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THE APOSTOLIC PATTERN

by Paul Galligan

There is clearly an apostolic pattern in the New Testament Scriptures that ought to be followed, and must be followed so that the church can be restored and fulfil God's purpose in the earth. This requires that there be **apostles** in the church today. For two decades now God has been restoring apostles in the church, but there needs to be a clear understanding of why we need apostles and that we understand the apostolic pattern that must be followed, so that the church may become *"a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:13b).

1. WE NEED APOSTLES TO REVEAL CHRIST

In **Matthew 10**, Jesus commissioned the first twelve apostles and sent them out. He gave them many and various instructions and then in **verse 40** He said *"He who receives you [the apostles], receives Me [Jesus the Messiah], and he who receives Me receives Him [the Father] who sent Me"*

The mystery of God

If we receive apostles sent by Jesus we actually receive Jesus. If we receive Jesus in this way, we actually receive the Father. There is a deep revelation of God to be received, and according to Jesus it comes by receiving the apostles He sends. Paul talks about this in **Colossians 2**: *"For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and for those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of Father and of Christ" v.1-2.*

God is Father and God is the Son

The mystery of God is the deep understanding of God as revealed in the whole Bible, but especially in the New Testament. **God is Father to a Son and Son to a Father – this is the mystery of God.** The Father is revealed in the Son and can be known no other way. *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me' Jn.14:6.* Jesus then said, *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him" Jn.14:7.* How were the disciples going to know the Father? Only through knowing Jesus, after He has risen from the dead.

The doctrine of Christ

The apostle John went to great lengths in his writings to make known to us the mystery of Christ. He says, *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" 2John 9.* He says, *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" 2Jn.7.*

In the modern world we have the Jehovah Witnesses going all over the world declaring that Jesus Christ is not Jehovah [Yahweh] in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. We have Muslims aggressively opposing the doctrine of Christ and even being prepared to kill. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Even in the Christian churches there has been a pulling away from the doctrine of Christ, replacing it with other doctrines that men have taught to explain the Godhead. There needs to be a clear preaching of the doctrine of Christ; there needs to be a clear teaching of the divinity of Christ. This is the only foundation of the Christian faith (**1Corinthians 3:10-11**).

2. WE NEED APOSTLES TO LAY THE FOUNDATION

A picture of the pattern

In **Ephesians 2:19-22** we have a picture of the pattern, after which the church is to be built. The household of God is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets. This is a remarkable statement and one that has been ignored for too long. Every church is built upon some foundational doctrine, but what is that doctrine? The household of God can only be built on the Biblical foundation and that is the preaching and teaching of the mystery of who Christ is. Therefore the building of God's house is only possible if true holy apostles and prophets are in place as foundational ministries, teaching and preaching the mystery of Christ (**Eph.3:5**).

God to be seen

The purpose is for God to be seen in the earth through His church. God needs a people fashioned according to the pattern. Apostles are necessary with prophets to lay the foundational knowledge of Jesus Christ in the church. Relying upon historic denominational foundations will never bring the church to maturity, that is, to the full revelation of who Christ is.

Through the church

In **1 Timothy 3:15** Paul was instructing Timothy how to conduct himself "*in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*". The primary truth that is to be found in every expression of the church is the declaration of the mystery of godliness: that "*God was manifested in the flesh*" (**v.16**). God was seen in flesh! And today God reveals Himself through His Word in the church of the living God. The living God is found in the church through the word that is preached and taught.

What did the first apostles preach? Acts 5:42

The apostles had been in trouble again for preaching Christ. The high priest and his companions were deeply troubled. They said, "*Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!*" **Acts 5:28**. What an accusation to have made against us: that we have filled our city, our nation with the doctrine of Jesus Christ!

These apostles, after being released, having been beaten with stripes, were rejoicing to have suffered "*shame for His name*" (**v.41**). And what did they do then? "*And daily in the temple and in every house they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus the Christ*" **v.42**. This is the fundamental knowledge of God, knowing Jesus the Messiah; that He is the revelation of God in the flesh.

