Pastor, have you considered the possibility that many of those sitting in your Sunday services are secretly demonized and tormented by unclean spirits? Has it not occurred to you that divorces, moral failure, mental problems, and similar things are demonic manifestations? What about the sick? When was the last time you prayed for the sick, anointing them with oil together with the elders? When was the prayer of faith last offered in your church? These and many other things will be challenged when the apostles arrive. They will strike at the foundation of the modern church's philosophy and structure. It will be nothing less than a revolution, and perhaps even a reformation.

David's pitiful cry is recorded in 1 Chronicles 13:12: "David was afraid of God that day and said: How can I bring the ark of God to me?" David left the ark where the oxen stumbled. The move of God stopped, as it usually does. However, a move of God is approaching that will not cease until Jesus comes in the clouds with great power and glory. The ark

remained in Obed-edom's house while David returned to Jerusalem to nurse his wounds and ask God what he should do to have His presence in his city. If we bring this event into our own day, we see that we long for the same thing David desired. We want to bring God's ark, His manifest presence, to our city. David wanted revival, and so do we. Our problem is the same as David's: we do not know how to bring it home. We must do what David did: consult the Lord and ask Him, "How?"

God revealed to David the reasons for his failure and gave him five principles necessary for transporting God's ark. These are eternal principles and deserve to be taken seriously. Why must revival be such a vague and mysterious subject? Why does revival seem so elusive, as though God were reluctant to send it? Is God the enemy of revival? Is the absence of revival really a failure on God's part? Could He not send revival anywhere and at any time? Is the absence of revival a heavenly matter or an earthly one? Could it be that when we follow the proper pattern, revival will simply be its natural consequence?

God answered David's inquiry and explained that the reason for his failure was that "we did not seek Him according to the prescribed order" (1 Chronicles 15:13). This was David's fundamental error. His plan was out of order. In other words, God was not impressed by the effort to achieve unity, nor was He obliged to bless their plan even if their hearts' motives were right. We must not forget whom we are dealing with here. We are God's servants, not the other way around. He is not waiting to discover what we want to do so that He can then do something to help us. God has established the pattern and will accept nothing less. We would be wise to consider God's word to Moses: "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain" (Hebrews 8:5). God has established a pattern in Scripture. The Old Testament had a pattern for building Moses' tabernacle, and there is a New Testament pattern for building the church. Jesus' words deserve our consideration: "I will build My church." Have we forgotten that Jesus is the architect and builder of His church? Have we also forgotten that the apostle Paul "laid the foundation as a wise master builder" (1 Corinthians 3:9-11)? One of the primary functions of apostolic ministry is to establish proper order in the church. This is one of the main reasons we need this ministry restored in its fullness today.

Another thing David had to do was "prepare a place" (1 Chronicles 15:1). A place must be prepared for God to move. Tragically, most of our churches make no room or prepare no place for God to move in our "services." Many are centered on men and so rigid that they leave God out of the program. I do not wish to sound so critical. I do not see the problem as a deliberate attempt to exclude God. On the contrary, I see thousands of hungry and thirsty leaders who are desperate for a move of God but do not know how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit by allowing God to move. Show me a Bible seminary or school offering a course called "Flowing with the Holy Spirit." Where are the learning centers teaching "the what, when, how, and where of revival"? The poignant truth is that even the hungriest and thirstiest are in David's situation as he tried to transport the ark. His motivation was not wrong; his order was. When he changed the order, he obtained the desired results.

God's third instruction to David was: "Sanctify a priesthood" (1 Chronicles 15:12-14). There must be ministers completely set apart and committed to the move of God. In other words, they must sanctify, dedicate, consecrate, and set themselves apart to God's purpose and His order. Many, if not most, ministers and pastors have not done this. They have not truly set themselves apart and sought God in holy desperation to discover His holy will and proper order.

Again, I emphasize that motivation is not the issue. I can imagine that some minister with impure motives, but they are few compared with the multitudes of sincere men and women who give their lives to serve the living God as well as they can. I can say, however, that there is much carnality and compromise in the church and among ministers. The greatest problem I see is that the standard is wrong and our measure of success is out of order. Is a pastor with ten thousand members more successful than one with a hundred? You and I know the usual answer: "Yes!" The error is already apparent in this answer because it is out of order.

The Scriptures warn us not to compare ourselves with those who commend themselves or measure themselves by themselves (2 Corinthians 10:12). Even under Old Testament law there were leaders of tens, hundreds, and thousands (Exodus 18:21). In the New Testament, Jesus distributes talents according to each person's ability (Matthew 25:15). Must I tell you that we do not all have the same ability or measure of grace? Gifts

are distributed according to the measure of Christ's gift (Ephesians 4:7). It is out of order to compare our ministry with someone else's and thereby determine our level of success. Furthermore, the New Testament commission is to "go into all the world and make disciples." A church with five thousand members is not necessarily a church with five thousand disciples. Members may or may not be disciples. Jesus said: "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples" (John 8:31). Part of apostolic restoration will be to bring these and other matters to light. When the standard is wrong, the foundation is weak, and wrong results are inevitable. Leadership and accountability simply must be added to the body of Christ, and this is the function of apostolic ministry.

Fourth, God told David to "appoint singers, psalmists, and musicians with musical instruments... lifting their voices with joy" (1 Chronicles 15:16). A worship team of dedicated, skilled musicians is vital to the move of God. The modern church has not appreciated the true value of musicians and singers. They have been treated as second-class citizens rather than valued as ministers. This has been a great transgression, and we suffer for it today. God moves only to the sound of His people's praise and worship. When God is moving, someone is worshiping, celebrating, and rejoicing. Without worship there is no move of God. It is very simple. This statement is confirmed by Jesus' experience as He entered Jerusalem riding a donkey. When the Pharisees complained about the people's "noise" and demanded that Jesus put a stop to the shouting, Jesus said that if they did not cry out, the stones would. Jesus is God's ark, and when He is moving there will always be the sound of someone's worship, praise, and rejoicing. Again, this is a scriptural principle and part of divine order. If the order is violated, the oxen will stumble, someone will die, and the ark will remain where it is. It is interesting that Obed-edom's name means "a worshiper in Edom." This is where the ark is hidden and kept today: in the worshipers' house. The Bible goes on to say that the Lord blessed Obed-edom's house because the ark was there. Do you want God's blessing in your house? Then worship God in your home. God is enthroned upon Israel's praises (Psalm 22:3). God sits where there is a throne for Him, a throne of praise and worship. Again, this is part of the pattern. Build according to the pattern to obtain the desired results.

God's fifth command to David was: "Bring a sacrifice of seven bulls and seven rams" (1 Chronicles 15:26). In Scripture, the number seven represents a complete work, a perfect work, and a place of rest. Its use here is very significant. God accepts only complete, unblemished sacrifices and offerings. We can also see that the continual nature of the sacrifice teaches us that our sacrifices never end throughout our walk with God. The priests were commanded to stop after every six steps and offer a sacrifice. Six is the number of man. Six steps indicate that man's number of steps is limited before he must stop and meet with God in sacrifice and offerings. Remember, we are working alongside God with the common aim of bringing the ark to our city. We can never make this journey alone, without God's blessing and approval. He honors only His pattern and will establish those who follow and build according to it. Our Christian life is a life of sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice or offering, there will be no move of God, period! The church has neglected much in this matter. Yet who can deny that we in today's church are building upon the supreme sacrifices of those who have gone before? A sacrificial spirit will be restored to the church of Jesus Christ in these last days, and many will pay the ultimate price of martyrdom so that the Great Commission may be fulfilled.

These five principles are necessary for the ark of God's presence to move in our cities. Apostolic ministry must be fully restored to reestablish these truths in the church and see that they are put into practice in the life of the Body.

David's failure to fulfill his desire to bring the ark back to Jerusalem comes down to his failure to recognize and heed God's order. Scripture makes it very clear that apostolic ministry is crucial to divine order, and that the church will continue struggling to pull its carts built by human religion, with all its good intentions and attempts to achieve unity, until apostolic ministry is restored, recognized, and released to operate in today's church.

Some claim that apostolic ministry ceased with the death of the last apostle. My question, then, is: When did the last apostle die? Who was the last apostle? Were there only twelve? What about Judas? Does that mean there were only eleven? Can we count Matthias (Acts 1:15-26)? Who appointed him? God or men? Was he the twelfth or the thirteenth? What about Saul of Tarsus, who later became Paul the Apostle? In fact, more

than twenty-six apostles are mentioned in the New Testament. To say that apostolic ministry has ceased has no biblical basis. There were apostles then, and there are still apostles today. How can any honest student of Scripture say otherwise?

