

# Apostles

by Anton Bosch

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the role and function of apostles in the church, and how modern-day apostles should not be compared to the original twelve apostles or Paul.*

**Duration:** 47:04

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Ephesians 4:7-16

**Topics:** "Apostles"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of elders in the local church and their responsibility to shepherd the flock. He warns that false teachers will arise and try to lead people astray. The speaker also discusses the role of apostles in the church, highlighting that they are like fathers who bring people into the new birth and then gradually withdraw as the believers mature. He contrasts the role of a father with that of an instructor, emphasizing that while instructors may teach many things, only a father can truly parent and guide. The sermon is based on passages from Acts, Ephesians, and Corinthians.

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## Transcript

Turn with me to the book of Ephesians chapter 4, Ephesians chapter 4, and we continue to deal with a series on the church, and we're dealing with the various ministries right now, and unfortunately tonight is going to be fairly technical, in fact very technical, and I trust that you'll be able to bear with us, because this is very important that we deal with this, because the, there are many errors that are in the church today, and the, probably the two biggest areas of ministry that is taught in error today is that of apostles and prophets. We live in the time, in the charismatic movement, we live in the time of the apostles and the prophets, and they have all sorts of fancy teaching saying that this is the time of the apostles and the prophets, and so it's important that we understand what an apostle is, and how he functions, and what a prophet is, and how he functions. Every second guy in Africa calls himself apostle so-and-so.

This is, I suppose next to Bishop, this is probably the most popular title amongst many preachers, and probably half of every, half of the preachers in the world today all want to be apostles. So let's read from Ephesians chapter 4, and we'll read from 7 through 16. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift, therefore he says when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.

Now this he ascended, what does it mean? But that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. Verse 11, and he gave, he himself gave, some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.

For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. 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. That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ, 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. Now before we speak about the apostles, we need to just highlight some of the errors that are propagated or preached or taught today.

The first is what we call cessationism. Cessationism from the word cease. Saying that the apostles have ceased.

That there are no more apostles after the twelve and Paul. And so according to these people, and this is a very, very popular view. It is held by the Baptists.

We are very, very big in America. And many, many other groups. Most reformed churches ignore or don't believe that there are apostles today.

Then there are those who see apostles as being the top of the pyramid. And so you have all of the other ministries. And right at the peak is the apostles.

And they, they effectively are the highest form of ministry. That is an error. Paul says God has made us the apostles or set us last.

They are not the top. They in fact are the bottom, according to Paul. The other problem is that of restorationism.

And that's what I referred to earlier. They, people are saying that the ministries of apostles were lost for 2,000 years. There was no functioning of these ministries.

And God is now restoring apostles and prophets in these last days in anticipation of his return. Now these ministries never ceased. They were always there.

They were there for when the church was established. And they have continued to be in the church and functioning and operating right up to today. And so the idea that they disappeared and that God is restoring them, there is no biblical basis for that.

And then apostolic succession. And we'll go into these in a little bit more detail. Apostolic succession means that when one apostle dies, another one succeeds him, takes his place.

This is most evident in the Roman system, where the Pope is the apostle, and he is in a line of apostles from Peter. Peter being the first apostle and Pope, and then each apostle came after that. And so when one dies, another one has to take his place.

Again, there's just no Bible for that, but we'll speak about that. All right. The other error is that apostles run denominations.

Some churches have a president at the head of the denomination, and other churches have a general superintendent or a general overseer, and other churches have apostles that run the denomination. Again, the Bible has no provision for that. That's just not a biblical idea.

All right. What does apostle mean? It's simple. It means somebody who has sent.

Somebody who has sent. That is what the word means. It's important to understand the meaning of the word, because that will help us to understand how the ministry is to function.

It is not called a... Apostle is not Greek for, or an English translation for a Greek term meaning big cheese, or big chief. It simply means somebody who has sent. Now immediately you can see there's a difference between the way apostles are viewed today, where people think the word means big chief.

No, it doesn't mean. It means somebody who has sent, a messenger, a gopher, in that sense. Now, literally in the church, the deacons are the gophers, but here, in the meaning of the word, it is somebody who goes for somebody else.

