

Unity (Part 2): God's Pattern of Leadership

Peter as Chief Apostle

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We are going to be continuing the *Unity* series today. The first step was to seek reconciliation with God, and the second is to choose which body of doctrines that we are going to allow to govern our lives. This sermon today is going to be Part 2 of Step 2.

I Corinthians 1:10-12 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions [or divisions] among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

There is no doubt that the church is now badly divided and it shows no evidence of coming back together again, and yet we are all commanded to speak the same things.

Paul goes on then to use the words "*mind*" and "*judgment*." The word "*mind*" that is used there actually is related to the power of observation—the way that we see things. He is saying we all need to see things in the same way. The word "*judgment*" has to do with the forming of an opinion.

They obviously did not all see things the same way, and thus, there was no possible chance for them to come to the same opinion. So they did the natural thing and that is to divide. I don't mean in this case that they actually split from the congregation, but there were cliques within the congregation and these people were not at peace with one another.

Now why didn't they see things the same way? The context shows it depended upon whom each decided he was going to use as his authority. Some used Paul as their authority, some used Apollos, some Peter, and of course, some Christ. There is no evidence that those named were divided, but people made it seem so. There is no wonder that there is division, and I think that today many are doing the same thing, but have you noticed that Paul followed up this opening in what he gave in the following context? I'm not going to go through the entire explanation here, but you get an indication from verse 13. He says,

Is Christ divided?

I Corinthians 1:30-31 But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glories, let him

glory in the Lord.

Now in verse 30, "*of him*" is referring to what it says in verse 28, "has God chosen." It's referring back to God, and so the conclusion that Paul comes to is very, very clear. We ought to be following Christ for He is the wisdom and power of God, not Paul, not Apollos, not Peter, or anybody else. But here's a question. How can we know whether we are following Christ? Well there is an answer to that, and the answer, I think, is largely found in another one of these patterns, if we will just believe it. God gives a multitude of patterns by which He operates in order that we might have faith, and when we see this pattern, we need to believe it and follow it.

Now this section shows me that speaking the same things is a choice. That's what Paul says in verse 10. We have to choose for the sake of unity. That is not an option for those who consider themselves to be converted. It is commanded. There is no option. We have to choose to follow Christ.

Paul expected the converted to choose to submit, but again a question: Submit to what? The church today is split along the doctrinal, attitudinal, and philosophical lines, with, I think, the doctrinal lines being by far the most important, and there is also undoubtedly some splitting upon personality lines. But again, I consider that less important than the doctrinal.

We're never going to get back together until somebody submits to somebody else. To whom should we submit? The same issue eventually almost completely destroyed the first century church. So the New Testament is rich in material regarding what we are to do regarding this. I'm going to cover just one principle that I think is very important to us today, and that is something that Herbert Armstrong went over many times with us—"*How does God get doctrine into the church in the first place?*"

I think that the Bible is very clear in this matter. It leaves us no options because the principle is clearly shown in one of these patterns that I speak on so frequently. We're going to review this pattern so that we can firmly get it into our minds so that we can be convicted about what we are going to do. Now this has to be done. I don't mean necessarily what I'm doing here, but I mean the choice has to be made by each one of us because every individual does not automatically know right from wrong. We all come from different kinds of environments and family life. We are rooted in different areas of the country, indeed different areas of the world, and some things are emphasized in one place, in one family more than they are in others, but we must all be agreed on what is doctrinal truth. I firmly believe that the splitting and the scattering is God's method of purifying us and bringing us to where we do agree.

I mentioned last night that God is the one who is on trial just as He said in I Samuel 8:7 — He was the one that was being rejected. Certainly Samuel got caught in it, but God saw it as though *He* was being rejected, and that is the issue today. So God's whole operation of producing His image in us is through our response to His word by faith, and what principle is it that we must have faith in? What principle must we submit to so that we can have unity? God puts truth into His church through His apostle or prophet. That is the pattern that He always follows. It doesn't come through the side door.

Now we are going to turn from here to the book of Luke. We're not going to dwell on this very

long. I do want to mention it because it will be a springboard to what we are pointing at here. I want you to see at the beginning of this sermon that God shows that there is a direct connection between Him and His prophet or His apostle. We might extend this on out to the ministry as well. Jesus said to these men,

Luke 10:16 "He that hears you hears Me; and he that despises you despises Me; and he that despises Me despises Him that sent Me."

Just in case you think that this is a minor point, I think perhaps you may want to consider John 13:20. This is on the last night of His life. It's one of the final things that He left with His disciples following that Passover. He says,

John 13:20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receives whomsoever I send receives me; and he that receives me receives him that sent me.