I recognize the prominent place the first twelve apostles occupy in Scripture, whoever the twelfth may be. They sit on thrones judging Israel's twelve tribes, and their names are inscribed on the twelve foundation walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. This, however, does not eliminate the need for other apostles, thousands of them, to be fathers and legitimate ministers with important functions in the body of Christ.

If the Christ who ascended into heaven gave gifts to men "until we all attain the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," then until this maturing of the saints is fulfilled, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers must exist.

We are certainly in the midst of apostolic restoration. Apostolic ministry is being restored to the church in these days in which we live. To God be the glory!

# CHAPTER 2

## The Apostolic Function

In this chapter we will examine some of the functions and responsibilities of apostolic ministry. It is undoubtedly an exhaustive list, but one that will serve as a foundation for a better understanding of this vital ministry. In writing a book like this, the author's intention is not to build a box, but to provide an outline as a tool for understanding. As with the restoration of any truth, there will be extremes and abuses. Unfortunately, this is inevitable. The author's prayer is that this book will help answer questions that deserve answers.

It is important to remember that not every apostle will operate in or experience every aspect of apostolic ministry. It is also important to remember that not all apostles are at the same spiritual level, and that there are no apostles over cities or individuals. Apostles are sent to specific places or groups of people, not to be over them, but to serve them. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, not over the Gentiles. Likewise, Peter was an apostle to the Jews, not over them (Galatians 2:7-8). Be careful of those who claim to be over anything or anyone. There will be many apostles in your city, not one apostle over your city.

Apostles are sent to serve, not to dominate people's faith. Most people will recognize an apostle's rank, calling, and spiritual position and consider themselves under his care and authority. However, this is not something an apostle will demand or even expect. Apostles possess great authority, but they do not wear it like a badge. In fact, an apostle spends little or no time thinking about the authority he does or does not possess. Authority is never an issue for the apostle.

Apostles differ in rank and authority according to the individual. An apostle may be very immature in his present state, depending on his age or spiritual experience. Consider the twelve apostles appointed by Jesus. None was mature in the faith, and one of them, Peter, would even deny Jesus, abandon the ministry, and return to fishing; nevertheless, Jesus called him an apostle. God sees the end from the beginning and calls things that are not as though they already were.

One misconception is that apostles are promoted from other ministry functions. This false idea has caused much confusion and deception. Some believe, for example, that a successful pastor will be promoted to apostolic ministry. I disagree with this conclusion. An apostle is called from his mother's womb. In other words, an apostle is born an apostle. I agree, however, that an apostle may serve in other ministry functions and pass through various stages of development in the process of recognition. Nevertheless, in God's eternal mind and calling, this person was called to be an apostle before birth (Galatians 1:15). All ministry gifts are given by God according to His eternal purpose. We must avoid establishing a ministerial hierarchy that promotes ambition and political appointments. Each person is responsible for discerning his calling and fulfilling it faithfully. God makes His own choices and appointments without consulting anyone.

Let us look at some functions of apostolic ministry:

## Apostles pioneer every new move of God (Acts 8:5).

Apostles are pioneers who invade new territory, both geographical and spiritual. They cannot stand still and are not satisfied with routine. They have an eternal perspective, and their value system is eternal too. Their sincere desire is the maturing of the saints so that they may be presented as "a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). They work tirelessly to see the Gospel spread throughout the earth.

Because they have a breakthrough anointing, apostles have the ability to lead people to break through and enter new dimensions of grace and glory. They can be ruthless toward religious traditions that bind and blind men and women. Nations are opening because of this breakthrough anointing. Churches are being revolutionized and transformed as apostolic ministry and anointing are restored and released. Where there is no breakthrough, there will never be a move of God. Apostolic ministry can penetrate darkened heavens and release God's rain, resulting in a harvest of souls brought into God's Kingdom. There is no substitute for the apostle.

### Apostles represent Jesus as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The Greek word for apostle is apostolos, meaning ambassador. It is more a political term than a spiritual one. An ambassador is an official representative, delegated and sent by a government to represent his nation and government. Apostles represent and speak for God's Kingdom with authority and influence. They have authority to represent and speak for heaven's Kingdom while ministering here on earth. An ambassador possesses the spiritual rank to carry out his commission with authority.

The spiritual realm recognizes apostolic authority because it is official authority given by Jesus Himself. There is no higher rank of authority on earth today than true apostolic authority.

### Apostles establish doctrine (Acts 2:42).

This is one of the most important areas of apostolic ministry. The church suffers greatly at the hands of false doctrines. The Bible says that false doctrine corrupts Christ's bride (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

### Apostles are valuable to the truth and will defend doctrinal purity to the death (1 Corinthians 4:14-15).

The church in Acts grew and prospered because it continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). It is important to note that it was the apostles' doctrine, plural, not one man's doctrine, even if he was an apostle. No man possesses all the light and all the truth. In Christ's body, every joint has a supplying function. It is helpful to observe the spirit and attitude of someone who calls himself an apostle. Apostles possess great authority, but it is authority for building up, never for dominating another person's faith or practice. Apostles are servants of the highest rank and fathers of the highest order. Jesus Christ, the greatest apostle ever declared, said: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). A true apostle lays down his life for the sheep; he seeks to serve, not to be served.

## Apostles bring revelation to the church (Ephesians 3:5).

Apostolic ministry is a pioneering, breakthrough ministry. This includes introducing new revelation to the church. Note that it was an apostle who guided Jewish converts to Jesus through the difficult transition from Old Testament law to the New Testament and its application. It is important to emphasize that new revelation does not imply revelation outside the Bible. Anyone who adds to or takes away from God's Word does so at his own peril, for the Bible instructs us not to do it. By new revelation, I mean a new understanding of the ancient paths. All New Testament truth and reality is an extension of Old Testament law. The apostles constantly used the Old Testament to confirm New Testament order. New revelation is fresh light shed upon ancient paths. New revelation is simply deeper insight into something already revealed in Scripture. Be extremely careful of revelation that contradicts Scripture or takes any area of biblical revelation to an extreme. Be suspicious of any doctrine that appears to exalt an individual or ministry. Be prudent when encountering a group whose doctrine excludes everyone else or tries to distinguish its members as somehow special or privileged before God. Biblical revelation includes everyone. What is available to one person is available to all.

## Apostles lay the church's foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10).

Apostolic ministry is foundational in nature. Without much effort, an apostolic ministry will automatically go to the root and foundation of things. When an apostle visits a congregation, he will immediately address matters related to that church's foundation. Many church problems are caused by a faulty foundation in leadership, structure, doctrine, or practice. Apostolic ministry will touch these problem areas almost automatically, sometimes causing discomfort to the congregation and its leaders.

The Bible asks what the righteous can do if the foundation is destroyed (Psalm 11:3). If the foundation is damaged, wrongly laid, or destroyed, there is nothing the righteous can do except uncover it, repair it, or replace it. Apostolic ministry is very sensitive to and concerned about foundational matters and will tolerate nothing out of place.

Jesus told a parable about two houses, one built on sand and the other on rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Wind and rain struck both houses, but one

stood while the other fell. The difference was the depth and quality of the foundation. A house without a solid foundation cannot withstand a storm. The parable explains its own relationship to the church. The Bible predicts a coming storm. Will the church prevail? Only if the foundation is secure and steadfast. Apostolic ministry has much to do.

### Apostles plant churches (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Apostles are never satisfied with present circumstances and are always opening a way into other areas. Churches planted by apostolic ministry grow and prosper. Those arising from divisions rarely do so. It is probably the absence of apostolic ministry that has allowed churches to spread through such methods as church splits. It is this author's hope and prayer that apostolic restoration will help eliminate the wounds and confusion caused by such divisions.

### Apostles care for local churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Apostles are fathers and pastors to pastors. They care for and pray for local congregations and their pastors. An apostle's greatest joy is to see the church grow and succeed, entering into what God is presently doing on the earth. They understand the importance of local churches and know they must remain strong and healthy to reach more people with the Gospel of the Kingdom.

### Apostles care for the churches with which they have a relationship and oversee them as a father does his family (2 Corinthians 11:28).

The members are his own spiritual children, and he will do anything or make any sacrifice for them.

### Apostles ordain ministers to the Body of Christ and release them to do the work of ministry (Acts 14:23).

Apostolic ministry is a ministry of impartation. It includes the laying on of hands and imparting spiritual gifts to people. When an apostle lays hands on a newly ordained minister, a real, tangible impartation of honor and authority occurs. Those who have never been ordained through an apostolic ministry may never reach their full ministerial potential. Someone who has no relationship with a father, an apostle, who endorses and confirms him may never experience the kind of joy, security, and fullness this truth provides.