And Thayer says that it is a delegate, a messenger, once sent forth with orders. Once sent out or sent forth with orders. That is the meaning of the word.

You can see that it has nothing to do with controlling, with authority, with structure. It has to do with going out. Very, very important as we speak about that.

All right. Let's go right back to the beginning, and let's just... We just need to understand, because we have to clarify some of the details in order to understand where some of these wrong teachings are coming from. If we go right back, the first apostle was who? Mary Magdalene? Peter? Jesus Christ.

Hebrews chapter 3 verse 1. Consider the apostle and high priest of our calling. And so Jesus was the first apostle. Was he sent out? Yes.

He was sent from heaven to come to earth, to represent God, and to come and to establish the church. He was the first apostle. And so we need to learn from him.

Who were the next apostles? The twelve. The twelve apostles, the twelve disciples, whom Jesus called and he taught them for three years, and then he sent them out. And they are specifically called apostles.

Now those twelve, and this is very important, those twelve were unique. There will never ever be another group, another apostles like those twelve. We cannot look at them, and this is one of the problems, is people look at those twelve and they say, well apostles today have to be like Peter and John.

They have to perform miracles like they did. They have to speak with authority, that when they speak, they speak the word of God, like John did and Paul did, and Peter did. No, those twelve were unique.

And they were a closed number, it was only twelve, and they appear again in the book of Revelation. Remember that the twelve layers of the foundations of the New Jerusalem are named after the apostles. They have a special place in heaven, and so you cannot compare other apostles with those apostles.

They were very, very special, and in fact they were sent out by Jesus during his ministry, but in fact after the ascension the apostles, those twelve, did not function in the true apostolic sense of being sent out. Remember when the church was scattered from Jerusalem, what happened to the twelve? No, they remained in Jerusalem. Occasionally they would go from here and there, but they primarily operated from Jerusalem.

They were unique. You cannot use them as a model to understand how other apostles are to function. Now you remember one of the twelve was Judas.

Judas fell away. He had to be replaced, and in Acts chapter 1 we have the story of how, in fact let's turn there because this is very important, as to the replacement of Judas. And during the time, the ten days between Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Jesus ascended forty days after he rose, and then there was another ten days before the day of Pentecost, Pente meaning five or fifty, and so on the fiftieth day the day of Pentecost came.

Now in these ten days they were waiting in the upper room as he had instructed them. During this time they were searching the scriptures, and as they went through the scriptures they discovered a verse that said that Judas would fall away and that another was to take his place. And they did what we ought to do.

They were obedient to the scriptures. Sometimes we read it and we say, oh well that's interesting. Let's debate this, let's discuss it.

No, they read the scripture that said that his place was to be taken by another, and they said we better be obedient. We must do this, because we're not to be eleven, we should be twelve. And so they, it says in verse fifteen, Acts 1.15, and in those days Peter stood in the midst of the disciples, altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty.

So it was a hundred and twenty of which the twelve were there. Men and brethren, this scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.

Now this man, Judas obviously, purchased a field with the wages of iniquity and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. For those young people who want all the blood and guts, it's right here. And obviously we know what happened, he tried to hang himself and the rope broke or the branch broke and he fell down.

Verse 19, and it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem, as the field is called in their language, akel dama, which is field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his dwelling place be desolate and let no one live in it, and let another take his office. Therefore of these men who have accompanied us, now look at this, here is the qualifications for the replacement.

This is very, very important. Therefore of all these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us, from the beginning, from the baptism of John to the day when he was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection. And they proposed to Joseph called Basibus, who was surnamed Justice and Matthias.

And they prayed and said, you Lord have made, and we know that the lot fell on Matthias. Now I'm going to come back to that, let me just complete this. Now some say that Matthias was the wrong decision and that Paul should have taken Matthias' place.

Now you'll see that it says in verse 26, they crossed their lots and the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all in one accord in one place, and what happened? The Holy Spirit came. Do you think if they had made such a serious mistake that the scripture would immediately follow was saying that God blessed us with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? I don't believe so.