It's a little bit different wording, but He is teaching exactly the same as He did in Luke 10, and something very similar also shows up in Matthew the tenth chapter as well. Now I've given you this verse before, but if you want to write it down in this context, I Samuel 8:7. We're going to read Exodus 17:2. There's trouble in the wilderness, and it says in verse 2:

Exodus 17:2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?

Moses understood the same principle way back in the book of Exodus. He understood that he was God's direct representative and though he was not God, to reject him was to tempt God to do something, to react. And what did Moses fear? Well, he was afraid that God would react by striking those people dead because they were chiding with His ambassador to them.

This principle in no way means that His representatives are sinless. It does not mean that they are infallible. God has given us plenty of evidence of some of the weaknesses of his servants. Moses had quite a temper that he had to learn to bring under control. We're all familiar with much of what David did.

But those men were not alone in having problems. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, took on God and gave Him a piece of his mind. But God got him straightened out. "*God, you tricked me.*" So he had trouble getting his nature under control. And of course Herbert Armstrong had problems with his nature as well. But that did not change the fact of his office, and that God was able to use him in the way that He desired. God was able to control Herbert Armstrong in those things that were of importance to our relationship with God, in order that we might come out of this in the image of God.

Let's go back to the New Testament again, back to the book of I Corinthians, but this time in chapter 14 and in verse 33, where Paul wrote to this divided congregation,

I Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

God continuously, from the beginning of the book on as we are going to see, reveals Himself working through one man at a time. Does God send two or three or five ambassadors speaking somewhat different things to the same country at the same time? That would be confusion, and God is not the author of confusion. He avoids confusion by speaking through one voice, and we need to understand that. We need to believe it, and we need to make it a part of the operations of our lives. It was when we became confused about the voice that God was speaking through that everything blew apart and everybody went pretty much in their own way.

I am also certain that God, in an effort to restore the holiness of His name, and to get us into His kingdom, has led us into groups whereby we can continue to be sustained until we learn this maybe bitter but very vital lesson and submit to Him, by following the voice that He did send into this world to establish the doctrine that He wants us to conform to so that we will come out in the image that He wants (when we make the right choices toward the end of our lives).

What kind of leadership would it show God to have if He spoke in a confused tongue, as it were, having two men in the same area saying different things about the pathway to the Kingdom of God? Doctrine is that recipe that will form the product at the end of the line if it is believed and if it is applied in one's life through the choices that we make.

We find here another biblical principle. This is going to be in Mark 3:24. Jesus speaking, He said,

Mark 3:24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

If God sent two voices or three voices or five voices into the same area at the same time, and they were not speaking the same things, that kingdom is going to be divided against itself and it will not endure. It will split and the factions will be fighting with one another. The factions will say, *"I'm the true church, not you. I'm the true church and anybody in those other groups is not the true church."* So pride begins to rise. Vanity takes control. So we snub and ignore our own brethren self-righteously thinking that we are better than they. Wait a minute, brethren. It's not over yet. We need to be humble.

Mark 3:25-26 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.

Now God does what He does in order to avoid confusion. There may be periods of time, following the death of a strong leader, where it is not apparent through whom He is working. We can see that from the book of Judges. God raises up a Gideon; Gideon dies. The strong leader leaves, the people go their own way. God raises up another one and the people come together. He dies and the people go their own way.

That has been a pattern that we can see from the very beginning, and during the period that people fall away, there is a great deal of dividing. It's partly because there is confusion about whom it is God is working through. I believe, brethren, that we are in one of those times now. But take hope, because God is faithful and after His purpose for leaving things this way for awhile are satisfied, He will make that *one* known.

Now right now we have to stand on our own in order that we understand that it is God that we submit to. It is Christ that we submit to. It is not a man that we are following, but rather we are (in that sense) following a man *because* he is following Christ. So the connection goes directly up from the individual member to the leader and right on to Jesus Christ. That's why He said, "*They reject you, leader, they are also rejecting Me—they reject you, they reject Me, they reject the Father.*"

That helps us to understand why Herbert Armstrong again so frequently referred to the government of God and he wanted us to submit to him, not because he was some great person, but rather because he recognized that he was the apostle God was working through in this end time. He wanted to make sure that we extended our submission to the government of God, not Herbert Armstrong. Now I think many misunderstood what he was talking about.

I want you to reflect back to the beginning of the book. Like I said in the sermonette, God establishes things in the book of Genesis. So what does He show us in regard to this pattern? God worked through Abel. He doesn't mention a multitude of people, but He mentions Abel—one man. Then He mentions Enoch—one man. Then He mentions Noah—one man. The He mentions Shem—one man.

Then things really begin to pick up speed because He gets into Abraham. But it was Abraham—one man—whom God chose to be in the position of leadership, and thus the pattern is established right in the book of Genesis, where almost every important pattern has its beginnings. The foundations are laid there in the book of Genesis and that is where the foundation, of this pattern, is shown. God's government in heaven is going to extend its influence more strongly through one individual than anybody else, and it is our job to submit to God through this individual as he is following God, and not allow that man to come between us and our relationship to God.