Apostolic ministry is necessary to position and release appropriate leadership within the local church. Apostles not only set ministers apart; they also impart something to them. The principle of impartation is one of the most powerful tools available to the church today.

### Apostles put things in order (Titus 1:5).

Most of the church today is out of divine order. The apostle recognizes this and has God-given wisdom and authority to put the church in order. This includes such details as making adjustments in leadership. The apostle is deeply concerned with doctrinal purity, the church's overall vision, and its spiritual priorities. According to Scripture, apostolic functions include dealing with sin and disobedience in the church. Since apostolic ministry is first among the ministries of Christ's body, a church without access to it will suffer.

### Apostles have a ministry of impartation (Romans 1:11).

They impart spiritual gifts. Because of their special gift, apostles can impart anointing, strength, power, and joy to those who receive their ministry. Apostolic ministry is necessary for the emergence and maturing of new, anointed ministries.

### Apostles tear down strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The English Bible uses the word "imaginations," referring to mental strongholds that dominate people's minds and blind them to spiritual realities. Apostolic preaching and teaching will expose and tear down strongholds arising from vain traditions and doctrines of men and demons.

### Apostles intercede for the saints (Ephesians 3:14).

An apostle's very character and nature make him a powerful intercessor. He knows how to pray and receive an answer. An apostle has great authority in the spiritual realm and can be a powerful intercessor because of his great faith and love for the church. Part of the apostolic calling and ministry is to pray for the churches they serve and with which they have a relationship.

### Apostles demonstrate God's power (1 Corinthians 2:4).

Apostolic ministry is a supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, with a supernatural anointing. Apostles possess great spiritual authority and power. They work miracles and demonstrate God's power.

### Apostles impact cities (Acts 13:44).

When an apostle comes to a city, it is impacted in some way. They go beyond the church walls and reach surrounding areas.

### Apostles bring reformation (Hebrews 9:10).

Every great move of God that brought reformation to the church came through the hands of an apostolic ministry. Where reformation is needed, the Lord sends apostolic ministry. Apostles have the ability to challenge and change traditions that nullify God's Word, bringing fresh revelation and application to Scripture.

### Apostles defend the faith (Philippians 1:17).

Apostolic preaching and teaching can be highly confrontational. This is because apostles are deeply committed to Gospel truth. They are zealous for God's glory and Jesus' testimony. They may openly attack the doctrines and practices of those they consider heretical or dishonorable in the sight of God and men.

A man or woman may fulfill one or more of these functions without necessarily being an apostle. A person can prophesy without being a prophet. A man can be a spiritual father without being an apostle, and so on. Apostolic ministry is appointed by God and will be confirmed through many signs and testimonies.

# CHAPTER 3

## Apostles and the Local Church

The relationship between apostolic and pastoral ministry can be the most inflammatory and controversial. The modern church is administered, and often controlled, by pastoral ministry. This in itself violates divine order.

In terms of ministerial rank and order, the apostle is first. The Bible says:

> *"God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, varieties of tongues."*
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:28

The English word "first" translates the Greek protos, meaning first, chief, before others, first in importance. Apostolic ministry is first in rank, order, and authority. This is why the apostle must demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in brokenness and humility. Such authority can easily be abused and used to dominate or control the church or individuals.

In the simplest terms, the apostle is a father figure in the church. The best example is a father within the family structure. The father is the family's priest, responsible for its welfare and discipline.

In chapter two I listed the apostles' functions, and there is no reason to address that subject again here. An apostle is a humble servant of God with a father's spirit, who will care for and watch over the church as he would his own beloved children.

The apostle Paul illustrates this principle in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Let us examine chapter two, paying careful attention to verses 1 through 20.

## Verse 1:

*"For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming among you was not fruitless."*

1 Thessalonians 2:1

When an apostle visits or ministers in a local church, he comes with a divine purpose. An apostle is never just another preacher filling the pulpit. His coming is never in vain.

## Verse 2:

*"But although we had been mistreated and insulted at Philippi, as you know, we had bold confidence in our God to proclaim God's Gospel to you amid much conflict."*

1 Thessalonians 2:2

Apostolic ministry usually brings a dramatic response, whether negative or positive, or a combination of both! However, the apostle expects to suffer and is not surprised by the possibility of mistreatment or threats. Boldness in the Gospel characterizes apostolic ministry and can be mistaken for arrogance or pride. It is neither. The apostle is zealous for God's things, God's Word, and God's people.

## Verse 3:

*"For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity, nor is it based on deceit."*

1 Thessalonians 2:3

Together with the prophet, the apostle will bring fresh, challenging revelation to the church. For this reason, his motives may be questioned. Apostolic ministry will openly challenge religious traditions and ideas that bind God's people.

## Verse 4:

> *"On the contrary, as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not to please men but God, who tests our hearts."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:4

The apostle is aware of the sacred trust God has given him. His passion is truth and holiness. He desperately desires to see Christ's body reach maturity. He is not concerned with pleasing men. He is neither impressed nor intimidated by so-called "great men." The apostle can sit at the table with the richest or the poorest and maintain the same composure.

## Verse 5:

> *"The truth is that we never used flattering language, as you know, nor greedy motives. God is our witness."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:5

The apostle cannot be bought. He will not surrender his convictions to accommodate what is contrary to God, nor will he try to win another's favor through flattery. A true apostle will never covet another person's riches or possessions.

## Verse 6:

> *"Nor did we ever seek glory from men, whether from you or from others."*
>
> Literal translation

Apostles do not seek glory; they seek God. They possess great authority in the church and Kingdom. However, they will not use it to dominate other people's faith. They will exercise their great authority to recognize, raise up, and release ministries.

### Verse 7:

> *"Yet we became gentle among you, like a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:7

The apostle's great boldness and authority are tempered by his gentle, loving spirit.

### Verse 8:

> *"So, loving you dearly, we were ready to offer you not only God's Gospel but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Apostles love the church. Here lies the difference between an apostle and an ordinary preacher. An apostle gives more than a message; he imparts his own soul. He gives his own life to those in the church because he loves them.

### Verse 9 (numbered 46 in the source):

> *"For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil, how we worked night and day so that we would not live at any of your expense, as we proclaimed God's Gospel to you."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:9

Like a father, the apostle does not wish to burden those he serves. He will work night and day, charging nothing, for God's people. He will present himself and give himself freely, demanding nothing from his hearers.

### Verse 10:

> *"You and God are witnesses of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we behaved toward you who believe."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:10

The apostle is often painfully aware that all eyes are upon him. He knows his life reflects Jesus Christ, and for this reason will always try to maintain and demonstrate the highest level of character and integrity.

### Verse 11 (numbered 47 in the source):

> *"And you know how we exhorted and comforted each one of you, as a father does his children."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:11

What could more clearly describe the apostle's position in the local church? He exhorts one member to keep the faith, comforts another going through trials and suffering, and instructs another concerning his responsibility to Christ and the church. He can be all things to all men.

To save time and space, let us move ahead to:

### Verse 19:

> *"For who is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? Is it not you?"*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 2:19

The apostle has, as some have said, "one foot on earth and the other in eternity." He carries eternity in his heart, and his greatest desire is for God's children to be ready to meet Jesus at His coming, like a glorious bride awaiting her bridegroom.

## Verse 20 (numbered 48 in the source):

*"Yes, you truly are our glory and our joy."*

1 Thessalonians 2:20

This is the heart of apostolic ministry. It seeks not merely its own benefit, but that of others. Its glory and joy throughout eternity will be to present its beloved spiritual children to the Lord Jesus Christ as He receives them into His glorious Kingdom.

So, dear reader, what is the relationship between the apostle and the local church? What do you need him to be for you? Do you need comfort? He can provide it. Or do you need discipline? The apostle does that too. Perhaps you need exhortation or instruction in sound doctrine? He does that very well.

Do you need to be brought into divine order? That is his specialty. Do you need a father in ministry? That is what he does best.

# CHAPTER 4

## New Testament Apostles

Some debate the validity of apostolic ministry and its restoration to the church today. Some argue that apostolic ministry ceased with the death of the last apostle. I respect my brothers' opinions, but I cannot help asking: "Who was the last apostle?" Were the first twelve apostles, including Judas, the only apostles in the New Testament? What, then, can we say about Paul? What about Joseph, called Barsabbas? And what about Matthias? These two men were obviously recognized by the eleven as worthy candidates for appointment to apostolic ministry. When they cast lots, the lot fell to Matthias, and by common vote he was counted with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:26).