And from here on you'll see that he is numbered with, it says that on the day of Pentecost, Peter stood with the eleven. In other words, Peter plus the other eleven. He is counted with them, he is reckoned as one of them, there is nothing anywhere in the scripture to suggest that Matthias was not the man who was supposed to take that place.

Now, as far as the question as to whether Judas should have taken, whether Paul should have taken Judas' place, or whether Matthias should have in fact been Paul. Paul does not qualify, and this is important. The reason why people say that Paul should have been the twelfth apostle is because in 1 Corinthians 15 he proves that he saw the resurrected Christ.

And they say that this fulfills the requirement of Act 1, of having seen the risen Christ, and that's why Paul proves the fact that he saw the risen Christ, because it proves his apostleship. Now, there are very learned people who propose this argument. It's a stupid argument, because look at the requirements, the conditions.

Verse 22, beginning with the baptism of John to the day when he was taken up from us, one of these must be become witness with us of his resurrection. What was the requirement? To have been there all the time, from the baptism of John to the resurrection. Paul does not meet that requirement.

In fact, Paul was not even there at the ascension, Paul was never there at any of the stage. He may have been an outside observer, certainly he may have heard of Jesus, he may even have seen Jesus preach, but he was not with Jesus, he was not one of his disciples, he was an opponent, he was an enemy of Christ at that stage. So there is no way Paul can qualify according to these requirements.

The requirement is not that he should have witnessed the resurrection, that he should have seen the resurrection. That is not the requirement. Notice what it says, verse 22, one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

In other words, one of these must go with us and preach to people and tell people that Christ is risen. The resurrection or having seen the risen Christ is not a requirement for the Apostle, but in fact the requirements are to have been with Christ from then to then and the purpose is to witness to the resurrection, not having been a witness of the resurrection. That's not the question.

So the whole argument that Paul took this place, it's just a stupid argument, in spite of the fact that some very clever people proposed that argument. Was Paul an Apostle? Most definitely. At least three scriptures, Galatians, Timothy, and Ephesians, chapter one, verse one of each one of those books, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy 1, he introduces himself as Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

So he's not ashamed or he's not hesitant to say, I am an Apostle. Dealing with the Corinthians, he goes into great detail to prove his Apostleship. So he was an Apostle, there is no question that he was an Apostle, but he was not one of the twelve.

So immediately the people, you see, the reason why people want to force the issue that Paul was one of the twelve, is because if he was one of the twelve, you can prove that, then you have a leg to stand on to say there are no other Apostles after that. But if there was the twelve, and Paul was also an Apostle, then the idea that you only have a closed number of twelve Apostles, falls away. You then have to say, if there was a thirteenth Apostle, then there can be a fourteenth one, and a fifteenth one, and many others.

Now, very clearly the twelve, and that's why I've gone to some detail, to prove that the twelve were closed, it was a sealed number, Paul was not one of the twelve, yet Paul was an Apostle, and we can go to many, many scriptures to prove that Paul was an Apostle. So, now, is Paul the same as every other Apostle that would come after him? The answer is no. Paul had a unique ministry and calling.

He was not like the twelve, and he was not like any other Apostle that would come after him as well, because to him was given the responsibility to write the doctrine, and to write a lot of most of the New Testament. Now, this is important, because modern Apostles claim that they speak with the same authority that Paul did, and that they can make statements that are outside of the Bible, because that is authority that comes with being an Apostle. No, that is what God gave to Paul.

He did not give that to other Apostles. There were other Apostles in the New Testament, and I'm not going to go through all of them, and I can give you a copy of the notes if you wish, but there was Barnabas, James the Lord's brother, Apollos, Timothy and Silas, Epaphroditus, Andronicus and Junius. Now, that makes it 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 men that are named other than Paul, that were named Apostles in the New Testament.

Did any of these men write any of the Scriptures? Did they have the revelation? Were they caught up into the third heaven like Paul was? Did they have any of the power and the wisdom and the insight that Paul had? No, but they were Apostles nonetheless. So Paul was unique. You cannot use the 12 as a model for other Apostles, and you cannot use Paul as a model for other Apostles.

