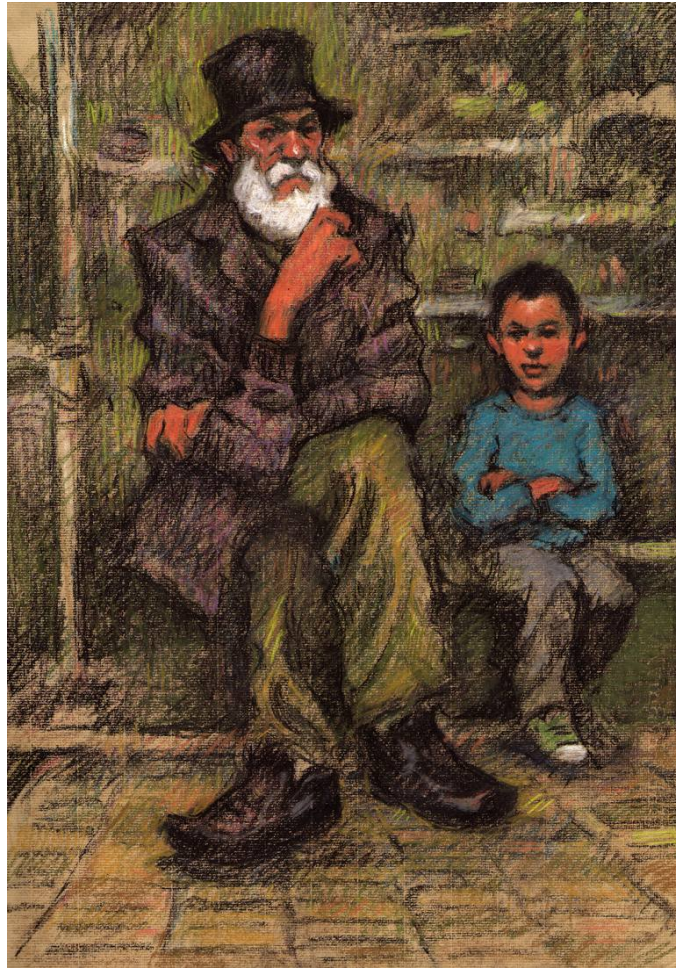




From Children to a Mature Man

This is a brief essay on a passage in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. My "bottom line" flies in the face of a current tendency in much of the professing Church in western nations, including most of the so called "Ekklesia" movements. **That tendency is to shun the reality and necessity of authentic spiritual leadership.**¹

To be clear, by "authentic spiritual leadership" ministries I am NOT referring to those who have well-known, large, and popular, "successful" ministries. Nor am I advocating "apostolic authority" in a governmental sense. In fact, I view the "Ephesians 4" / "apostolic" ministries quite differently from these modern interpretations. In this particular essay, I am simply highlighting the reality and necessity for the "Ephesians 4 ministries". I will not be discussing much about my specific definitions of those ministries nor my understanding of the nature and functioning of "apostolic" or "leadership" ministries. *I have written elsewhere on that.*²

The impetus for writing this essay comes from observing the **increasing deception** in the midst of professing Christianity. As I reflected on this, the Holy Spirit once again drew my attention to

¹ While I consider myself a staunch advocate of the Headship of Christ, never-the-less I have observed what seems to be a self-styled "democratic" spirit from the surrounding culture having invaded aspects of the professing Church, but especially the "Ekklesia" movements with regards to their concept of gatherings. Shunning the concept of leadership ministries has become in vogue.

² Read / Download: "Christ is Pre-requisite for Church", "Discipleship & The Equipping Ministries", "Headship, Leadership & The Body" - <https://www.atchriststable.org/category/ebooks/> Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/user/billfurioso/videos>

this passage which Paul wrote to the Ephesians. I am aware that what follows is not the **ONLY** explanation for the **increasing deception** in the Church. But what Paul presents in Ephesians 4 is one clear and simple explanation for deception in the Church. I think we would need to question our spiritual sincerity and intellectual honesty if we were to ignore this particular explanation while being preoccupied with alternative explanations.

I know many will not be stirred to give an “Amen” to the simple point of this message. Nevertheless, this is not in any sense a “personal interpretation”³ - I am simply presenting the words of Paul, the apostle, hoping to draw attention to something he wrote to the Church.⁴

Ephesians 4:11-14⁵

**¹¹” And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets,
some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers,
¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the
building up of the body of Christ;**

³ Cf., 2 Peter 1:20

⁴ When I use the English word “church”, I mean to communicate the full biblical meaning of the Greek word *ecclesia*, Strong’s # 1577. The meaning of biblical concepts requires instruction. I don’t think simply using the Greek word, *ekklesia*, in place of the English word, *church*, does anything to help communicate biblical meaning.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

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¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."

v.14

¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."