A strong argument for the continuation of apostolic ministry is Scripture's statement in Ephesians 4:11-15, which I quote in part:

> *"Until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*
>
> Ephesians 4:11-15

If these words mean what they say, then today we need apostolic ministry, indeed all five ministries. No individual or ministry, regardless of effectiveness or perfection, can bring the saints to maturity. Pastoral ministry is vital to the process, but is only one of five ministries that must work together to achieve the goal of bringing the church to maturity.

Jesus is waiting for a bride; of this we can be certain. Waiting for what? Why has He not already come for her if she is already perfected and mature? How can we explain the delay? My usual explanation is this: When a man seeks a bride to marry, he does not look among kindergarten pupils. Is this inconsiderate toward children? Of course not! They are lovely, sweet, and delicate, but they are not of marriageable age! Marrying a five-year-old child would be madness!

Likewise, the church has remained in kindergarten for centuries. As the universal church, we are nowhere near the measure of Christ's full stature. Will some reach this fullness in this life? Certainly, I believe so. This is our calling and destiny.

Do you want to know whether I believe in the manifestation of mature sons? Yes, I do. Or perhaps you want to know whether I believe it is possible in this life to reach a place of full maturity and perfection. Again, I must say yes. A word of explanation to remove any confusion: the biblical word "perfection" does not imply perfection in a human or fleshly sense. In its biblical context, perfection means completeness or maturity. If someone disagrees with the idea of Christian perfection, perhaps that person will agree that Christian maturity is indeed possible and a goal worth pursuing.

Does God have a provision for perfecting the church? He does. That provision is the fivefold ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. To say that one or any of these ministries has ceased is inconsistent with Scripture and unreasonable to suppose.

I often wonder what objection there could be to restoring apostolic ministry. If it was given by God, and I believe it was, then it can only benefit the Body of Christ and everyone in it. Perhaps fear of abuse prompts objections. Granted, there will be abuses as many call themselves apostles.

Resistance to change and opposition to anything new from God are an old curse in the church. I believe this is part of the answer. However, I believe the issue is a lack of understanding of apostolic ministry and its function in today's church. We will leave this for another chapter and now study the apostles mentioned in the New Testament.

> *"And calling His twelve disciples, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal every sickness and disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, surnamed Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out..."*
>
> Matthew 10:1-5

In verse one we have the first twelve disciples, who are called apostles in verse two. When specifically "sent" by Jesus with power and authority, they became "sent ones," which is what apostles means. No one can deny the place these twelve, with the possible exception of Judas, hold in eternity. No one can dispute that they form the church's foundation, with Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone.

The twelve apostles appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ:

### Simon, Called Peter

The great fisherman who became a powerful apostle. Two symbols are associated with Peter. The first is a bunch of keys, for he was the disciple to whom Jesus gave the Kingdom's keys; the second is a rooster, because he wept bitterly when it crowed in the high priest's courtyard. Many believe he was crucified and martyred in Rome.

### Andrew

Tradition is rich concerning this apostle. He is said to have been powerfully used in working miracles, including raising many from the dead. He is said to have preached in many parts of the world, including Russia. He is also Scotland's patron saint. Fourth-century writings record that Andrew was crucified in Greece.

### James, Son of Zebedee

The first apostle to die as a martyr at Herod's hand.

### John

The apostle who outlived the others. John is believed to have died around the end of the first century, although there is no record of his death.

### Philip

Legend says that Philip and a small group ministered in Asia Minor. Accounts of the apostle's death differ, but many believe he was hanged and died as a martyr.

### Bartholomew

He is Nathanael, whom Jesus met under the fig tree. Ancient writers say he traveled through India, various parts of Mesopotamia, Lycaonia, and Armenia, or the land of Ararat. There are two theories about his death. One says he was crucified upside down; the other says he was flayed to death in Armenia, or the land of Ararat.

### Thomas

The great apostle to India. He died when pierced by a spear while kneeling in prayer.

### Matthew

The author of the Gospel bearing his name. His life and travels are the subject of much speculation, but no reliable evidence exists. He is believed to have ministered in various parts of the world, including Ethiopia and Arabia. Tradition says he was killed by the sword, becoming a martyr.

### James, Son of Alphaeus

Little reliable evidence is available concerning this apostle. Tradition and some ancient writings say he traveled through Spain; others say he traveled and ministered in England and Ireland. A more recent legend says he settled in Persia, where he died a martyr.

### Lebbaeus/Thaddaeus

The apostle with three names: Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus, and Judas, not Iscariot. Tradition places him in the Syrian kingdom, where he died as a martyr.

### Simon the Zealot

The apostle known for his zeal. Simon traveled to what are now known as the British Isles. Later he went to Persia, where he died by being sawn apart (Hebrews 11:35).

## Judas Iscariot

The tragic testimony and death of this apostle are well known to all.

Other apostles identified in the New Testament, in alphabetical order:

Andronicus - Romans 16:7

Apollos - 1 Corinthians 3:22

Barnabas - Acts 14:1-14

Epaphroditus, called a "messenger" - Philippians 2:25-30. Note: The words messenger and apostle have the same Greek root.

James, the Lord's brother - Galatians 1:19

Junia - Romans 16:7

Matthias - Acts 1:26

Paul - Romans 1:1

Silas - Acts 15:22

Timothy - 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:6

Two unnamed apostles - 2 Corinthians 8:18-23. Paul praises these two "brothers," describing one as someone "whose praise in the Gospel is spread throughout all the churches," and the other as someone "whom we have often proved diligent in many things." Then, in verse 23, Paul groups them together and testifies of them: "They are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ." As mentioned earlier, the Greek word for apostle, ambassador, or messenger is the same.

The Lord Jesus Christ - Hebrews 3:1. The first and last of all apostolic ministry. Our blessed Lord Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

These humble, powerful apostles paid a high price for God's Kingdom. Most died painfully at the hands of those for whom they sacrificed their lives. May our hearts be broken as we reflect on these men of God's lives and deaths.

May these men be a testimony and example to each of us who desire to be used by God in these last days. Should we who wish to be used by God in the service of our great King and Lord expect anything less than they experienced? Is the world a more pleasant place today? Are the threats fewer now? Are the risks smaller?

We need people to arise today with the same apostolic zeal and fervor as our fathers in the faith. Anyone who considers apostolic ministry a place of glamour and praise is certainly mistaken. Someone who desires to control another's life is deceived in his own heart and understanding.

Apostolic ministry is a ministry of sacrifice and loneliness. It is a ministry of sacrifice and brokenness before God and men. A present-day apostle would benefit greatly from studying the lives of men like Paul, who was persecuted from city to city and spent many months chained to a Roman soldier. A young apostle would also do well to consider James, who, at a pagan king's whim, was abruptly taken from his home, separated from his family, and executed simply to please a group of religious hypocrites.

Something must be said about the true apostolic spirit. An apostle is someone sent by Jesus to serve people in love, sacrifice, and humility. The apostle is not a lord, but a slave bound to God's calling and love for the Kingdom. The apostle can never die because the apostolic spirit never dies. The apostle cannot be killed because he has already died to himself, his will, and his desires. You cannot kill a man who has already died.

Are you, dear reader, an apostle? If so, lay down your life as Jesus did and as all the apostles before you did. If someone must go, let it be you. If someone must sacrifice, let it be you. If someone must give, let it be you. If forgiveness is needed, be the first to forgive. If someone must humble himself, let it be you. If someone must die, let it be you. If someone must speak, be that person. If someone must challenge the Babylonian religious system that holds people's souls captive, be that person.

Are you an apostle? Then love as a father loves his children. Are you an apostle? Then conduct your life accordingly and be a man of God. Are you an apostle? Then consider your neighbor better than yourself and serve him. Are you an apostle? Then the church needs you; the multitudes are crying out for your life. Congregational pastors are desperate for you to be everything apostolic ministry is in essence. Are you an apostle? Then a new

generation of young believers will never become what God intended without you. Does this make you proud? Then you are not an apostle.

If you are an apostle, you will die serving people. You will sacrifice for the ignorant. You will give to the ungrateful.

Are you an apostle? Then you will lay down your life for the unrighteous, hoping to bring change to that life. Are you an apostle? Then you will own nothing. Are you an apostle? Then you can lay down your own life and die for the Gospel. Are you an apostle? The list goes on...

If you are an apostle and fulfill your ministry faithfully, you will have a rich reward in heaven. You will find yourself among an exclusive company of men and women who held fast to eternal things and counted the world as loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord, for whom we have suffered the loss of all these things so that we may gain Christ and be found in Him (Philippians 3:8-9).

To Jesus the Apostle, everything!

# CHAPTER 5

## The Signs of an Apostle

In considering the signs of true apostolic ministry, a person might be drawn to outward manifestations of power and authority. Although these accompany apostleship, they are not the first sign mentioned in the New Testament, as the verse below shows.