They are different, and they had a specific responsibility to establish the doctrine and to establish, to write the New Testament, and so that's very, very important. So new Apostles that exist today are bound by these Scriptures. They cannot speak beyond these Scriptures.

They cannot add to these Scriptures. God is not giving them, continuing to give them revelation like he gave to Paul. The additional revelation, whatever revelation was given in addition to the Old Testament, and we understand that God did give new revelation in addition to the Old Testament, that he gave to the 12 and he gave to Paul, and that is contained in the Scripture.

There is no new and ongoing revelation. All Apostles after Paul have to write or have to preach what is in the Scriptures. They cannot give additional, say, God revealed to me whatever, all of the nonsense that these guys claim that that God gave and God revealed to them.

All right, so another important point is that the difference between the 12 and other ministries. The 12 were called Apostles during Jesus's ministry. In Acts chapter 1 verse 8 we read that when he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men, and he gave some to be Apostles.

In other words, he gave Apostles after he ascended, but the 12 were Apostles before he ascended, and so from that you can clearly see that there is a difference between the 12 and those. In other words, according to Ephesians 4 verse 8, there were no Apostles other than the 12, different to the 12 before the

Ascension. There were prophets in the Old Testament, but the New Testament prophets only came at the Ascension, when he ascended on high, and the same with pastors and teachers and evangelists.

All right, are there Apostles between the New Testament and today? Yes, there are. There are many clearly definable Apostles. Let me speak about the work of an Apostle, and then I'll come back to that issue as to other examples of Apostles between then and now.

What is the function or the work of an Apostle? First of all, he goes out. He doesn't sit in a headquarters. He doesn't sit in a local church.

His ministry is to go out and to go and to preach the gospel, and to take those that get saved as a result of his preaching the gospel, and to establish them into local churches. Once he has done that, and once he has put them into local churches, he teaches them, and having done that, he moves on, and he goes to new territory. Paul said, I don't preach where others have preached, because I'm not going to build on anybody else's foundation.

One of the practical realities of apostolic ministry is that they operate in new territory. Unfortunately, today we find that much of the world, particularly in the Western world, has already been preached, and so there are Apostles who are establishing new churches based on existing believers in cities and in towns, and that's very messy work. It's very hard work.

It's much harder than to preach to the Gentiles or to the heathen out there, because you're having to break down bad foundations before you can build good foundations. But there are Apostles who operate in that mode today, but it is not the ideal situation. And so Apostles go out, preach the gospel, establish churches.

That's the function of Apostles. Once those churches have been established, they ordain elders. We dealt with that in the last two weeks.

Those elders now become the oversight of that local church. The Apostle now moves on. He goes to a new place, does the same thing there.

Moves on to the next place. That's what Paul did. That's what Barnabas did.

That's what each of the Apostles that are listed in the New Testament, that's how they functioned. Now, they would go back to the places that they'd established from time to time, and they would minister there again, and if there was problems, they would be consulted, but they did not hold control or authority over those local churches. One of the things about modern Apostles is that they control all of the churches that they established, and others that they did not establish, and one of the things about that is that when he makes the rules, the rules apply to every church, and when people pay tithes, all of those tithes, a portion of those tithes, go to the Apostle.

Now, even in Paul's ministry, that didn't function. Paul didn't demand money from the churches that he had established. He's clear about that.

He writes to the Philippians, and he speaks to the Corinthians, and he says, you know, I worked with my own hands. I didn't demand anything from you, and so that's the function, basically. Apostles look out.

They're looking for new fields. They're not very good at sticking to one thing at a time. They're always wanting to move on.

Elders are different. Elders don't really have a vision for out there. Elders have a vision for here.

Elders want to keep things together. Apostles want to get people moving, and want to themselves be going out there. They are two very, very different ministries.

They have a totally different outlook on life. They're different personalities. Now, the problem today is that the impression that is being created today is that Apostles control.

No, Apostles don't control. Apostles are wanting just to get out. They want to get rid of their responsibilities as quickly as possible, so they can move on to the next place, and to the next place, because that is what God has called them to do.