The man can come between us and our relationship with God if we are just following *the man* rather than God. It's very likely that we are going to be very severely disappointed and discouraged by the sins that might be in the man and that's going to turn us aside. It's evidence that you were following the man and not following God.

God is faithful. He never changes. So you don't follow the man but you follow God, and the man has a part to play in that.

Now God worked through those men and after we leave Abraham, we get to Isaac and Jacob and then the outstanding leadership of Moses. So God confronted Moses at the burning bush. Moses protested that he was slow of speech. God was angered by what Moses' response was, but nonetheless God supplied Aaron to do the speaking for him.

Exodus 4:14-16 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. And you [listen to this] shall speak unto him, and put words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. And he shall be your spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to you instead of a mouth, and you shall be to him instead of God.

Now Moses was not really God, but in the teamwork here God is very clearly pointing out that Moses was the leader even though Aaron was going to be doing the bulk of the speaking, at least until Moses' confidence, his faith, got to the place that he didn't have to worry about being slow of speech. So Moses was in the position of the one issuing the orders. Aaron was in the position of submitting to what Moses said.

Moses was in the position of being God to Aaron, even as God was God to Moses, and Moses was God's prophet, but Aaron was Moses' prophet. A prophet is simply one who speaks for another (speaks the words that the other put into his mouth)—a very simple arrangement, easy to understand.

Exodus 7:1-2 So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh [that's a lot of authority], and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land."

Moses is the leader even though Aaron was going to be the one who seemingly was out front doing all of the talking. Now we're going to go to Numbers the 12th chapter as we begin to follow this pattern through. The children of Israel are out in the wilderness and a rebellion took place right in Moses' own household, in his family.

Numbers 12:1-2 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it.

Now if you will look at those words there in verse two you will find parallels with what is happening today. "*Has the Lord indeed only spoken by Herbert Armstrong?*" "*Who was he?*" "*I'm just as smart as he.*" That is not the issue. The issue is whom did God appoint to the office? "*Well, he's old.*" "*He's senile.*" "*He's not really with it.*" "*He's doddering.*" "*He doesn't grasp what is going on.*" That's still not the issue. The issue is respect for the office and the office is respected because the office represents God in heaven and the man was God's representative

until God removes him either by death or because of the poor conduct of his life. So we have that going on in the church of God today.

Now the context seems to indicate that the accusation was against Moses for marrying the Ethiopian woman, but that was not the real issue. Moses' leadership was being challenged right from within his own family. Did that take place during our time in the church of God? Yes it did. We lived through that.

Numbers 12:5-9 And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both came forth. And He said, Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He departed.

They were very severely rebuked for their challenge of the authority or the office of Moses because they were tempting God in what they were doing there. "*Well, God can't control Moses. He's off on his own doing these kind of things.*" So it was really calling God into account for what Moses was doing, and they thought it was wrong. So Moses was still the one that God was working through.

Now a more serious challenge occurs in Numbers 16:1-3.

Numbers 16:1-3 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men. And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

Now what they were doing here is accusing Moses of appointing himself. "*You take too much upon yourself. I'm just as good as you.*" Again, that's not the issue. The issue is respect for God through the office that He had appointed Herbert Armstrong to.

In verse 27 God very effectively answered that.

Numbers 16:27-33 So they got up from the tabernacle of Korah,

Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. And Moses said, Hereby you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that pertains unto them, and they go down quick into the pit, then you shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. And they perished from among the congregation

Well God very effectively answered that. He was still working through Moses. But God is showing a pattern that He will follow. These men, Dathan, Korah, and Abiram, revealed their lack of faith.

What they failed to have faith in is the principle that is the subject of this sermon. I know that you all know this scripture, but I want to tie it in here because the principle that is given here is important to this principle and the things that the church is going through today.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

He is still operating by the same patterns that He has always operated through. If God changed His patterns, it would create confusion, and we would not be sure what we should believe in. We would not be sure of the choices that we need to make.

Now we will also turn to another very clear scripture that gives us the same principle back in Malachi 3: 6. I want to read verse 5, because it lead into, and gives a sense to what verse 6 says.

Malachi 3:5-6 And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, says the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

He is assuring us that not only will He stick to His patterns (in regard to what we are talking

about here), He will also stick to His patterns in regard to mercy as well. God wants to see His purpose carried through to a successful conclusion, and it's going to require Him many, many times to act in an extremely merciful way, patiently forbearing with us until He leads us to the place where we can, in good conscience and great conviction, make the choices that we need to make in order to be conformed to His image. Therefore He doesn't change those patterns and we can have hope that He is merciful and that He is not carrying through in exactly the same way as He did with Korah, Dathan and Abiram. I don't know of any of you who have had the earth opened up beneath you whenever you might have challenged this principle as these others did.

