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## THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

*This teaching is an excerpt from the book "Walking in Our Inheritance",  
by Paul Galligan. This book is available on our website in easy copy format.*

### GRACE TO GROW TO MATURITY, EPHESIANS 4:7-16

#### The goal is maturity [perfection]

God's goal for the church of Jesus Christ is for the church to grow into maturity and then to be perfected. There will be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing as befits an eternal companion for the Son of God! **Ephesians 4:7-16** is the only place in Scripture where the fivefold ministry is clearly presented. It is in this context that we find that grace is given to each member of the body of Christ through the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to enable each member and thus the whole body to grow into maturity.

Through each of these gift's grace is released to the body of Christ. If any of these gifts is not released and operating then the body of Christ does not receive all the grace she needs to grow into maturity.

#### Jesus Christ is the five-fold gift

Jesus Himself is the full representation of the fivefold gift:

- \* **the Apostle of God**, sent into the world to build the church [the house of God] (**Heb.3:1**);
- \* **the Prophet** raised up by God from among the brethren (**Deut.18:18**) to speak the words of God, (**Lu.24:19**);
- \* **the Evangelist** who came to seek and to save the lost, (**Lu.19:10, Mk.1:14**);
- \* **the Pastor**, the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep, (**Jn.10:11, Heb.13:20**);
- \* **the Teacher** come from God, who taught as one having Authority, (**Jn.13:13-14, Jn.3:2**).

#### The eternal purpose of God

In the book of **Ephesians** and elsewhere Paul speaks of the mystery which has been revealed and he speaks of the eternal purpose of God which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Eph.3:11**). We need to understand that God is about His own eternal purpose. He has never wavered from His purpose for which He created the universe and for which He created us humans in His own image and likeness. All that was lost in the first Adam through

sin has been regained by our Lord Jesus Christ, and much more. It is possible to see that these gifts were innate in the first Adam but were taken into captivity through Adam's sin and submission to the devil. God has always intended for the glorious church to be formed and raised up in the earth for His Son. God had always made provision for this to be possible but it took the death of Jesus and His descent into hell and His glorious ascension to fully release the means whereby God's purpose can be realised.

### **Jesus is building His church through the fivefold**

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church which is represented as a building. He is the foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation (**Isaiah 28:16; 1Cor.3:11**). We are the living stones that are built upon Him to make up the walls of the temple of God in the Spirit (**1Pet 2:5 & Eph.2:22**). Jesus has given the ministries of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher to enable His building work to go ahead and for the eternal purpose of God to be fulfilled.

## **Fivefold Ministry Brings the Body to Perfection**

### **Three purposes of the fivefold**

*“For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph.4:12).*

#### **1. For the equipping of the saints**

The fivefold ministry is given for the equipping [perfecting] of the saints.

**Equipping**, *katartismos* (kat-ar-tis-moss); S.C.#2677 Greek: *a making fit, preparing, training, perfecting, making fully qualified for service*. In classical Greek the word is used for setting a bone during surgery [SFLB word wealth p1651]. The understanding of this word teaches us that the body of Christ must be set in order so that every part can function properly.

God intends for every member of the body of Christ to be equipped to function in the gifts and ministries God has given to each one. Obviously not all are destined to be fivefold ministers but everyone has specific works to fulfill. Until every saint is equipped to minister the body of Christ will not grow into maturity.

#### **2. For the work of the ministry**

The fivefold is given for the work of the ministry: each of the fivefold ministries must function. Much of the church does not receive the grace that has been given by Jesus the Head of the Church because apostles and often other fivefold ministers are not received. If I am called to be an apostle but I function only as a pastor in a local church then I am not doing the work of the ministry I am called to do. One of the wonderful restorations that is happening across the body of Christ worldwide is that the saints are being released into ministries because Jesus is raising up apostles and sending them to do the work of the ministry.

People already functioning in ministry are boldly stepping out into fivefold ministries as the Holy Spirit calls and separates particular people to these ministries. This is illustrated in the life of the apostle Paul who was not ordained to be an apostle until Acts 13 but he was

already functioning in ministry prior to that. Even so many in ministry today will experience a change and begin to minister in another gifting. Currently many are functioning in pastoral eldership who are actually called into apostolic and prophetic ministries across the body of Christ.

### **3. For the edifying of the body of Christ**

The fivefold is given for the edifying of the body of Christ, that is, the building up of the body [literally *building the house*]. Jesus promised in **Matthew 16:18** that He is building the church. How is He building the church? He is building the church through the fivefold ministry gift that He has given. This is why the restoration of all five ministries is crucial to the fulfilment of God's purposes. The glorious church which is to grow into maturity will not be built without the fivefold ministry gift fully restored and functioning. The apostolic gift needs to be restored so that the other gifts can begin to function in fullness.

## **SIGNPOSTS OF MATURITY**

***“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” Eph.4:13.***

### **1) The unity of the faith**

The first measure of maturity is the unity of the faith. This means we agree concerning the word of God. Such agreement is based upon receiving the apostles' doctrine, not adhering to the doctrines of men, whatever the church tradition may be. The first church continually devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine (**Acts2:42**). Peter tells us ***“that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” 2 Pet.1:20.*** Unfortunately the church historically has divided on the basis of a particular leader's doctrine and often that doctrine is taught rather than the Scriptures. The emphasis has been on what the man said rather than what the Scripture says.