They are different. Elders are very, very different. Those who control, or look after, manage local churches, they have, in fact, it's very hard to get a true elder to agree to release a young person, or a young man, or somebody in the church to go and help some other church, because their job is to keep the chickens together.

That's what they do, and that's right. There's nothing wrong with that, but you can see that they are very different animals. They are very different kinds of people, and yet today, all of this gets put into one pot, and so Apostles are those who control.

No, no, Apostles are those who are out there, who are preaching, who are breaking new ground. So, are there any examples of Apostles in the last two thousand years? There are many, many, many Apostles. There are men like Augustine.

There are men like Calvin, and like Luther. These were all Apostles, all of them with their faults and so on, but I think that for me, two of the greatest examples are a man called Job Darby, John Nelson Darby, who, when he died, and very interesting, he and his followers do not believe that the Apostolic ministry continues, and yet they write about him, and they said that his relationship with his churches was apostolic in nature. He established 1,500 churches, 1,500 churches, all over England and Europe, and the churches continue today.

They've gone into error, unfortunately, and he lived, he was born in 1800, so we're talking 200 years ago, and yet he started those 1,500 churches, just would move into a new territory, preach the gospel exactly the way we've described it. In my own time, and someone, well, before my time, but someone who had a great influence on me, I knew him as a young boy and as a young man, was a man called William Burton, who went from England to the Congo. The most amazing stories, as he traveled, and I remember him telling me some of these stories, went into the darkest part of Africa, where no white man had ever gone before, and just lived there, amongst the wild animals and the diseases, and in fact, on his first journey, he had a friend who went in with him, and before they even got to the place where they planned to begin to work from, his friend had already died because of some tropical disease, and he went in there, and he began to preach the gospel.

God worked with him, just like in the New Testament, and at the time when the Congo got independence, and the war broke out in the Congo, a thousand churches had been established. Every one of those churches were autonomous, had its own elders, and so when he had to withdraw, those churches

continued, and today those churches count into thousands and thousands and thousands of churches. Now, what is this? What do we call these men today? Missionaries.

That's all it is. We just change the language, and we think, ah, you know, a missionary is this thing, and an apostle is another thing. No, it's a missionary.

That's all it is. An apostle is a missionary. Now, not all missionaries are apostles.

Some missionaries are teachers, and they teach kids to read and write, and others are doctors, and others are engineers, and others are cultural tourists. They just travel to go and see strange people. A true missionary is an apostle, and he doesn't just preach the gospel, but he establishes local churches, and he puts local elders in charge of those churches, so that those churches are independent of the sending church or sending agency.

You see, one of the problems of missionary work today is that, let's say, Burbank Community Church says, we're going to send a missionary to wherever. Venezuela. And so, we support the guy, and which is good and quite right, and we say, brother, go there, preach the gospel, start churches.

He starts churches. What do we do? We say, no, these churches must be responsible to the mother church, and we make them dependent on us for gifts, and for money, and for ministries, and for everything. And what happens when trouble breaks out in that country, and that missionary is chased out of the country? Those churches die, because they are dependent on the mother church.

This is not the way it was in the New Testament. Those churches were independent, they were started, they were taught to stand on their own feet, not to be dependent on the sending church, or the sending agency, the mission organization, for their money, or for their ministry, or for anything, but to be dependent on Jesus Christ. And wherever this has been done correctly, as in China, and in the Congo, and in many other places, when the doors were closed, and missionary organizations were kicked out of the country, those churches continued.

Where that was not done properly, those churches failed, and they closed down, because they were not founded on a proper foundation. All right, we can talk for hours about that. Let me deal with some very important, some of these errors that we spoke about.

Apostolic succession. Apostles hand over to the next apostle, and so when that apostle dies, the next one takes over. Acts chapter 20, and Paul, and I've referred to this before, when we spoke about elders, but Paul is now dealing with the Ephesian elders.

He is on his way to Jerusalem, and then to Rome. He says in this passage, he says, you're not going to see my face any longer. I'm dead, as far as you're concerned.

