

“THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE”

Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 2:2

Intro: “The apostles’ doctrine” was that which the apostles taught. It does not mean the teaching which they originated, but that which they were commissioned by God and by our Lord to teach. The word that Luke used in this verse for “doctrine” is the Greek word *didache*. It refers to that which they taught. Another Greek word which is used more frequently is the word *didaskalia*. And this too refers to the substance of the teaching. This is the word which Paul used in the Pastoral Epistles. In 1 Tim. 1:10 he spoke of “sound doctrine.” This means that which has not been corrupted. It is doctrine which is consistent with the teaching that the apostles did, and that which our Lord before them did. In 1 Tim. 4:6 the Apostle Paul spoke of “good doctrine.” And this, too, means that which is in total agreement with the teaching of the Apostles.

Now, lest we be confused as to what that means for us today, we only need to turn to verses like we find at the end of 2 Timothy 3 and the beginning of 2 Timothy 4 in order to identify what “sound doctrine,” or “good doctrine,” is. Reading from 2 Tim. 3:14, this is what Paul told Timothy:

- 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;
- 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
- 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 4

- 1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
- 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (Read v. 5 on p. 2.)

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 3:14-4:5).

— “The apostles’ doctrine” is to be found in the Scriptures, the Bible. And it includes the OT as well as the NT. And the Apostle Paul indicated to Timothy, who quite evidently had a good grounding in the teaching of the Scriptures given to him by his grandmother and his mother (see 2 Tim. 1:5), that there was no reason at all for him to change now that he was an adult and would be teaching others “sound doctrine.”

In addition, it is in these verses which I have just read that the Apostle Paul gives us what is the greatest statement in Scripture as to how we got our Bible. It harmonizes perfectly with what Peter said at the end of the first chapter of his second epistle, but Paul’s statement is more complete. And so let me re-read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. (Read.)

Notice what Paul said that the Scriptures were profitable for.

— And then in chapter 4 we have Paul’s charge to Timothy for his ministry. See it in verses 1 and 2. And here we come to the word “doctrine” again. And this is what Timothy was to preach even though he would face the time when men would “not endure sound doctrine,” but would be looking for teachers who would give them what they wanted to hear, and not what they needed to hear.

These are truths concerning the ministry of the church which have never been changed. No servant of the Lord has the right to do anything else in his ministry but to teach the Word.

Paul had indicated this earlier in this same epistle. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:1-2:

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

This second verse indicated that Paul taught Timothy, and Timothy was to teach “faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” So you have four generations here, if I may express it this way:

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- 1) Paul.
 - 2) Timothy.
 - 3) Faithful men.
 - 4) Others.

But instead of limiting Paul's ministry just to three more generations, the point of the verse is that as long as God leaves the Church on the earth, this is what the Church is to be doing, *preaching and teaching the Word of God*.

If you have been reading the prophets of the OT as many of us have, you will surely have noticed that the prophets made it very clear that they were delivering the Word of God to the people to whom they had been sent. When the Lord through Jeremiah was condemning the false prophets who were telling the people about their dreams, this is what He said:

28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (Jer. 23:28-29).

And this is what we read in Isaiah 8:20:

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

When Luke wrote the words that we have in Acts 2:42, "the apostles' doctrine" had not all been committed to writing like it has now. And so the people were to a great extent dependent upon the verbal instruction given to them by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this was the period of the apostles' greatest ministry. And they did their job well.

After the martyrdom of Stephen, we read this at the beginning of Acts 8 which tells us that the persecution in Jerusalem only hastened the spread of the Gospel:

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4).

And then in verse 5 of this same chapter we read that "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." The Apostles in

their doctrine found that preaching the Word, meant preaching Christ. The early church was devoted to the preaching of the Word of God, and this is what led to the amazing growth of the church throughout the Roman Empire!