> *"The credentials of apostleship were demonstrated among you with all perseverance, through signs, wonders, and miraculous powers."*
>
> 2 Corinthians 12:12

The first sign the apostle Paul mentions is patience. I find this particularly interesting and have spent considerable time pondering why patience is the first sign of apostleship.

I have concluded that patience is mentioned first because it is a matter of character pointing to an individual's heart, rather than to gifts, which do not necessarily testify to a person's character or integrity. In apostolic ministry, the inner matter of character development is paramount to God. Since apostleship carries such authority and influence in the church, character is of the utmost importance.

For the student of apostolic ministry, a correct understanding of patience's true meaning is important. Patience as we naturally understand it means waiting patiently for something until it happens, remaining calm while awaiting an answer to prayer or something we have anticipated.

In this context, however, patience means something a little different. In the New Testament, patience means remaining steadfast amid opposition. It can be described as remaining faithful to a task even through terrible difficulties and persecution. A patient person stands firm even when waves of persecution rise against him.

When we consider the Greek word translated as patience in 2 Corinthians 12:12, we find hupomone, meaning cheerful endurance. Its root means to remain firm and intact while undergoing pressure or

difficulty. Patience operating in an apostle's heart and life undoubtedly testifies to his humility and surrender to God's dealings.

To say that someone is patient has lost some of its impact today. A patient person stands firm while others stumble. He remains steadfast through storms or severe difficulties.

This biblical patience is crucial in an apostle's life because he will face many difficulties, be misunderstood and criticized, and may even suffer martyrdom for his faith. We must not forget that nearly all the New Testament apostles ended their lives in death and patient suffering at the hands of hostile crowds or religious systems.

Paul's ministry was marked by patience amid great difficulties, as we read in 2 Corinthians 6:4-10:

> *"On the contrary, in everything commending ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleepless nights, in fastings..."*
>
> 2 Corinthians 6:4-10

Notice the things through which Paul exercised patience. Now the apostle reveals the "how" of his endurance through the word "in."

> *"In purity, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, in the word of truth, in God's power, through the weapons of righteousness, both offensive and defensive; through honor and dishonor, through ill repute and good repute; as deceivers, yet truthful; as unknown, yet well known; as dying, yet behold, we live; as punished, yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet enriching many; having nothing, yet possessing everything."*
>
> 2 Corinthians 6:4-10

The Scripture above is a powerful testimony to the apostle's faith, character, and patience. Is it any wonder that an apostle's first sign is patience?

Only through a humble, patient, broken spirit can a man or woman walk in true apostolic power and authority.

Now we will briefly observe the other signs of an apostle: signs, wonders, and miracles. It is clearly true that Paul, much like the Great Apostle, Jesus Christ, walked in great power and demonstrations of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 testify to this:

> *"My speech and my preaching did not consist of persuasive words of wisdom, but of demonstration of the Spirit and of power."*
>
> 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

An apostle will never be satisfied with mere words of preaching. He will always seek breakthrough in the Spirit and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Lifeless preaching, foolish teaching, or mere Christian theory will never survive an apostle's close scrutiny. Nothing less than God's genuine power will satisfy the apostolic mind. This partly explains the opposition apostolic ministry experiences.

Not everyone welcomes God's power and the move of the Holy Spirit. Not everyone wants Jesus to manifest His power and glory among His people. But an apostle will accept nothing less.

Signs, wonders, and miracles will accompany apostolic ministry. These signs and wonders vary in their manifestation, but they will be supernatural occurrences pointing to Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

There has been little demonstration of power in the church and very little confirmation of God's Word as it is preached or ministered. Restoring apostolic ministry will bring renewed signs and wonders to confirm God's Word and convince unbelievers that God is indeed moving and transforming the hearts of men and women.

# CHAPTER 6

## Apostolic Character

Apostolic ministry is a gift from God; it has nothing to do with the individual. God makes His choices according to His eternal purpose and calling. No one can take credit for being called an apostle. Even the great apostle Paul attributed his calling to God's sovereign appointment. Paul's assessment of himself was "the least of all the saints" (Ephesians 3:7-8). These were neither mere words nor false humility. He knew his place and position in Jesus Christ, just as he was aware of his weaknesses and failures.

The higher someone's position in God's Kingdom, the greater the responsibility. We cannot overemphasize the demand for character in an apostle. An apostle without impeccable character is like a cloud without rain. He looks good and may bring great expectations, but ultimately brings frustration, wounds, disappointment, confusion, or worse.

Character is defined as the combination of emotional, intellectual, and moral qualities distinguishing an individual. Ministry is God's gift; character is our gift to God. Ministry is an imparted gift, whereas character is developed and cultivated throughout a person's life. Character is not merely honesty; it goes beyond this to the deepest convictions of a man's or woman's heart. True character testifies to a person's inner strength and moral and ethical constitution.

Character is a person's ethical and moral quality governing thoughts and actions. It is developed through discipline, first through parents or mentors, then through the individual's self-discipline.

Character development results from various characteristics, such as:

## Choices

Human beings have the unique privilege of making choices. Animals live by instinct, whereas we humans live by our choices. We choose whether to serve God. We choose where and how we will live. Our personal choices reveal our character more than anything else. Choices made in secret are the most important. The Bible declares that "our Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:4). The great secret to public reward in ministry is understanding that our secret life is seen by God alone. What we do in private becomes a great key in an apostle's life. Character will be seen and recognized by men, but it is developed for God. We can deceive and impress men, but not God. He knows every thought and sees everything we do. True character results in a powerful life and ministry before people, but it is tested in secret before God. One great demonstration of apostolic character is revealed in Acts chapter sixteen. Here we find the apostles Paul and Silas in prison, not just an ordinary prison but an underground one, with their feet bound in chains. Some say this was the deepest dungeon, several yards below ground. I ask you: What could be worse? Could another situation be more discouraging? Yet around midnight, in the darkest place, we find Paul and Silas praying and praising God. Whom were they trying to impress? Character impresses no one and does not need to. Character may be observed by men, but it is never for their benefit. Character is an individual's inner conviction directing his conduct. In other words, character reveals what someone is more than what he does. Indeed, what he does is an outward manifestation of what he is before God.

## Humility

Apostles are humble people. Humility is not putting yourself down; it is exalting God in every situation. An apostle's humility is the mantle he wears and may be his greatest characteristic. When Jesus' disciples asked who would be greatest in heaven's Kingdom, He made it clear that greatness in God's eyes belongs to those humble as a child (Matthew 18:1-4). An apostle's nature is contrary to arrogance and pride. His boldness and confidence may sometimes be mistaken for pride, but that would be an error on the part of those judging him that way. Humility is denying oneself. Humility is not degrading oneself, but exalting others. It is putting one's neighbor first; nevertheless, it can be forceful and persuasive at the same time.

The Bible does not define humility for us; it simply commands us to humble ourselves. Some things, like humility, are difficult to define but obvious when present, and even more obvious when absent.

So many biblical promises are made to those who humble themselves, such as Isaiah 57:15:

> *"For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, but also with the contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite."*
>
> Isaiah 57:15

Blessings and revival come to the humble. Apostolic ministry is to be an example of humility.

## Attitudes

A person's character is revealed by his attitudes. A wrong attitude is something all of us must deal with from time to time. However, as someone said, "Attitude determines altitude." An apostle's life will be beset by challenges and difficulties, as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians chapter eleven. Here he describes his sufferings for the Gospel. It is a challenging list of difficulties and dangerous situations that would discourage anyone seeking personal glory or any self-appointed apostle. There is a price to pay for apostolic ministry, and only those with strong character and right attitudes will be worthy of the calling and challenge. A person's attitude is his response to surrounding circumstances. The circumstances of the Lord Jesus' life were often adverse and difficult. The same can be said of Paul's life and those of the other apostles. A person's attitude reveals when he is being governed by circumstances. Adverse circumstances often provoke a negative attitude. However, those in leadership, especially those exercising apostolic ministry, cannot put on such a display of carnality.

## Respect

Apostles are respectful. They respect each person's dignity and value. More than that, they respect God and His ways. Apostles hold God's ways in the highest esteem and seek to communicate them to everyone they meet. Like a father with his children, an apostle believes in every individual's worth. Apostles see people as made in God's image and therefore deserving of kindness and respect.

## Availability

Apostles are available to those they serve. Moses is said to have sat to judge the people, to hear their problems and needs (Exodus 18:13). We know that this ultimately became too heavy a responsibility for Moses, but the point is that he was available. An apostle must be absolutely certain which group of people God has sent him to, and be available and approachable. We have all witnessed Christian "celebrities" making their grand appearance, performing their task, and disappearing before anyone can approach. This must not happen with an apostle. In some situations, access to ministers must admittedly be limited, but this must be the exception, not the rule. Apostles are not celebrities; they are fathers and servants who desire to touch, embrace, and minister a sweet, encouraging word to God's family.

