

Restoring the Apostolic in Our Day

This is a small excerpt from Bert's newest book, *Cleansing the Temple*.

The church began as a house of prayer (Acts 1, 2). It is God's purpose for the church to always remain a house of prayer. Every Gospel bears witness to the zeal for God's house being a house of prayer (Matt. 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, John 2). The four Gospels' witness is very significant, since only 8% of the content in John's Gospel appears in the others.

When God's house ceases to be a house of prayer, it then by default becomes a place of business. Actually, Jesus stated it much more strongly when He called it a "den of thieves." This is one of the strongest indictments against the modern-day church.

Apostles were the first ministry gifts appointed by Jesus. He appointed them after a night of prayer (Luke 6:12). Isn't it interesting how the apostolic is released through prayer? We see the pattern again in the early church (Acts 13:1-3). Once apostles do their work, shepherds are needed (Matt. 9:35-36). The harvest is contained by the shepherds. Laborers are released by apostles.

Jesus was a Shepherd, but He was first the apostle. An apostle is a "sent one." The 12 were apostles because they were sent. Divine work can only be done by those who are divinely commissioned. The church had its beginnings, and thus its roots, in the apostolic.

We need not fear the word "apostle." It is not a title to be used for personal consumption. It is not a gift to promote greed. It is not a credit card to be flashed for recognition. Rather, it is a glory for the church. True apostles count

themselves last, not first. This ministry often comes with a humiliation and not an exaltation.

The New Testament and its epistles were laid down by apostles. The Scriptures are holy because they are God-breathed and written in the ink of holy apostolic lives. It is interesting to note also that what tradition has labeled as the “pastoral” epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) are actually apostolic letters written from a senior apostle (Paul) to junior apostles (Timothy and Titus). The truth is that the authentic apostolic ministry has been overlaid with crusty layers of man-made doctrines and traditions that are so common today. They are now overshadowed by the insecurities of men who have hidden themselves in the systems and structures from which these doctrines and traditions feed and grow.

The scribes and Pharisees devoured widows’ houses and used the resources to strengthen the systems and structures that their own hands made. The house of prayer had become a place of business, or as Jesus put it, “a den of thieves.” The “give until it hurts” offering would definitely apply here. The statement “God will not bless you unless you give” would also apply.

In the early church, money and resources were laid at the feet of the apostles, men who devoted themselves to prayer and the Word and hazarded their lives for the name of Jesus. Today, money and resources are laid at the feet of men who are not as interested in building God’s house as they are in building a structure, a system or a place of business. This will never satisfy the cry of God’s heart.

The glory of God will be restored to the church when we become a house of prayer. Before that happens, there will be a shaking and a cleansing. Man-made doctrines and traditions will be confronted. The pastoral ministry shall cooperate more fully with the other ministry gifts. And the authentic apostolic shall be in greater prominence. The best days for

the church are just ahead. {eoa}