You're never going to see me again. Now, if anybody was ever, and I believe that this scripture is given to us on purpose, if at any stage, there was any hint at an apostolic succession, or if there was any idea that an apostle would be replaced by another apostle, then we would find it here in this passage, because this is a clear discussion between Paul and the elders, and he says, I'm gone. I'm out of here, and he does not say to them, there is Timothy, or Barnabas, or Peter, or whoever.

If you have any problem, send them an email, or phone them, or call them. He makes no provision for that, and in Acts chapter 20, verse 20, let me just cut to the chase. Verse 28, therefore take heed to yourselves

and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch and remember, that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

So what does he do? He makes the elders in the local church responsible. He does not provide a successor. He does not provide anyone to take his place.

He makes no provision for them whatsoever. He says, you are the final responsibility in this church, and that alone, we don't need many other scriptures. That alone proves, as far as I'm concerned, the fact that apostles are not succeeded by other apostles.

The second reason why this is true, and this is very important, is if we go to the book of Corinthians, 1 Corinthians, chapter 4. Now in Corinth, how are we doing there? In Corinth there was an issue concerning apostles. Remember the book opens, and Paul says there's problems in this church. He says, because some say, we're with Paul, and others say, no, no, no, Peter is our man, and others say, no, apostles our guy, and he says, you're carnal, because you're chasing after men.

But also he was protecting, because men were coming in and laying claim to this church. That's one of the things that false apostles do, and the New Testament warns us about false apostles. One of the things false apostles do, is that they lay claim to territory.

They want to move into churches and into areas, and they want to grab as much as they can, because these men are about ego, and they're about numbers. I have a hundred churches, I have five hundred churches, whatever, under me. You don't ever see that, but at the same time, Paul is very careful to protect and to defend his apostleship in the local, in the church of Corinth, not because he wanted Corinth as a notch on his arrows, on his bow, you know, to say, you know, that there's, you know, or pins on the map.

So, you know, there's Corinth, that's one of my churches. That wasn't the issue for Paul, but Paul recognized that these guys who wanted to come in, were going to cause havoc in this church, they were going to cause division, and they were going to bring in error. And for that reason alone, he felt the need to protect that church, and to claim it in the sense of saying, this is my church.

Not because he wanted to claim that church for himself, but simply for the sake of protecting it. That was the, that's the only motive you see here with Paul. And so Paul says, he says, I don't like to prove who I am, but he says, you forced me to do this now, because these guys are coming in and they're saying, we're apostles, here are our credentials, here is our proof that we're apostles.

He says, no, what do I have to do? He says, you're forcing me to explain who I am. Now, in this context then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 14, I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children, I warn you. Now look at this, verse 15, for though you might have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers.

For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel, therefore I urge you, imitate me. What does an apostle do? He is a father. He brings people into the new birth, he fathers them the same way as I

fathered my daughters, and the time came when I had to let them go, but I'm still their father.

If they have an issue, they call me, but the relationship has changed, the same way as an apostle brings the church into being, initially he is right there all the time, teaching them, training them, he begins to withdraw slowly, and eventually they're on their own. Now Paul says here, there's a difference between a father and an instructor. My daughters have had many instructors, they went to school, all of those teachers taught them things, but none of those teachers can ever be their father.

They can only have one father, and that is me, and even if they were adopted, they would have a biological father, a true father, and then the father who parented them. Now that's a sad situation, let's rather not go there, but there can only be one father, and Paul says you can have 10,000 instructors, who are these instructors he's talking about? Peter and Apollos amongst others, because these were the guys that they were saying, but these men are also apostles. Was Peter an apostle? Yes he was.

Was Peter an apostle to the Corinthians? No, because he was not their father. According to Paul, Peter was an instructor in Corinth. He may have been an apostle in Jerusalem, but he was not an apostle to the Corinthians, because there was only one man who had started that church, and had fathered that church, and it was Paul.

And here lies the key to understanding the function of this ministry. So an apostle is not an office, that you write behind your name and you say, I am an apostle. If you have started, if a man has started, let's say he started three churches, he is an apostle to those three churches.