The unity of the faith is the holding fast of the faithful word that has been taught; it is adherence to sound doctrine in matters of faith and practice. ***“Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” Titus 1:9.*** The unity of the faith is having sound doctrine, that is, believing and living by the word of God. The unity of the faith is that faith [apostles' doctrine] ***“which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).*** The apostle Jude exhorts us to contend earnestly for that faith: the doctrines given by the word of God through the apostles.

*The first church devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine.*

*The last days church will only come to maturity in the faith as once again the apostles' doctrine is taught and received.*

*It is only by the word of God that we can judge whether a particular doctrine or practice is of the Lord or not.*

### **2) The knowledge of the Son of God**

***We are to come to the 'knowledge of the Son of God', understanding all the references to the Son in Hebrews chapter one. We are to come to the knowledge of the mystery of godliness in 1 Timothy 3:16. The knowledge of the Son of God is understanding***

*that God was manifested in the flesh, that God became a man in Jesus Christ (John 1:1 & 14).* Jesus demonstrated His relationship with the Father in John's gospel, finally declaring to Philip *"If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father"* (John 14:9).

**3) Unto a perfect man**

The body of Christ is to become a mature man, conformed to the image of His Son (Rom.8:29) and knowing the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13). We are to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2), and *"to press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* Phil.3:14.

**4) The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**

We are to be like Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God, *"that He might be the firstborn among many brethren"* Rom.8:29. The church is the fullness of Him who fills the all in all (Eph.1:23). The glory of the Lord is the fullness of Christ manifest as He fills His church.

**5) No longer like children ...**

*"That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting"* Eph. 4:14. It is time to grow up, living by the anointing that we have received. The anointing will teach us all things and will not lie (1 Jn.2:20,27). Jesus said in Matthew 24:5 *"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and deceive many."* Beware of false teachers; many will come in Christian ministry garb! We are to be established and rooted in the faith, not led astray by philosophy and vain deceit (Col. 2:6-8). We are to be strongly founded and grounded on the Rock and in the Word of God. What does Matthew 7:24-27 teach us? We are all to look to Jesus, not to any man, and to obey His word.

**6) Speaking the truth in love**

*"But speaking the truth in love"* Eph. 4:15a. Disciples growing into maturity no longer involve themselves in gossip or back-biting; they do not speak behind another's back; rather we speak the truth in love! The maturing church is a body of people growing in relationship. For relationships to grow in godliness and true Christian love, the truth needs to be spoken in love one to the other. There is no place for criticism of one another. If a problem arises among brethren and is dealt with according to the guidelines of Scripture, then the love will cover a multitude of sins (1Pet.4:8).

**7) Growing up in all aspects into Christ**

*"May grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ"* Eph.4:15b. The Christian individually and the church corporately are to grow. Every aspect of our lives is to measure up to God's word as the work of grace is completed in us. We are to be found in Christ [Anointed One] not having a righteousness of our own, but having the righteousness that comes through faith in Him (Phil.3:9). Everything we do in word or deed, we are to do *"all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"* Col.3:17.

## 8) **God's love revealed in the mature church**

*“From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” Eph. 4:16.* This is a powerful picture of the mature church; notice the key characteristic of the mature church is LOVE, God's kind of love, sacrificial, self-giving love! The mature church is mature because every part functions effectively, having been joined and knit together – true unity, having become one! Each part and every joint [in the body a joint is where two members are able to fully cooperate to function] supplies life and every part works for the up-building of the whole. All of this life flows from the Head, our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **THE CHURCH MANIFEST**

### **We are the house of God**

‘We are the house of God’ (**Heb. 3:6**) and Jesus Christ is the Son over God's house. *“He shall build the temple of the LORD” Zech. 6:12. “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men” Eph. 4:8.* He gave these gifts to ‘build up the body of Christ’ (**Eph.4:12**). The church is to come into maturity [perfection], to be the expression of His glory in the earth, *“that the world may know that You have sent Me” (Jn 17:22-24). “That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” Eph.5:27.* God has glorious intentions for the church: she is the body of Christ.

Through the church God intends to reveal His Son. For this to eventuate there will be a full restoration of apostolic ministry along with all the ministry gifts. This is happening in our day and is being quickened for God intends a quick work to be done in the last days (**Is. 60:21-22**).

One of the key roles of the apostle working in tandem with the prophet is to lay a foundation for the church of Jesus (**Eph.2:20**). Such a foundation releases the other ministries of evangelist, pastor and teacher to function fully and thus the saints are properly ministered to and raised up to function in the body. The apostle is responsible for doctrine [that is, accurately teaching the word of God] and for the building strategy. Paul says he was a wise master builder (**1 Cor.3:10**). God reveals to the apostle how to lay the foundation; others are to build on it. The prophet has a role alongside of the apostle and together they provide a firm foundation in Christ for the training and equipping of the saints and the raising up of other ministries. The house of God will be built.

### **It is written**

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” 2 Tim.3:16-17.* Much of that which we have inherited as ‘church’ is not according to the Scripture. One Bible translator refers to the church in the book of Acts as the ‘young church’. He suggests that the church that developed in history is the older and therefore more mature church and that the structures and practices that have developed in church history are those of a mature church. This is not the case!

*The church of Jesus Christ is found in all its fullness in  
the New Testament, from the first church in Acts 2 to  
the pattern of the mature church in the book of Ephesians.*

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