3. APOSTLES ARE NEEDED AS WISE MASTER BUILDERS 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

Apostle Paul had received grace from God to be as a *“wise master builder”* (v.10). A master builder has to know the plan, so that we can all build according to the pattern. There is a master plan that apostles are responsible to make known. The building must have a sure foundation. The only foundation that can be laid is *“Jesus the Messiah”* (v.11). This Jesus who is Yehovah [Yahweh] in the flesh, bringing salvation. He is the promised Messiah, the King of kings and He has a plan.

The foundation is the knowledge of who Jesus is. God is not a concept; He is a person whose name is Jesus.

The church is to be built up into maturity and every saint equipped to function so that the church will begin to measure up to the stature of Christ (**Eph.4:13**). Apostles are needed, along with all the ministries Christ has given, to bring the church to be a perfect man in the earth reflecting Christ. God will be seen in the earth!

4. WE NEED APOSTLES TO MAKE KNOWN THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY

Apostles function in the realm of revelation. Paul speaks of the grace he received to know the mystery and to make known the mystery through his writings and through his preaching (**Eph.3:2-4 & 8**). This knowledge is given by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. We will only see the mystery when we receive the apostles and prophets that the Spirit has revealed it to. There are many today calling themselves apostles and prophets but they do not speak of the mystery of Christ. **Ephesians 3:5** clarifies this: the mystery is revealed *“by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”*, that is, those who set themselves apart in prayer, enabling them to receive from the Spirit (**Acts 6:4**).

There is one body

In the book of Ephesians, Paul refers to the **one body** (**Eph.4:4**) and to the **one new man** (**Eph.2:15**). One of the primary aspects of the mystery is that the *“Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel”* **Eph.3:6**. There is one body, made up of Jew and Gentile. The body that Jesus is forming in the earth is made up of Jew and Gentile. There is no such thing as 'a Gentile church' in the Scriptures. There is only the one body of Christ. There is not a separate destiny for the nations [Gentiles] to the nation of Israel. Christ has *“broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity”* **Eph.2:14b-16**.

This is a most important aspect of the mystery that few are preaching today. Many are coming up with sophisticated doctrines and eschatologies concerning the future of Israel and the church, therein denying the clear teaching of Paul in the book of Ephesians and elsewhere, and Jesus' own words in **John 10:16**, *“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”*

Grace was given to Paul to *"preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Messiah [Christ]" Eph.3:8*, so that we could all see **the fellowship of the mystery (v.9)**. This is the mystery of Messiah, the Anointed One. It is a fellowship! That means that we are all to become participators in this mystery. This mystery has been hidden since creation. It was hidden by God, but it is revealed in Jesus Christ. This is all referred to in **verse 9**.

The result of seeing the fellowship of the mystery is that the principalities and powers will bow the knee to Jesus, when the mystery [manifold wisdom] is made known by the church to the principalities and powers (**Eph.3:10**).

WHAT IS THE PATTERN?

The early church was undisputedly led by apostles. When Paul was converted he was taken to meet the apostles. Who led the church? The apostles. The first church was apostolic.

The pattern is expressed as **follow me as I follow Christ**: this is the pattern of leadership! This is the **apostolic pattern**:

- apostles lay down their lives for the brethren
- the heart of apostles is to raise up brethren into the callings that the brethren have
- all that apostles have to offer is a lifestyle of following Jesus

Paul's example: Philippians 3:7-14

If you do what Paul did, you will become an apostolic person. Then you will be functioning in the apostolic pattern as a member of an apostolic company who are a pattern people.

v.7 *"What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."* This is the beginning of our walk to maturity: laying down everything for Christ

v.8 *"indeed I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus My Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ."* We need to have this same attitude as Paul: full commitment! Laying down everything for the sake of gaining Christ! Not mourning what we have lost, but purposely deciding to count them as loss. The reward is gaining Christ!

v.9 All we need is to be *"found in Him, not having my own righteousness ... but ... the righteousness which is from God by faith"*. Faith is the key, not your feelings.

v.10 This is a remarkable prayer from the heart of Paul. His great desire was to *"know Him and the power of his resurrection."* Most of us like that part of the prayer, but Paul does not stop there. He goes much further: to know *"the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"*. We often fail to understand the importance of embracing His sufferings in our own lives; we fail to really die to ourselves.

v.11 *"If by any means I may attain to [arrive at] the resurrection from the dead"*. This is speaking of a lifestyle experience of the resurrection. This is walking in the power of the resurrection here and now. Our goal is to walk in Jesus, for Jesus, and through Jesus.