Now for the remainder of our time tonight, let's go back to what the Apostle Paul told Timothy in the latter part of 2 Timothy 3 and the beginning of chapter 4. It obviously seems to some who profess to be leaders in the church today, that we need to go beyond the Scripture, beyond what they did in the early church, to reach the people of this generation. And so many refuse to be limited by the Word of God. And when men start to go beyond the Word, they soon depart from the Word altogether.

And so let us note:

I. HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE? (2 Tim. 3:16a).

**II. HOW ARE WE TO PROFIT FROM THE SCRIPTURES?
(2 Tim. 3:16b).**

**III. WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD PREPARE US TO DO?
(2 Tim. 3:17).**

Note the emphasis in Scripture on the Word, our walk, and the work that the Lord has given us to do. It is here in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17. It is in Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18:13-27. And it is also in Paul's prayer for the Colossians in Col. 1:9-10, leading on to verses 11 and 12.

Concl: There is more that I want to say about the Apostle's Doctrine, but that will come later. What I want to establish in your minds tonight is that the ministry of the church is the ministry of the Word of God. We are to learn its teachings, then apply its teachings to our daily lives, and finally to spend our lives spreading the teachings of the apostles which is nothing less than the teaching of all of Scripture plus nothing else! We are not to be psychologists, or entertainers, or politicians, or social reformers. We are to be people who love the Lord and who love His Word, and who are always eager to learn more about the Word so that we can learn more about our Lord.

This is our mission. This is our high calling. We can thank the Lord for those who were faithful to the mission before us, and let us seek by God's

grace to be faithful in our day, that we might influence the coming generation to carry on the same work until our Lord returns.

- The church learns from its leadership. May we take our directions from the apostles of the NT and the prophets of the OT. God's directions for His people has never changed. We are to be diligent in "rightly dividing the Word of truth." That is our sacred trust from the hand of God Himself.

THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE IN PETER'S MESSAGE AT PENTECOST

Acts 2:14-40

Intro: Peter's sermon which he preached on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, has always been of great interest to people in the body of Christ, and especially to preachers and teachers of the Word. Frequently it has been required study for students who are learning to preach, that is, in Homiletics classes. Part of the interest has been due to the amazing response that Peter had. Not only were "about three thousand souls" were saved that day (and this was the Holy Spirit's count), but before Peter could tell them what to do, we read that as the people listened to his message, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Some have naively felt that if they could preach what Peter preached, they might have the same success that he had. But to date I have never heard of that happening.

Nevertheless, it is a very good message and a very important message. It is good because it was the truth that Peter was preaching. It was important because it was actually a keynote message for what has been called, "the apostles' doctrine." See Acts 2:42. Of course it does not include all of the teaching of the apostles. We would have to go from this chapter on to the end of the NT to get all of the teaching of the apostles. But this gives us our first taste of "the apostles' doctrine" following the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So what I would like to do tonight is to go through this message to point out what are the outstanding points which we see in this message so that we can see more clearly what Luke, in writing the book of Acts, had in mind when he used the expression, "the apostles' doctrine," or the apostles' teaching.

The first point of major importance is that we see in Peter's message that he firmly believed in:

I. THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

As he was seeking to explain the unusual events which were taking place, he cited first of all *the prophecy of Joel*. See Acts 2:16-21 which is a

quotation from Joel 2:28-32. We would have to say that what had taken place was not a complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, but it certainly was a partial fulfillment, and a major part.

Peter's second reference to the Old Testament was from a Psalm written by David, King David. The Psalm is Psalm 16, and the verses in that Psalm which he quoted were 8 through 11. In Acts 2 they are verses 25-28.

The third reference to the Old Testament is found in Acts 2:34 and 35. And this time Peter was quoting from Psalm 110:1.

These were points which would have been very strong arguments with the Jews to whom he was speaking. Throughout the New Testament we have frequent references to the Old Testament. This was the apostles' way of establishing the authority of their message. They firmly believed in the Old Testament, and they welcomed any opportunity to refer to the Old Testament.