I think if you start one church, it doesn't mean you're an apostle. Some people like to think that that means that you're an apostle. I don't see that.

But let's say he started, I think three would, I don't know what the minimum would be, but you know, but let's say he started three churches. He would be an apostle to those three churches, but when he goes to another church that he did not start, he cannot be an apostle to that church, because he did not start or found or plant that church. He can only be an apostle to the churches he started.

Now if that man dies, and another man comes and says, here is this church in Timbuktu that was started by this apostle, he's died, I'm not claiming apostleship of this church. It can never be. That man can only be a stepfather at the very best to that church, but according to Paul, he can only be an instructor.

He cannot be an apostle to that church. So what are we saying? One church, one apostle. Every church can have one apostle in its relationship.

The relationship of a father to that church. Anybody else cannot claim. And so when you look at apostles today, men who claim to be apostles, they're apostles over, some of them over hundreds of churches, and they have not started one of those churches.

It's a false claim. If they have started any churches, they would indeed be apostles over those churches that they'd started. So when Paul goes back, let me illustrate this.

When Paul goes to Jerusalem, and you can see this, it deals with this in great detail when he goes to Acts and there's a debate and a discussion about circumcision and so on. When he goes to Jerusalem, does he go to Jerusalem and he sits around the table and there's a sign in front of his table saying, Apostle Paul? No, because he was not an apostle to the church in Jerusalem, but he was an apostle in the church

in Corinth. When Paul goes back to Antioch, remember they were the church who sent him out, and when he came back he would go back to Antioch.

Would he come back to Antioch and say, well now I'm an apostle, I deserve to sit on the platform here? No, when he goes back to Antioch, he fits in with the other brothers as a teacher, which was his ministry in Antioch. An apostle is only an apostle when he's functioning in that role out in the field. When he's back in another church, he's just a brother.

He will obviously have some other ministry. All apostles will have a primary or another ministry. They will be a teacher or a prophet or an evangelist or a pastor, and so they can fulfill that ministry in other churches, but they cannot fulfill an apostolic ministry in other churches than those churches that they established.

You see, because like the elders ministry and like all of these ministries, it is based not on a position or a title or an office, but it is based on a relationship. That's the only basis of that. You see, and this is one of the keys that has been lost today, is that apostles are, it's an office, it's a position, it's a title.

No, it's none of those things. It's a relationship, and Paul says you can only have one apostle. There's only one man who has this relationship with you, and that is the man who brought you into the faith.

Now, we've run out of time. Let me quickly say, apostolic infallibility. Apostles claim that they are infallible, that they cannot make a mistake.

Not only does the Pope claim that, but many other apostles claim the same thing. Was Peter an apostle? Yes, he was. Did Peter make mistakes? After the resurrection and after the ascension, yes, he did.

In fact, in the book of Galatians, Paul says that I had to correct Peter publicly, because Peter was playing the hypocrite about the issue of eating kosher and non-kosher food, and Paul had to rebuke him in front of the rest of the church. So the idea that an apostle is this super spiritual guy who can never make a mistake, Peter made serious mistakes, and he was an apostle, no question about that. All right, apostles are not the final authority to the church.

Jesus is. Colossians 1 verse 18. Apostles do not receive special revelation.

And then finally, another very popular thing today is this idea of an apostolic team, and I don't have time to deal with that because I think we're out of time, but the idea of apostolic teams, which is another word for an oversight committee. There's no such thing in the scriptures. Paul's relationship with the Corinthians was a unique relationship, a one-on-one relationship between him and them.

When he went out into the field, he would take different men with him. He would take Timothy and Silas and Barnabas and John Mark and other men who would go with him, but that was not a fixed committee. They were teams in the sense that, but they were fluid.

They would change all the time. He would leave one man here, another one would join him over there. It was not another word for a board or a council or a committee.

They were based on relationships, and they were based on the wicked hand, and so one man would be here, another one, and Paul would never convene the apostolic council of the church in Asia. There's just no, that idea is just not in the Bible. All right, let's close, and we'll allow a few minutes for questions.

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