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" 2 Cor.4:10. Paul speaks of a lifestyle of *"death working in us, but life in you [others]"* (v.12).

v.12 Here is the decision! Will we press on? Will we *"lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"*. Do not get stuck where you are and what you feel right now. Make the decision to **press on**. Why did God call you in the beginning? Do you know?

v.13 This is the attitude. *"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead."* Forget the past! Make a decision: press on into the future. It does not matter if you have been successful or a failure, walk into the new man. Do not let people hold you in the past. Do not let yourself remain in the past.

v.14 *"press toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

In verses 12 to 14, Paul uses strong words of action. We are to make decisions to press on, to lay hold of, to apprehend, to forget the past, to reach for the future. Brethren you can do it! You can press on! You can lay hold of all that God has in store for you. He wants you to be an over comer, to be part of a pattern people, to walk in maturity.

Being a pattern people - Philippians 3:15-17

v.15 *"Therefore let us"*. Paul has changed from personal testimony: I press toward the goal etc, to the plural: let us. *"As many as are mature"*. Paul is now talking to a company of people who have the same commitment and attitude and zeal as he describes of himself in **verses 7-14**. If you and I have a similar commitment and choose to go on, counting the cost and choosing to forsake all, then we are mature. This is the qualification to be a member of the apostolic company; to be part of a pattern people.

"Let us ... have this mind": we are to think differently. We are no longer just individually orientated in following Jesus, but we have become a functioning part of the body.

Then Paul says, *"If in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you"*. If you have made the mature decision to follow Jesus, God will reveal any differences in thinking. It becomes more easy now to discern the good acceptable and perfect will of God (**Rom.12:2**), and it becomes easy to repent, that is, to change our minds.

v.16 *"Nevertheless to the degree that we have already attained"*, the level of maturity that we have, we are to walk as a functioning body in Christ, submitting to the word of God, and submitting to one another.

"Let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind". Let us stop arguing and making divisions according to our own opinions. Let us build up the body that we are part of and look to contribute to the building up of the whole body.

We are to walk by the same rule. This means we are to live by the rule, according to the measure, and the measure is *"the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph.4:13b). This walk is voluntary; we need to have a generous attitude in the company and be committed to being a pattern people.

v.17 *"Brethren, join in following my example"*. Let us walk with the apostle. One can only be an apostle to those who receive him as an apostle.

"Note those who so walk as you have us for a pattern". Are you willing to be a pattern? Can others follow your lifestyle, your example and thereby grow to greater maturity?

What sort of pattern should we be setting?

The **Thessalonians** were a pattern people, **1 Thessalonians 1:6-8**

- They *"became followers of us [apostles] and of the Lord"*
- They *"received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit"*
- They *"became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe"*
- *"The word of the Lord sounded forth ... in every place"* from this people.
- Their *"faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything"*

Longsuffering is a necessary part of the pattern. The apostle must show forth *"all longsuffering as a pattern"* (1 Timothy 1:16).

As an apostle, Titus was to show himself as a *"pattern of good works, in doctrine, integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech"* Titus 2:7. The brethren are to follow this example.

The brethren are meant to be able to follow the example of the apostolic leadership, not being disorderly; not eating without working; not being a burden to other brethren, showing themselves *"an example of how you should follow"* (2 Thess.3:7-9).

Our understanding of the pattern is growing and deepening. Discipleship is meant to be a lifestyle, following the example of the apostles in the midst, and receiving the doctrine through them. Being a pattern people is very different to following the normal traditional church pattern. The normal church pattern is mostly expressed in congregational meetings with one minister up the front, trying to provide everything that the people of God need and then the people of God go home and individually and as families seek to follow the Lord.

In discipleship we function in public - the congregational meeting - and from house to house. We are disciples seven days a week, following the pattern.

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