Perhaps you have noticed that I have been using the word "quoted" in referring to these passages. It is very doubtful that Peter had a copy of the Old Testament Scriptures before him, but it seems certain that he was quoting from memory these passages to which he referred. He had no opportunity to prepare specifically for this message. The Spirit of God was very evidently leading him in what he said, but as far as the references to the Old Testament are concerned, they were in Peter's memory and in his heart.

A second outstanding point about Peter's message is that:

II. IT WAS CHRIST-CENTERED.

A. He believed that the Old Testament looked forward to the coming of Christ, the Messiah.

This was his reason for quoting from the Old Testament.

B. He believed in the true humanity of our Lord (Acts 2:22).

This is especially important because before the NT was completed there

were heretics in the church who were denying the true humanity of our Lord. This is why the Apostle John began his first epistle the way he did:

- 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;
- 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)
- 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).

These men were called Gnostics. They claimed to have access to knowledge above what was in the Scriptures, and their doctrines struck at the very foundations of the truth revealed in God's Word.

C. He believed in the Deity of Christ (Acts 2:22b).

We see this in his reference to our Lord's "miracles and wonders and signs." He believed that the Lord really performed those miracles which are reported in the Gospel records, and many more which were not recorded, and that they were "signs" identifying Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God. Peter believed what John believed about the miracles of our Lord, and in what John recorded in John 20:30-31:

- 30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:
- 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

D. He believed that the death of Jesus of Nazareth was all according to God's plan, and yet that those who put Him to death were fully responsible for what they did (Acts 2:23).

E. He believed in the bodily resurrection of our Lord (Acts 2:24).

Peter believed it was the same Person Who died, Who was raised from the dead. He furthermore believed that it was not possible that the Lord would remain in a state of death – for two reasons:

- 1) Because He was the Son of God, and
- 2) Because, as he went on to show from Psalm 16, that the Lord, the Messiah, would be raised from the dead.

And then Peter went on to explain that David had not been referring to himself when he wrote Psalm 16 because they had the tomb of David with them at that very day.

F. He believed that the Lord ascended back to the Father in heaven, and that He was seated at the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33).

And again he showed that David had not been speaking of himself because of what he had written in Psalm 110.

G. Summing all of this up, Peter believed that all that had happened to Christ, culminating in His ascension back into heaven, was God's way of declaring that Jesus was both Lord (Deity) and Christ (Messiah, and also Deity). See Acts 2:36.

Notice all through Peter's message that there is much evidence that Peter firmly believed in the sovereignty of God in all that took place in the life and death of our Lord.

But there is more. A third major point in the doctrines which Peter preached as the spokesman for the other apostles, we see another very significant point.

III. PETER BELIEVED THAT THE EARLY CHURCH HAD A MISSION IN THE WORLD, BEGINNING WITH THE APOSTLES (Acts 2:32, 36, 38-40).

The mission was to preach Christ first to "all the house of Israel" (v. 36), and to their children (v. 39), and ultimately "to all that are afar off" (v. 39) – a reference to the Gentile world.

So the mission was to preach the Gospel, "the remission of sins" (v. 38).

Finally, Peter expressed in his message what he believed about the

salvation of sinners.

IV. WHAT PETER BELIEVED ABOUT HOW SINNERS ARE SAVED.

A. He believed that God calls people to be saved (v. 39b).

B. He believed that there must be repentance (v. 38).

The apostles believed that repentance was a gift from God. Cf. what the Apostle Paul taught Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26:

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

And also with the apostles repentance was also linked with faith. Notice what the Apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders when he met with them for the last time. His words are recorded in Acts 20:20-21:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we know from Ephesians 2:8-9 and Heb. 12:2 that faith also is a gift from God.

So God calls, and those who are to be saved repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is still more.

C. Peter believed that those who were saved would be baptized (v. 38).

This was the first way in which they gave testimony of their faith in Christ, and we to be proof of the sincerity of their profession of faith in Christ.