Again, Paul's life provides an example of availability to those he served. In 2 Timothy 3:10-12 we read, "You, however, have followed my doctrine." No secret doctrine exists in an apostle's heart to be revealed only to a "chosen few." It is true that an apostle knows many secret things of the Lord, truths that cannot be revealed to babies, but he has no deep, hidden revelation of a selective or divisive nature. Apostolic revelation is for building up Christ's body. There are five levels of revelation in God's Word. We find milk for babies (1 Peter 2:2); bread for children (Mark 7:27); meat, or portions of food, for men (Luke 12:42); solid food for the mature, or perfect (Hebrews 5:14); and hidden manna for the overcomer (Revelation 2:17). The apostle can discern the spiritual maturity of those to whom he ministers and feed them accordingly.

He next says, "You have followed my way of life." The apostle's life is an open book for all to observe. He has no secret life hidden from those he serves. Young disciples learn much by observing an apostle's lifestyle: how he treats his wife, manages his affairs, and relates to other believers and unbelievers. An apostle's life is exposed to everyone, and he must allow his lifestyle to teach others how to live, others desperately seeking an example to follow. Preaching is not leadership; all leadership is established by example. Jesus did not open a Bible seminary to train His disciples. He simply lived with them and allowed them to observe His conduct in every

daily situation. This should be an example to each of us. People are watching every step we take, especially the younger ones.

"You have followed my purpose." Apostolic ministry is very clear about its purpose: to see the church mature and presented as a virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). This encompasses the full spectrum of the Great Commission, from evangelism and church growth to fully mature believers. This new, young generation is desperately seeking a purpose to live for and, if necessary, die for. Peter's preaching on Pentecost included these words: "Save yourselves from this perverse [purposeless] generation" (Acts 2:40). An apostle is intense about his purpose in God and does not hesitate to communicate it through doctrine and lifestyle.

"You have followed my faith." A person will never outgrow the need for pure faith, and apostolic ministry will be the greatest example of this lifestyle. The apostle lives by faith and will not become dependent on any man or organization to meet his needs. The very nature of apostolic ministry can be confrontational and changeable, and apostles will never agree to please men in exchange for personal benefits. Paul made tents, supporting himself by his craft so that he would not burden anyone (1 Thessalonians 2:9). The point is not that the apostle has an independent or arrogant spirit. The opposite is true: he will be broken and contrite in personality and will joyfully submit to those in spiritual authority. An apostle is a servant who will never violate this posture.

"You have followed my longsuffering." Longsuffering means being loyal to one's convictions and faith. A longsuffering person will not surrender to difficulties and will not yield even in the face of death.

"You have followed my love." Jesus said: "By this they will know you are My disciples, if you love one another." All believers must walk in love and fulfill the greatest commandment of all. An apostle will walk in deep, manifest love for the church. Jesus loves the church, and so does the apostle. We must distinguish between the church as a group of individuals and the church as an institution. Apostleship may demonstrate profound indifference toward any institution calling itself a church but not meaningfully caring for the flock. Indeed, some institutions call themselves churches while exploiting people and using them and their resources for personal gain. An apostle will not tolerate such an attitude and may openly

oppose it. The apostle is a father serving Christ's body and will manifest deep love and affection for each member.

"You have followed my patience." As mentioned, patience implies perseverance and loyalty to God's eternal calling. The first sign of apostolic ministry is holy loyalty to the things of God. While many are carried by every wind of doctrine and others always seek some "new thing," the apostle remains constant in his calling and purpose to see the church reach its full stature and maturity. He has a heavenly vision and an abiding sense of eternity.

"You have followed my persecutions." An apostle's life is not easy or comfortable. His life no longer belongs to him. He owns nothing, yet possesses all things. Paul did not conceal the price he paid in persecution. He rejoiced amid persecution because he knew it was the price of such a calling. It is good and honest to share with a new generation of disciples and apostles that being called an apostle has a price.

"You have followed my afflictions." The Bible says: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him from them all" (Psalm 34:19). Those who read this book to the end will finish with a deep conviction that apostolic life is not a life of celebrity or fame. Some have rightly said that persecution and affliction are like income tax: the more you earn, the more you pay. Anyone discerning an apostolic calling would be well advised to consider afflictions a way of life and joyfully depend on God's grace, power, anointing, and presence to keep him in all his ways. His grace is certainly sufficient for you.

## Commitment

Apostles are extremely committed people. They have the maturity and capacity to maintain deep relationships and tend to be extremely loyal. As fathers, they want only to see those they serve prosper and find their place in God. An apostle sincerely seeks others' success and welfare and is extremely generous with time and resources.

## Teachability

Apostles do not have a monopoly on truth. Their lifestyle and posture are a continual pursuit of truth and experience in God. They realize how limited their knowledge is compared with God's infinite wisdom and knowledge.

## Endurance

Apostles do not give up easily. They are tenacious in their initiative and determination to see God's glory released on earth. The first sign of apostleship Paul mentioned was "with all patience" (2 Corinthians 12:12). The literal translation here should be perseverance, meaning endurance. The apostle will probably be the first to arrive and the last to leave. He will have the character to see things through to God's conclusion, whatever the price.

## Reverence

Apostles possess a rare sense of reverence, an uncommon reverence and respect for God's things. A fully developed, mature apostle will be a person of deep, abiding reverence. Apostles command respect, not by human demand, but through the nature and character of their lives, sacrifice, and service.

We live in a time of compromise and great moral and spiritual decline. Many have become bitter or disappointed by the fall of "great" men. Christ's body has been guilty of idolizing some ministers almost to the point of deifying them. One thing is certain: the higher someone is exalted in men's eyes, the greater the fall can be.

Every believer is expected to walk in integrity and Christlike character. Because the apostle is first in ministerial rank and order, God and men place the highest expectations upon him.

# CHAPTER 7

## False Apostles

I would like to distinguish between two categories of false apostles. There are, and will be, honest, well-intentioned souls who claim to be apostles on the basis of their own sense of calling and importance. We cannot say they are deliberate impostors, but rather men and women misled by their own immaturity or even by the influence of those around them. Compared with the false apostles to whom I will devote the remainder of this chapter, these people scarcely pose a threat. It is important to understand that I am not excusing their error.

Every genuine move of God will have its counterfeits and impostors. The emerging apostolic ministry will be no different. The false, however, does not invalidate the authentic. Satan always seeks to discredit what God is doing by disguising his own messengers as the real thing. With biblical discernment and a little common sense, these deceivers will be easily recognized by their aims and attitudes.

What is a false apostle? The term appears only once in Scripture, in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15:

> *"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light. It is no great thing, then, if his own ministers disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will be according to their works."*
>
> 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

The Greek term for "false apostle" used here is pseudapostolos, meaning those who pretend to be apostles but are not. They are impostors motivated to obtain personal gain through fraud. One chief concern occupying a false apostle's mind and motives is accumulating money. We must not forget that one of Jesus' twelve apostles, Judas, sold the Lord and his own soul in pursuit of financial gain. Judas fell into the money trap!

Although this chapter concerns false apostles, it is helpful to remind the reader that impostors will always be present in all five ministries. Just as false apostles exist, false ministers will always exist in every place and ministerial function. For example, we see:

1. False prophets - Matthew 7:15

2. False pastors - John 10:12-13

3. False teachers - 2 Timothy 4:3-4

4. False evangelists - Galatians 1:9

5. False apostles - Revelation 2:2

False and deceptive ministries are not limited to apostolic ministry.

Identifying the false becomes easier when we are familiar with the true. This book is devoted to presenting the true apostolic movement arising today. We will not need to spend a great deal of time describing the false, since the real and true will always reveal it. Light always dispels darkness. Truth always exposes error. Integrity and purity always expose deception and corruption.

In my opinion, a false apostle will always pursue his evil intentions from one or both of two motives: pride or the love of money. I have already said that humility is a sign of a true apostle's character. I maintain that the character of both the true and the false apostle will be revealed by their attitude toward money. How someone handles money is a good indication of the heart's condition.

Christians in Acts voluntarily sold their lands, houses, and property and laid the money at the apostles' feet. Evidently, they had no reason to distrust the apostles, whom they believed would use the money, all of it, for its designated purpose (read Acts 4:35-37). The coming move of God will place great sums in the hands of Christ's body. It is easy to see why a false apostle would be tempted to be counted and confused with a real, true apostle. If he can successfully deceive his followers, he has much to gain and profit from his deceptive tactics.