What Paul writes in v. 14 is **"a result"** of what he wrote in vv. 11-13. It is painfully obvious that we have not arrived at this "result". The desired **"result"** is: **"We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."**

The body of Christ is being **"tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine"** – because we do not have what preceded v.14:

v.13

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¹³**until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**

I'd like to suggest that Paul understands these four phrases to be different ways of saying the same thing. Namely ... **"The measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"** is the **"mature man"** (collective – the Body of Christ). The **"mature man"** (collective – the Body of Christ) is those who have attained **"the knowledge of the Son of God"**. And **"the knowledge of the Son of God"** is what comprises **"the unity of the faith"**.

Each of these phrases needs in depth exposition. It is not within the scope of this essay to provide those expositions. Rather the point of this essay is to simply point out that VERSES 13 & 14 **ARE A RESULT** OF VERSES 11 & 12.

vv.11-12

"And He gave some *as* apostles, some *as* prophets, some *as* evangelists, some *as* pastors and teachers⁶, for the

⁶ Some prefer to call this a "five-fold" ministry, others prefer "four-fold", because the text doesn't say "some pastors, and some teachers". (The "as" is not in the Greek text.) The are some who are "pastors" or "shepherds". (I prefer the word "shepherds", because in every other instance in the New Testament, *poimen*, Strong's # 4166, is translated "shepherds".) And these shepherds, as elders, are "apt to teach" (1Timothy 3:2, 2 Timothy 2:24), but do not fulfill the

equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.”

We are living in the harsh negative reality of v. 14 - being **“children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine”**, because we do not have the positive reality of vv. 11-12 - **“some *as* apostles, some *as* prophets, some *as* evangelists, some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ”**.

There is much to say about the Ephesians 4 ministries⁷, but here I would like to make just one point: Instead of **“children tossed here and there”** we need mature disciples who have been STRENGTHENED, ESTABLISHED, AND CONFIRMED IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST. Apostolic workers performed this ministry in the Early Church. We see that Paul and Barnabas **“returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening and establishing⁸ the hearts of the disciples;**

calling of a teacher of doctrine after the example of Paul and the writer to the Hebrews. Having said that, I must add: Jesus was seen as a rabbi (if not the Christ); and in the Jewish culture the rabbi was considered both a teacher and a shepherd to follow. Jesus said that these rabbis “EXAMINE THE SCRIPTURES”. Bear in mind, He DID NOT criticize them for being dedicated to scripture study, He criticized them because they were “unwilling to come to Him”, because they “do not have the love of God in yourselves and accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God”. John 5:39-47.

⁷ Read / Download: “Discipleship & The Equipping Ministries” -

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⁸ Greek: episterizo, Strong’s # 1991, meaning to establish, strengthen, confirm.

encouraging them to remain firm in the faith". (Acts 14:21-22 AMP) We see Judas and Silas in Syria and Cilicia where they **"exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed⁹ them".** (Acts 15:32 ASV) And we see Paul and Silas **"traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening¹⁰ the churches".** (Acts 15:41)

These Ephesians 4 "equipping"¹¹ ministries are "CHRIST-GIFTED"¹² to set forth¹³ - indeed, act as tools of the Holy Spirit to establish in people's lives – "the knowledge of the Son of God", resulting in "the unity of the faith, a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ".

That is my "bottom line", and it flies in the face of much of the professing Church in western nations, including most of the so called "Ekklesia" movements, because there is now a reactionary movement in response to false leadership ministries – ministries which have failed in their calling to "lay the Foundation" of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Ephesians 2:20) – "the knowledge (cognitive and experiential) of the Son of God" in the hearts, minds and lives of the body of Christ.

⁹ Greek: episterizo, Strong's # 1991, meaning to establish, strengthen, confirm.

¹⁰ Greek: episterizo, Strong's # 1991, meaning to establish, strengthen, confirm.

¹¹ Greek: kartartismos, Strong's # 2677, meaning completing, perfecting, preparing, equipping, bringing to a condition of fitness.

¹² Cf. Ephesians 4:8 & 11

¹³ Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Ephesians 2:20

It is as simple as that – the members of the body of Christ are predominately children, vulnerable to “**every wind of doctrine**”, because they are not receiving the ministry of authentic, Christ-Centered apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers.¹⁴ I am fully aware of the fact that servants with “**single-hearted loyalty to Christ**” (2 Corinthians 11:3) are not easy to come by. Yet, Paul said that Christ has given these men as gifts (past tense). They are there, having been discipled by Christ Himself, tested, and approved through a “**baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire**”. (Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16)

A few more things about these authentic, Christ-Centered apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers ...