Finally,

D. Peter believed that all believers would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (v. 38).

Concl: Peter continued his appeal, according to verse 40, calling upon the people who were inquiring to save themselves, obviously by turning to Christ, from that perverse, corrupt, sinful nation. He knew that they would not turn to Christ unless they were called of God, but that did not stop him from warning people, exhorting them, to turn to Christ to be saved.

Now since the church had just come into existence, and since the people who were saved on that day of Pentecost were baptized into the body of Christ, it follows that this is the basic message of the church today. It is not the whole of “the apostles’ doctrine,” but this is the foundation. They believed in the Old Testament and used it to prove the truth of their doctrines, they strongly and sincerely believed the whole Biblical teaching about Christ, and that only through repentance and faith in Christ could anyone ever have their sins forgiven.

The message of the church has not changed, nor has the mission. In our generation, as in all past generations, we need to be concerned that all people within the sphere of our lives, hears the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

1 Timothy 3:1-13

— **Intro:** During our Lord's ministry on earth, one of His main ministries was in the calling and training of His apostles. In Matthew's Gospel, we have the apostles mentioned for the first time in chapter 10, verse 2. There we read, "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these," and then their names were given. Luke presented the apostles in this way:

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles (Luke 6:13)

Mark tells us this about the apostles when the Lord chose them::

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils (Mark 3:13-15).

And then in the following verses he gave their names:

— 16 And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house (Mark 3:16-19).

Mark tells us what the apostles did following what probably was their first mission:

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught (Mark 6:30).

— The word *apostle* actually means *one sent forth from one to others*. So they were divinely appointed messengers sent forth from and by the Lord Jesus Christ to minister to others. Their ministry included the performing of miracles, but even more was the preaching of the Word of God. And all through the Gospels, and into the book of Acts, these are the men

whom we read about as being associated with our Lord in His ministry. We saw in my first message that the Lord had said that He would build His own church, but also that the Apostle Peter would have a key role in the church, which we learn later in the epistles was to be *the body of Christ*.

When we get to Acts 6 we find that the work of the Lord had grown to such an extent that the work of caring for the widows was not being done as it should have been, and so the apostles called upon the church to recommend seven men whom they, the apostles, could appoint to take care of the ministry to the widows. And then we read this:

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:5-7).

The apostles refused to leave the Word of God to serve tables, not because serving the widows was unimportant, but because they had been called by the Lord to give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. See Acts 6:2-4.

They are not called *deacons* in this passage, but the word “serve” at the end of verse 2 is a translation of the verb, διακονεῖν, which is the word from which the word *deacon* is derived. It is true that the word “ministry” in verse 4 is from this same verb, but it can be used in both places because the apostles and deacons were all involved in serving the people of the church, but in different ways. Anyway, it is generally the consensus of godly men that this was the beginning of the office of deacons.

When we go to the book of Ephesians where the Apostle Paul was identifying men who were God’s gift to the church, this is what he said:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11).

Of these, the apostles are the only ones about whom we have had any

definite instruction. “Prophets” were NT prophets who were enabled to speak by revelation. “Evangelists” were pioneer missionaries,, or men who preached the Gospel and saw people established in local churches. — “Pastors and teachers,” or pastor-teachers as many prefer to call them, were men who became pastors of local congregations to teach them the Word of God. The word “pastor” means *a shepherd*.

Now going from the Scriptures, it seems that as long as the apostles lived, it appears that they assumed the role of elders, or bishops, in the churches.

Perhaps you remember in our study of 1 Peter that in chapter 5, verse 1, Peter spoke of himself as an elder. We read in that verse that Peter said,
The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,
and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the
glory that shall be revealed (1 Peter 5:1).

This means that the apostles continued to have the greatest authority in the early church, and this is emphasized by the fact that they have given us the books of the NT, or have been involved in the writing of books which may bear the names of others. For example, it is thought that the Gospel written by Mark was closely supervised by Peter.

— Now there are no successors to the apostles. These included the twelve plus Paul. When Paul was relating in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians that the Lord was seen by all of the apostles, who were eleven in number then, then he added in 1 Cor 15:8-9,

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

These men had no successors.