To help the reader discern the false from the true, I offer the following characteristics that may be present in a false apostle's character and practices:

1. Secrecy and mystery surrounding his doctrine and life instead of transparency. Secrets are a good indication that something is wrong (read Galatians 2:4-5).

2. A spirit of dependency and control over people instead of promoting true freedom. A true apostle never wishes to bind or control anyone (read Galatians 2:4-5).

3. Manipulation or flattering words to gain approval instead of speaking the truth in love (read Romans 16:18 and Ephesians 4:15).

4. A sexually seductive influence over women instead of purity and respect (read Matthew 23:14 and 2 Timothy 3:6).

5. Deception and falsehood instead of honesty and integrity (read Matthew 7:15 and 24:11).

6. False miracles granted by demonic spirits to persuade and deceive (read Matthew 24:24).

7. A religious spirit and carnal mind instead of heavenly wisdom and the mind of Christ (read Colossians 2:8).

8. Vain religious traditions and symbolism instead of true worship and substance (read Colossians 2:8 and 18).

9. Seeking to draw people to themselves instead of leading them to Christ (read Acts 20:28-31).

10. Looking for what they can gain by approaching the local church instead of reaching society with the Gospel. True apostles are interested in winning souls (read Matthew 28:18-20).

The conduct described above is obviously contrary to the approved spirit and methods of true ministry. Any consistent violation of these principles may clearly indicate, if not warn of, a false apostolic ministry.

I will conclude this chapter with four suggestions for how an individual or congregation can distance themselves from, or guard against, the ministry and influence of false apostles.

### 1. Avoid placing yourself under their influence.

Never allow anyone to manipulate or intimidate you into submission. A true apostle is a father in the Lord and will manifest the fruits of humility, holiness, love, purity, and faith. Consider Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:8-11; Galatians 2:4-6.

### 2. Separate yourself completely from them.

Sometimes this is difficult because of relationships or feelings. Separation may mean division within your family or circle of friends. However, the danger and seriousness of being under false ministries' influence cannot be overstated. You cannot afford to associate with men and women of questionable character without risking corruption and loss of credibility. The Bible clearly instructs us to separate from such people. Consider 1 Corinthians 15:33; Galatians 5:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; 2 John 1:6; 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

### 3. Confront and challenge them to abandon deception and evil practices.

A word of caution: If you are a new convert, leave confrontation and challenge to men and women of God who are mature in the faith. Do not become involved in matters too lofty for you (read Psalm 131:1). Nevertheless, false apostles must be confronted and warned by legitimate church leaders. Consider Titus 1:9-16 and 3:8-11.

### 4. Expose them to other members of Christ's body.

Another word of caution: There is always a danger of falling victim to suspicion and gossip. Be careful! Every true apostle will be criticized, as Jesus was, as Paul was, and as all other apostles, past and present, have been. Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and we must not fall victim to his cunning. One of Satan's chief strategies is to dishonor a valid ministry through lies and falsehood. The Bible says we must not receive an accusation against an elder unless confirmed by two or more witnesses. Pray that you do not fall victim to something as dangerous as listening to and repeating rumors spread by immature, envious, or suspicious people. Judging another member of Christ's body is undoubtedly dangerous.

However, because we are dealing directly with false apostles, we must confront them and expose them for what they are (read Romans 16:17). It is important to observe that the Lord Jesus openly confronted the Jewish leaders of His day, exposing what they truly were: "hypocrites" (read Luke 11:44; Mark 7:5-6).

There can be no doubt that the restoration of emerging apostolic ministry will become Satan's target. No greater threat to Satan's kingdom exists on earth than apostolic ministry. Consequently, Satan will use lies and false accusations to neutralize, dishonor, or take to an extreme what God is doing. As we open ourselves to the emergence of true apostolic ministry, let us remain steadfast in prayer and attentive to the genuine. If you recognize the authentic, you will certainly identify and avoid the false.

# CHAPTER 8

## The Apostolic Calling for Women

I have spent considerable time pondering this chapter devoted to women with an apostolic calling. I have concluded that it will be difficult to write and perhaps controversial in content.

If someone says no women have an apostolic calling, then, to be consistent with that reasoning, the same person would have to say there are no women pastors, teachers, prophets, or evangelists. This is certainly a very radical view.

Some hold this conviction firmly and completely exclude women from serving in the New Testament's five ministries. I cannot agree. I believe there are many women pastors, teachers, evangelists, and, of course, missionaries, which may simply be another name for a woman with an apostolic calling.

I believe there are many women whose calling is apostolic. Although I have no specific biblical text or verse to support my claim, I do have a passage declaring that there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:28).

I am aware that this passage's context specifically concerns becoming God's children through faith in Jesus Christ and does not speak specifically of ministry. Nevertheless, it is an important principle that must neither be ignored nor taken to an extreme.

Clearly Jesus appointed no woman to apostolic office among the first twelve apostles. It may equally be true that there were no priestesses in Old Testament service. However, the reader should examine Exodus 38:8, where the Bible refers to the "women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting." No woman is mentioned among the more than twenty-five apostles identified in the New Testament.

Now I have a problem on my hands. What do I do with the thousands of women in ministry who are obviously, at least to me, anointed by God, very successful, and useful in their various areas of ministry? Should I eliminate them all and remove them from their ministry or function? Or should I simply recognize and accept them as ministers without taking

Scripture seriously? I find neither opinion comfortable. So, essentially, I have decided to risk controversy by including this chapter on women with an apostolic calling.

There is no denying that God has always used women in His service. Examples confirming this are too numerous to mention within these pages' limited space. Nevertheless, I will cite several scriptural records in which God's daughters were powerfully used by Him.

Before returning to Scripture, let me first give a personal testimony concerning women's ministry in general and women with an apostolic calling in particular.

Among the half dozen or more people who have profoundly impacted my life, at least three are women. First is my wife, Marti. Is it possible to know someone better or more intimately than your own wife? I would say no. My wife is one of the greatest women of God I have ever known. Denying her place in God's plan and calling would be ridiculous. She has traveled around the globe and ministered to multitudes. My wife is convinced that God called her to serve Him in public ministry. Would I say she has an apostolic calling? If one accepts the general, simple definition of the term, "sent," then I must acknowledge that Marti Duke has been "sent" to Brazil as a Gospel minister.

Second, I must mention another minister who has profoundly impacted my life: June Lewis. When I met June, I was a young disciple with no experience in the things of God. June joined my wife, and we became great friends. She is a very gifted Bible teacher and for many years has literally traveled around the world preaching and teaching God's Word. I have never known a Bible teacher, worshiper, or intercessor like June Lewis. June's husband, my friend Milton, died many years ago in a tragic automobile accident. Since then, June has lived as a widow, has not remarried, and has set herself apart for God's service and work. As I have said, June has traveled to many nations on several continents. How did she do it? To me, the answer is simple: God sent her. Does this mean she has an apostolic calling and ministry? To me, the answer is yes. You can reach your own conclusion.

I can also mention Gwen Shaw. I met Gwen when I was a young pastor in Florida. She and her husband Jim came to me more or less by "accident," but in the brief span of a poorly planned service with very few people, my life and ministry were forever transformed! I have never seen or

received ministry from an anointing like the one on her life. Sister Gwen shared how she traveled to inland China, leaving her home in Canada while still a teenager. She was so young that no mission agency would accept and send her, so she went, or should I say was sent, to the mission field. Gwen remained in inland China preaching the Gospel and making disciples until the last airplane took off. As her plane left the runway for Hong Kong, the Red Army was entering her city. She was the last missionary to leave before the communist takeover of China. She has since returned to China several times, smuggling Bibles and ministering to Christians suffering persecution.

From China, Gwen went to India, where she conducted great crusades, leading multitudes to Christ and establishing lasting relationships with the nation's pastors and leaders.

Gwen Shaw is undoubtedly a senior stateswoman in God's service and has fulfilled every biblical qualification necessary for exercising apostolic ministry.

Now I readily admit that these testimonies are just that: testimonies. No testimony, however powerful, can supersede God's written Word. Ultimately, our highest authority and rule of faith and practice is the Bible. With this in mind, let us turn our eyes to it and see how women of God were powerfully used in both Old and New Testaments.

By the mouth of two witnesses let every word be established...

*"The Lord gives the word; the women proclaiming the good news are a great army."*

Psalm 68:11, literal translation

*"You, O woman bringing good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift your voice mightily; lift it up, do not fear, and say to Judah's cities: Behold your God..."*

Isaiah 40:9

*"But every woman who prays or prophesies..."*

1 Corinthians 11:5

> *"And in the last days it shall be, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams... and upon My male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy."*
>
> Acts 2:17-18, Joel's prophecy, chapter 2

Here we have two witnesses from each Testament confirming that women are called to minister the Gospel's good news.