- I. This very brief essay has merely drawn attention to **the need for authentic “Christ-Centered, Foundation-laying” ministries to bring the body to the “fulness of Christ”**. It is these ministers of the word who will co-labor with the Holy Spirit to bring forth what “**the knowledge of the Son of God**” means in full.
- II. I don’t think the Jewish model of “rabbi” is the model for the New Covenant ministry. Christ is our Pattern. But like the scribes and rabbis of old, these ministers of the New Covenant WILL have a spirit of dedication to and a

¹⁴ For what I mean by “authentic, Christ-Centered”, I suggest: Read / Download: “*Discipleship & The Equipping Ministries*” - <https://www.atchriststable.org/category/ebooks/> Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/user/billfurioso/videos>

passion for scripture study and teaching like David (Cf. Psalm 119) and Apollos (Acts 18:24) - capable, strong, powerful, mighty in the scriptures¹⁵ - not like the popular lightweight teachers of today peddling formulas for a happy Christian life, or the self-absorbed mystic gurus of today leading so many astray.

- III. Who are these authentic Ephesians 4 servant-gifts to the body of Christ? How can they be recognized? Just a few suggestions which I received from the Holy Spirit:
- a. They will NOT be known, regarded, or recognized “by the flesh”. (2 Corinthians 5:16) It will take spiritual discernment to see as God sees, **“for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”** (1 Samuel 16:7)
 - b. They WILL NOT have a well-known, large, and popular, “successful” ministry because they will have invested their lives not into building *something for themselves*, but rather they will have invested their lives into the pursuit and propagation of the Foundation of Christ being laid in the lives of people. If you have been in “professional” ministry, you will know from personal experience that such a person is extremely rare. Towards the end of his very extensive ministry, Paul said he could send NO ONE ELSE but Timothy, because all the others “seek after their own *interests*, not those of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:19-21)

¹⁵ Greek: *dunatos*, Strong's # 1415

- c. **NO ONE** will “have it all”. Paul said, “**We** (plural – the universal body of Christ) have the mind of Christ....” (1 Corinthians 2:16) We will need to listen to various ministers of the word who may not be *consciously* working together. They will be working together “in tandem” in the Spirit, but not in the flesh. So, when I speak of this “plurality”, I am NOT suggesting that any one particular “ministry team” will “have it all”. Most often, the building of a “ministry team” is part of the building of “*something*” – namely, some human organization.
- d. **“But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.”** (James 1:19) This scripture most often refers to listening rather than speaking and getting angry. But I would like to focus on the first part of that verse with regards to our discussion here: **“But everyone must be quick to hear.”** Ultimately, our goal is NOT to recognize “the man of God”, but rather to recognize **“the word of the Lord”**. I believe the faultless servant of God exists only in the imaginations of admirers. Even these servant-gifts to the body of Christ won’t have everything 100% faultless. That does NOT mean they are “false prophets”. It means they are human - **“earthen vessels” SO THAT “the extraordinary greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves”**. (2 Corinthians 4:7) We demand perfect vessels; but, except for Jesus of Nazareth, God NEVER HAS and NEVER WILL give us

faultless servants of God. **We must be quick to hear the word of the Lord.** Now, for a certainty, there *are* false prophets.¹⁶ But, we are often too quick to label imperfect vessels “false prophets”. If God can speak through a donkey¹⁷, I am convinced we can hear what He wants us to hear and be able to distinguish that from human embellishment. If you are sincerely seeking to hear the word of the Lord, He WILL get through to you.¹⁸

IV. The body of Christ lives (grows and matures) **by the life of Christ** – that is, through the ministry of “**the word of Life**” (1 John 1:1-3) “**by the Spirit who gives life**”. (2 Corinthians 3:6)¹⁹ THE NEW COVENANT IS ALL ABOUT LIFE. The Christ-gifted Ephesians 4 ministers will be those who are “**holding forth the Word of Life**”. (Philippians 2:16) **Pay attention to, give heed to, hold on to**²⁰ **THE WORD OF LIFE.**

¹⁷ Numbers 22:28; “having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the reward of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own offense, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a human voice, restrained the insanity of the prophet.” 2 Peter 2:15-16.

¹⁸ Jeremiah 29:13

¹⁹ For further study, I would suggest: Read / Download: “*Christ is Pre-requisite for Church*”, “*Discipleship & The Equipping Ministries*”, “*Headship, Leadership & The Body*” - <https://www.atchriststable.org/category/ebooks/> Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/user/billfurioso/videos>

²⁰ Greek: *epecho*, Strong’s # 1907, Philippians 2:16

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Bill & Frances Furioso

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet...

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