The same is true of the NT prophets; they had no successors. No person today can claim to speak by divine revelation. Often the apostles served as prophets too, but no one beyond them could, or can, claim that office.

— “Evangelists” are those, as their name suggests, who preach the Gospel, but not like present-day evangelists. They went where there were no believers, and so, no churches. Paul was an evangelist. And we see this in what he wrote to the church at Rome in Rom 15:20-22:

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ

was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

Pastor-teachers we have.

But the epistles of the NT indicate that the regular ministry of the churches was under the leadership of two groups of men: men called “elders,” and other men called “deacons.” There is no such thing in the NT as a one-man ministry. But there is some evidence in the NT that there were women who were appointed to minister as deaconesses.

Now let us look at these leaders.

I. “ELDERS’ AND “BISHOPS.

That they are the same office, we are able to see in Titus 1:5 and 7.

Please turn to Titus 1 so I can show you what I mean. (Read Titus 1:5-7.)

And so an elder is a bishop, and a bishop is an elder. The two names indicate more fully the role that the elders, or the bishops, are to have in the local church.

A. Elders.

This comes from the Greek word πρεσβύτερος. It can mean an older man, but it probably came into the church with the Lord’s direction from Jewish elders, who were so called because of the office, or rank, or authority that they had. So it is a term designating the office and the authority it carries with it.

The Presbyterians have taken their name from this word.

B. Bishops.

This comes from the Greek word ἐπίσκοπος.. It means one who is an overseer, or one who has the oversight, like a shepherd who cares for his flock, to guide them, provide for them, and protect them.

Going back to 1 Peter 5, Peter also brings together the word “elders” along with the oversight which they were to exercise. Listen to what he wrote:

- 1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
- 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
- 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.
- 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:1-4).

And we can add to this the Apostle Paul's words to the Ephesians elders when he met with them at Miletus. Here is what he said:

- 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
- 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
- 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.
- 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
- 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:28-32).

So you can see from these passages that elders have oversight over the flock of God among whom they live and minister, not as their lords, but as their examples, teachers, and guardians.

Now this brings me to my final point for tonight. And now I ask you to turn to the text which I announced for tonight: 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

Here we have, along with part of Titus 1,

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).

Obviously we do not have the time to go into detail with the qualifications for these two offices, but I want to read over them, and to make just a few comments as we go. But you can see that Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, was emphasizing that the local church needs to be concerned about the spiritual qualifications of the men who serve them. In the early days it seems that the apostles and their co-workers, like Timothy and Titus, had the task of appointing the elders, and that as churches were established, the people recommended to the elders those men whom they believed to be spiritually qualified for the work. When the leadership of a church goes bad, the church will go bad. So it is imperative that elders and deacons be men who know the Lord, walk with the Lord, and who are seeking to please the Lord in their daily lives. No elder is going to be perfect, and no deacon is going to be perfect. But elders and deacons are to live as men who are on their way to perfection, not before the Lord comes, but when He does come. It is good for all of us to follow the example of the Apostle Paul who said that he “was not worthy to be called an apostle.” No elder should feel worthy, and no deacon should feel worthy. But in humility we should thank God for the privilege of ministering to His people because we recognize how precious every child of God is to God, and to our Savior.

(Read 1 Tim. 3:1-13 and, if time permits, Titus 1:5-9.)

Concl: What should be your response to all of this teaching?

Let me give you three verses from Hebrews 13 which answer that question:

- 1) Hebrews 13:7.
- 2) Hebrews 13:17.
- 3) Hebrews 13:18.

Pray that we might be like the Apostle Paul who could say, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ’ (1 Cor. 11:1). The Lord has richly blessed us since our beginning. Pray that we as your leaders may be faithful to the Lord, and to you, so that you may have us as your examples, and together we may daily walk in fellowship with the Lord, and with each other.

GOD'S GIFTS TO HIS SAINTS

Ephesians 4:7-16

- **Intro:** Last Sunday night I spoke on “Leaders in the Church,” and I sought to trace for you the development of those whom the Lord had appointed to lead those who became members of the body of Christ.