Furthermore, we can easily see that some prophets in both Old and New Testaments were women. Here are examples:

Exodus 15:20-21: "Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister."

2 Kings 22:13-20: "Huldah the prophetess, Shallum's wife."

Luke 2:36-38: "And Anna the prophetess was there, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher..."

Acts 21:8-9: "This man [Philip] had four unmarried daughters who prophesied."

I could continue proving from Scripture that God has anointed and used women throughout history. Indeed, Scripture clearly records women who were prophets, deacons, elders, teachers, worship ministers, judges, and many others.

Now let us return to women called to apostleship, to whom this chapter is devoted. Personally, I have no conflict with women being included among apostolic ranks. I also respect the arguments and reservations of brothers who do not share my opinion and do not wish to quarrel with them.

It is true that there were no women among the first twelve apostles. This is an extremely legitimate argument. It is also true that, with one possible exception, no women mentioned in the New Testament are called to apostolic ministry. That possible exception is Romans 16:7:

> *"Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are distinguished among the apostles and were in Christ before me."*
>
> Romans 16:7

Although Bible scholars differ, some believe Junia was a woman. One authoritative source is Thayer's Lexicon of Greek and Hebrew Words, which states that Junia was a woman and that Junia is a variant of Julia. Is this correct? Honestly, I do not know.

I am being deliberately flexible in my convictions as I write this chapter. My intention and desire are not to be dogmatic on this subject. We must walk cautiously where Scripture is not clear and conclusive.

My personal conviction is that if women are disqualified from any form of public ministry because of their gender, then, to be consistent in our biblical interpretation, we must exclude them from all positions of Christian ministry, as some indeed do. I do not share that opinion. Nor do I believe Scripture agrees with this extreme position.

Again, a word of personal testimony. I have known women upon whom I recognized an apostolic anointing and calling. I cannot explain it and certainly cannot deny it. I can only testify to what I have seen and heard. From time to time I meet a woman in ministry upon whom I can easily discern an apostolic calling. On at least one occasion, I was strongly compelled publicly to recognize and declare the apostolic anointing on a woman minister.

At this point, I wish to offer a word of caution to everyone, especially our dear sisters who are, or at least believe they are, called to apostolic ministry: always be found blameless before God and men. After all:

*"A man's gift [in this case a woman's] makes room for him."*

Proverbs 18:16

A person need promote himself as nothing more than a male or female servant, perhaps "slave" would be more appropriate, of Jesus Christ. If a woman is truly called by Jesus Christ to apostolic ministry, she will have the same authority to act and be required to have the same code of conduct; she will be subject to the same criteria of order and confirmation as a man. I refer the reader to chapter six, where I discuss apostolic character.

A word to the sisters: If Jesus confirms your calling to apostleship, then you have an apostolic ministry. However, I urge you to be gentle and tolerant toward honest, well-intentioned brothers who may find it difficult to accept a woman exercising apostolic office.

I beg you to determine to be such a woman of God that although some may question your ministerial calling, they cannot legitimately question your gentle, holy lifestyle, your servant's conduct, or the fruit of your life in Christ.

It is not a title that makes someone notable among the brethren. What really matters is the individual's character, nature, fruit, and anointing. The most appropriate biblical word here is: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). This admonition belongs in this chapter on women called to apostolic ministry, but in no way excludes the expanding apostolic order formed by men.

Unfortunately, every restorative move, like the restoration of apostolic ministry we are experiencing, will have abuses and excesses. This saddens me, and my prayer for everyone reading this book, whether you agree or not, is that you walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3). My conclusion, then, is that the Lord Jesus, the church's Head, does indeed call and anoint women to apostolic ministry today. To say that Jesus cannot or would not call and appoint a woman to represent Him as His ambassador to a people, nation, region, or city is not, in my opinion, consistent with God's counsel revealed throughout the Bible.

Some call themselves apostles but are not. Likewise, some call themselves nothing, yet have a calling. Apostolic ministry is a high calling that must not be sought, for it is given not according to man's will, but God's. Could we all agree to let God's will prevail and allow Him to use whomever He wishes in whatever way He wishes?

# CHAPTER 9

## The Making of an Apostle

When Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8). Apostolic ministry, like any other ministry, is imparted as a gift to those who receive it. My conviction and belief are that these gifts are predetermined in eternity and appointed by divine providence before a person's birth.

Although he had made great progress and was known among the religious people of his day, Paul stated that he had been "set apart from his mother's womb" for apostolic ministry.

This being so, it is evident that apostleship does not result from promotion from one ministry to another. A successful pastor, for example, is not promoted to apostle. Apostles are born apostles. Failure to understand this principle will result in confusion and error.

Apostles are apostles from their mothers' wombs. They are predetermined and called to exercise this function from birth. Now, clearly both men and women must undergo great preparation and testing before entering into and exercising apostolic ministry. In fact, many, if not most, will serve in other ministry areas before being released and recognized as true apostles. During these periods of preparation, which may sometimes last many years, apostolic character and experiences are developed, tested, and proved.

Apostles are essentially spiritual fathers and must therefore undergo extensive preparation and maturing before qualifying to serve as such. This does not change the fact, however, that throughout this time they were apostles in training.

The apostolic ministry function may be something a person grows into and attains, but the fact remains that these people were born with the apostolic calling, for from the beginning this was God's eternal calling upon their lives.

Many are familiar with God's word to Jeremiah:

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came forth from the womb I consecrated you and appointed you a prophet to the nations."*

Jeremiah 1:5

Jeremiah's response is exactly what yours and mine must have been:

*"Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child."*

Jeremiah 1:6

In His faithfulness, God begins by encouraging Jeremiah that he is indeed able to fulfill his function and confirms His words by stretching out His hand and touching Jeremiah's mouth, reaffirming: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9).

Imagine with me how Saul of Tarsus must have felt when struck by the revelation that his life had been preparation for a calling hitherto unknown to him: an apostle's life. Saul hated Christians and did his best to destroy them and everything they believed, yet he was born with an apostolic calling. It must have been a devastating revelation when he discovered the damage he had done and the pain he had caused so many people.

The first twelve disciples were called apostles long before they had any function or exercised public ministry. They had not even been born again when Jesus called them apostles. It was later, when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," that their lives were renewed.

The twelve did not have to do anything to become apostles. They were called apostles from the beginning. They walked in intimate fellowship with Jesus for three and a half years of preparation before entering their calling, but they were apostles from the first day.

My aim in this final chapter is not simply to prove a point, but to bring recognition and perhaps also rest to many men and women of God. If you are an apostle, this calling is "not from men nor through any man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead" (Galatians 1:1).

If this is true, you need do nothing except be faithful where God has placed you and be happy in His appointed place for your life. In His time, God will meet with you, providing your own Damascus Road experience, your own burning bush, or whatever is necessary to awaken you to your true and high calling as an apostle.

Suppose you are not called to apostolic ministry. Perhaps you have believed that apostleship is conferred through a series of religious, spiritual promotions and have aspired to it, or others have tried to put you in that position. If so, you need to rest and consider Scripture's instruction to "be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure." These comforting words follow that counsel: "For by doing these things you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:10).

For every ministry there is a corresponding grace. You will have grace only for the ministry to which you are called. Ministering outside God's grace is a sure road to frustration and failure. Any ministry is difficult even with God's grace, but impossible without it.

The Bible clearly says that God has placed every member in the body as it pleased Him. You have been placed in Christ's body as a minister with a specific place and rank. As God's servants, it does not matter where or in what ministerial function we have been placed. Servants have no right of choice in this matter. A servant's responsibility is simply to discern his calling and be faithful.

As God's servant, your only duty is faithfulness, as 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 says:

> *"Let men consider us as ministers of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, what is required of stewards is that each one be found faithful."*
>
> 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Some may aspire to apostolic ministry, thinking it an honor or a sign of success. This may or may not be true, depending on God's calling and grace. In this recent restoration of apostolic ministry, many will proclaim themselves apostles. Most will have pure motives, but others will not.

Ultimately, however, apostleship is God's calling and election and does not depend on man's will. To those who may aspire to an apostle's office and ministry, I present God's Word as given in Jeremiah 45:5: “And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them.”

We should never seek a ministry; we must seek God. If God has called you to apostolic ministry, it is within you. You do not have to seek it; it will find you from within and flow naturally from your life. You will not need to convince anyone or try to prove anything, for the signs, character, grace, and anointing will speak for themselves.

This being so, you will see how easy it is to remain in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and fulfill His calling, whatever it may be.

After all, our greatest ambition is to stand before Him on that glorious day and hear Him say: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

The End