

Some people's view of Christian Ministry is normally that of a select few who do all the work. This is not the case at all. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul makes this statement:

*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.*

*(Ephesians 4:11-14)*

Here Paul describes a group of spiritually gifted people given to serve the Body of Christ full-time. But with what goal in mind? *"To equip the saints for the work of ministry."* In other words, these leaders are to minister the Word of God to members, who in turn are to go out and reach the lost!

Probably the reason some fellowships today are not growing in number and spiritual maturity is because they have not spent enough time studying this Biblical Plan for the Church.

However, this is not the only reason some within the Body of Christ have not matured beyond a certain stage of growth. The second reason is because many recognize only two or three of the five Ministry Gifts Paul listed in Ephesians above!

Those usually excluded are Apostles and Prophets. And they are excluded on the basis that these Gifts are no longer necessary, because the foundation of the Church has already been laid and the Canon of Scripture closed.

First, there is not a shred of evidence anywhere in Scripture to substantiate these claims. Actually, to be consistent, one would have to say the other Ministry Gifts are done away with also! But we know this cannot be the case, since the work of ministry and the perfecting of the saints must continue until the return of Christ!

Of course, it is correct to say the foundation of the Church is already laid. But the job description of New Testament Apostles involved many other activities besides these. We are told they went out into the world and established Christian Communities where none had existed before!

During these missionary trips, they would sometimes stay for long periods of time, preaching and teaching the Word of God to the new converts. Observing history, can we honestly say this ceased after the First Century?

And what about the Prophets? Can we accuse millions of Christians of giving false testimony when they spoke of having received a prophetic word for a serious personal issue, or a word of correction, or of warning concerning impending judgement, or a revelation concerning a controversial doctrinal issue, to name just some? Therefore, there is absolutely no excuse for excluding these Offices!

No doubt, some will point to the many abuses and errors in these areas. To list just two, it was taught in some circles that Apostles and Prophets were more important than the other three Offices, because they are listed first on Paul's list.

This unbiblical claim was then used to dominate and exercise strict authority over the Churches these so-called apostles founded, and sometimes even over other Ministers in the Body of Christ elsewhere!

Regarding abuses related to the Prophetic, one of the most serious and deliberate errors involved believers never being told they were not to be led by Prophecy!

From our analysis, dear friend, you will agree the remedy does not lie in rejection of what God has put in place for the Body of Christ, but in a determined effort to reclaim what the enemy has stolen and give it its true definition!