Going back before the Church was brought into existence we saw from the Gospels that the followers of our Lord and of His teaching were first called *disciples*. They were *learners*, or *pupils*, and the Lord was their *Teacher*. From His disciples, the Lord chose twelve men, and they were called *apostles*. Much of our Lord's time on earth was spent with these twelve men, training them, and preparing them to carry on with His work after He went back to heaven.

After the ascension of our Lord, and on the following Day of Pentecost, the Church was born as believers were baptized into the body of Christ. And that led to a rapid spread of the Gospel. Soon the work became so great numerically that the apostles needed help, and so seven men were appointed by the Church and by the apostles, to be deacons.

- As the Church began to spread out from Jerusalem to other localities, there came into being local Churches which were identified by the name of the town or city where believers were meeting together. And so we not only read about the Church at Jerusalem, but also about the Church in Antioch, or in the Church in Corinth, or whatever the name of the city might be.

The Scriptures are not clear as to when the first elders, or bishops, were appointed, but it was before the death of the apostles. There were no successors to the apostles unless you look upon the elders as their successors, but even then the elders did not have the same kind of authority that the apostles had. But the elders became the leaders of the Church, and so they, along with the deacons, filled the only two offices in the Church which are recognized by the Word of God.

- Two chapters give us the qualifications for these two offices: 1 Timothy 3 for both the elders, or bishops, and deacons, and Titus 1 for the deacons. And it was very clear from the beginning that the men who were appointed to fill these offices were chosen for their spiritual characteristics. With both of them there was to be a good understanding of the truth. And so

the elders were to be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2), which means that they were to be qualified and capable of teaching. For the deacons it is said that they were to hold “the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9). Several of the first deacons became evangelists, but qualification was at least that they were to be well acquainted with the truth of God’s Word.

Tonight I want to take up the question, “What were the responsibilities of those early servants of the Lord?” As bishops, by definition, they were overseers of the people of God, watchmen who were concerned about the spiritual well being of the Lord’s people. But our text for tonight shows that their work was more than just looking for problems; they had a positive ministry which was related to the whole Church. It was largely the work of the Apostle Paul to give us through his writings both the character and ministry of the Church. And so we want to turn tonight to Ephesians chapter 4 to find the answer to our question.

(Read Eph. 4:7-16 – a very important passage with which everyone in the Church to be familiar.)

First we have:

I. GOD’S GIFTS *TO* THE SAINTS (Eph. 4:7-8).

This is not a subject which the Apostle discussed here, but he mentioned it because it is important for all of us to know this. We are all members of Christ’s body, the Church, and everyone of us has a special function in the body, a function which God has appointed for us. Paul took this up more in 1 Corinthians. But this is something that we all need to know.

But what we are more concerned with tonight is the part of this passage which begins in verse 11. These also are God’s gifts *to* His saints, but in a different way. These are not specific gifts to individual believers like the first, but gifts of certain people whom God has given, and continues to give, for the benefit of His people. And so let us call these:

II. MEN GOD HAS GIVEN *TO*, AND *FOR*, THE SAINTS (Eph. 4: 11).

These are the men we have been discussing. He began with the apostles and the prophets. Some of them became evangelists, but there were others also who were blessed by the Lord in the spread of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul was a very gifted and much-used evangelist as I pointed out last Sunday from Romans 15:20 where he said,

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

But what we are most concerned now is the long string of men from that day to this who are “pastors and teachers,” or pastor-teachers. Now since Peter in 1 Peter 5 admonished the elders to shepherd the flock of God, and Paul did the same with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, I believe that what Paul said in verse 12 and on applies to all elders, supported by the deacons, while it does seem that in the local churches one of the elders was given the main responsibility for the teaching.

Now let us look at:

III. THE WORK OF THE LEADERS IN THE CHURCH (Eph. 4: 12-16).

A. The nature of the work (v. 12).

Here it is very clearly stated: “for the perfecting of the saints.”

This would be the best description that could possibly be given for any church. “Trinity Bible Church – “for the perfecting of the saints.”

Paul did not say, “for the entertainment of the everyone who comes,” but “for the perfecting of the saints.”

Now let's review for a moment. Who are “the saints”? This is a title which the NT gives to those who are the Lord's people, and perhaps it would be good for us to get back to using it again. Let me give you a definition of a saint. *A saint is a person whom God has called to Himself, set apart from the world, and destined to be holy.* A saint is a person who truly knows the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior. There are saints all over this place tonight. We are not all that we should be, but God has set us apart from the world, and He is working in us to enable us to live up to the name that we have.

But what is it that we most need? It is “perfecting.” This is a word which speaks of *strengthening, completing, making a person what he ought to be.*

— And just as we don’t all grow physically, or mentally, or morally at the same rate, neither do we grow as the people of God, as saints, at the same rate. Growth is definitely a personal matter. And so the primary purpose of the church has to do with “the saints,” not the world. And our concern for the people of God is for their spiritual growth. Elders and deacons need this. All of us who know the Lord need to grow, and we will need to grow as long as the Lord leaves us here on earth. The work of the church is not fun and games. It is not productions and programs. The work of the church is to be designed for the spiritual growth of its people.

This means teaching the great truths of the Word of God – all of them. This means the application of those truths in daily life. This means learning to pray, learning to trust the Lord through all of the experiences of life.

— My Greek professor in Seminary said that there should not be any commas in verse 12. We want people to grow so that they can become involved in the work of the ministry, and that we can see believers built up together as the body of Christ. The body of Christ will be no stronger than individual believers are spiritually strong. I don’t think that the Apostle Paul was thinking about the numerical growth of the body of Christ, but he was thinking here about the spiritual growth of individual believers so that the church will become a mighty force in the world.

And this is what is wrong today. There is a lot of numerical growth, but it is being brought about by methods adopted from the world. I have even heard Christian radio broadcasts called “shows.” That is not our purpose for the Trinity Bible Hour. People get on the Trinity Bible Hour exactly what they would get if they came to meet with us here in our services.

Now let us ask about:

B. The goal (vv. 13-16).

— A lot of Christian workers are great about setting goal. And it usually has to do with attendance records, or building projects, or raising money. We

are to have goals, but our goals have been ordered for us in Scripture. The church was not our idea, but God's. And the purpose is not ours to determine, but it, too, is to be found in the Word. And the same applies to the ultimate goal. And I don't know of any church that has ever reached the goal, the objectives, that the Lord has for us His people.

What are they?

1. "The unity of the faith" (v. 13).

"The faith," as I have told you many times before, has to do with *the doctrines of Scripture*. That is why I said a moment ago that deacons need to know doctrine, the teaching of Scripture because they are to hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Be on the lookout for those words, "the faith," as you read the epistles of the NT. It always has to do with doctrine. And yet it seems that in local churches today there is a deliberate attempt to stay away from doctrine. People say that doctrines divide, and so they do. But what we need to seek is not to avoid doctrine, but to get to "the unity of the faith."

Do you believe that this is possible? There certainly are not going to be any differences in heaven. Then we will know as we are known. But now we have to keep moving in that direction. Unity at the expense of doctrine is not true unity. So leaders must keep studying. We all must keep reading. And the ministry of the church is a teaching ministry.

2. "No more children" (v. 14).

What we are seeing in the professing church today is a lot of spiritual baby talk, and sometimes it doesn't even measure up to that. False teachers would not be nearly as successful as they are if the Lord's people were really growing. And often they aren't growing because their leaders are not teaching.

I asked a lady years ago why she did not take her Bible to church. Do you know what she told me? She said, "I am never asked to use it, so why should I carry something that I am not going to use."

And you know, entertaining children is a baby sitter's job, but that is not what parents should be aiming at. And yet I am afraid that many pastors

are babysitting the Lord's people, but not feeding them, not teaching them. We need to be aiming at "no more children." I am not saying that we do not need to reach children, but I am talking about people who claim to know the Lord, but have never grown.

3. "Growing up into Christ (vv. 15-16).

Do you notice how Paul starts with each of us individually, and then moves on to speak of our relationship with each other in Christ? We are not just to grow individually, but to grow up "into Him in all things, Who is the Head, even Christ." ***We are not only to be learning of Him, but to be living in Him!*** How different things could be right here if we all knew why God has not only brought us to Himself, but has brought us together in Christ!

Concl: Now let me say this in conclusion, and I say it being very conscious of my own shortcomings. But if what Paul has described here concerning the ministry of those who are elders, deacons, and pastors, is not the objective, the primary objective, and the only objective, of any man in the ministry, then he had better get out until it can be what he is working toward. God will not give any man to His church whose purpose is to make a name for himself, or just to build a great organization, or who aims at attracting people with music and drama and comedy, and whatever else it takes to draw a crowd. We lament today because of the condition of the world, and it is bad, really bad, and getting worse all of the time. But what is a far greater tragedy is what is going on in the professing church. We need to hear again the charge which the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy. Let me read it to you as I close. It is found in 2 Timothy 3:14 and continuing on to 4:5. (Read.)

May the Lord make us and keep us faithful to the divine plan for the church which we have been considering tonight from Ephesians 4.

Adam's Love
Psalms

Sharing
Participating

2nd Church #10

Intro: Fellowship is a Biblical word which we use all of the time, and yet it is a word which we may find difficult to define. It has to do with what we share together as members of the body of Christ. Paul said in 1 Cor. 1:9 that we have all been called into the fellowship of God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that we have been united to Him, and that we share equally in the benefits of His death for us. But it also means that we have a unique relationship to each other, a relationship that has no equal. In this we share a mutual love for each other, as well as a mutual love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and for God as our heavenly Father. We are all indwelt by the same Holy Spirit. And we have this continuing relationship with God and each other which is such a delight to our souls.

However, in Acts 2:42 we are told that the early church continued in, first, the apostles doctrine and fellowship. *The practical side of the doctrine.*

This tells us that the apostles' doctrine was basic to their fellowship, and any way that the apostles' doctrine is ignored or changed by any church is to nullify true fellowship.

The NT tells us what the doctrine of the apostles was, and basic to it all was the belief expressed by Paul and Peter in particular that the Bible is the Word of God, as Paul said in 1 Tim. 3:16-17. (Discuss.)

And this was the Word which they preached, and which Paul charged Timothy to preach. Their ministry was not to be determined by the desires of men, but they were to preach the Word even when it was wanted.

Both in 1 Cor. 1:9 and in what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1 about fellowship shows that in the ministry of the Word and in their relationship with each other, the doctrine of Christ was particularly important. The fellowship of the people of God is always based upon what the Scriptures teach about Christ:

- His Deity
- His perfect humanity
- His sacrificial death on the Cross
- His triumphant resurrection
- His ascension back to the Father in heaven
- His present ministry of intercession for us
- His return for His saints, and His return to reign upon the earth.

True fellowship is only possible where people believe in what the Scriptures teach about Christ.

Passages to consider:

- 1 Cor. 1:9 *James Peter + John gave Paul + Barnabas*
- Acts 2:42 *the right hand of fellowship - Gal. 2:9*
- 1 John 1 *illustrated in LK 5:7-14 unto their*
- 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 *μετοχὴ - fellowship Heb 3:1; 6:4; 12:8 Partners*
- κοινωνία - communion*
- Phil. 1:5 - *Paul rejoicing in his fellowship with*
- Phil 3:10 - *the Philippians in the Gospel.*
- 2 Cor 13:14 - *the fellowship of His sufferings*
- communion of the Holy Spirit*
- Eph. 3:9 *What is the fellowship*

We have fellowship with the Lord through reading the Word, and prayer

We have fellowship w/ each other when we are talking to each other about the Lord.

Due Church #10
1/9/00