Now let's go back to the New Testament again because we're going to begin to show the process as it unfolds in the New Testament for the New Covenant. In Hebrews 3:1, the pattern begins for the New Testament church.

Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,

Jesus Christ is the chief Apostle. He is the chief Ambassador. He is the chief representative of the Father. Jesus said, "I only speak those things that I have heard from the Father." He faithfully delivered the message that was given Him by the Father to His disciples. So He was a faithful Apostle, as it says in verse 2, in carrying out the responsibility that He had with God.

So here begins the pattern. God revealed to His apostle Jesus Christ, who in turn revealed to His apostles, the twelve, and primarily Peter, as we will see. There is no doubt that Peter was preeminent among the twelve. He was, as Herbert Armstrong said, the first among equals. The scripture clearly reveals that by means of emphasizing him and his role in the events recorded.

Now when God was using Moses, God emphasized Moses. When God was leading through Joshua, God emphasized Joshua. When God was leading through Elijah, God emphasized Elijah.

Now I said that he was first among equals. If you know any of the story of Elijah, he operated, as far as we know, three schools of the prophets. And in terms of being prophets, every one of them who came from the school of the prophets were prophets. But Elijah was the chief prophet. He was first among equals in terms of responsibility.

When He was leading through Samuel, he emphasized Samuel. When He was leading through David, he emphasized David. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel were all alive at the same time, but Jeremiah was the main prophet. He was first among equals.

Now they were great men within their own area, or in their own right, or in their own sphere of operations. Ezekiel was with the captives, Daniel was in the government of Babylon, and though they were equal to Jeremiah in terms of being prophets, it was Jeremiah that they looked to for any kind of leadership that they needed. He was first among equals.

It was Jeremiah who received the commission from God that's given there in Jeremiah 1, I think beginning in verse 10, where he was instructed to tear down. Then he was also instructed to build up. So he was the one that was first among equals during that time.

Now this pattern in no way means that Peter was the first pope in succession of all of the popes there in the Catholic church, because God does not pass the preeminence or the leadership in that manner. Succession is by appointment of the Father, and it is revealed primarily through the works of the one appointed. "You shall know them by their fruits."

And you will find that the matter of unity (this is another pattern) always takes place if God raises the person up. He begins, for a period of time, to show the fruits that God is appointing him to an office. He is proving himself, and the people then begin to unite under him. They voluntarily, as it were, come under his authority. Isn't that what happened with Herbert Armstrong? It did. He used to say from time to time, "Nobody forced you here. Nobody twisted your arm. You gave yourself." And that's the pattern that God follows.

He raises up the leader and then by His Spirit He brings the people to the leader. That is the way David became, as it were, king of Israel. He was ordained. He was anointed by Samuel, but by the fruits the people of Judah began to see that he was the man that God is using and they submitted to him. Then after seven years, Israel, the ten northern tribes, came with hat in hand and they said to David, "Will you be our king too?" They came to him. David did not have to go out and conquer them. They submitted. That's God's pattern.

He raises up the person and then He brings the people to him and they voluntarily submit to the leader. And I'm telling you now that's the way it's going to happen in the future when God brings the church together. We will see, by the fruits of the person's life, that this person has the message and we will submit. We will bring ourselves to him. He won't have to go out and conquer us. That is God's pattern.

So succession is by appointment of the Father and it is revealed through the works they do, and I think, if you will look in Timothy in the instruction regarding the people who are to be appointed, that it says, "Let them first be proved." That's God's form.

Now people are by nature opposed to this because carnality is opposed to hierarchy. God's government is clearly hierarchical, but people will argue against it because the carnal mind is enmity against God and the resistant against hierarchical government is actually an expression of the carnal nature showing its enmity for God. Now we've all experienced that.

Let's go to Matthew 4, and what we're going to do here is trace what the Bible says about Peter and his role. Remember that principle that I just gave you. When Moses was the one that God was working through, God emphasized Moses. When it was Samuel, God emphasized Samuel. When it was Joshua, God emphasized Joshua.

Now we're going to see in the New Testament God emphasizes Peter. And if we are familiar with the pattern as it is established in the New Testament, that ought to trigger the thought in any Christian's mind, Peter was first among equals. It doesn't mean that he was better. It doesn't mean that he was more moral. It means that he was the one that God appointed to that office and that we are to respect that office.

Matthew 4:18-19 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into

the sea, for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Now if you find the story in other places you will find that Andrew was actually the one who came first into contact with Jesus, and he in turn took Peter by to see Jesus. But when Jesus began appointing apostles, Peter was the first one He chose. Nobody else. None of the other eleven. Peter was the first one. He is named first and is the first disciple from all that we are able to see within the New Testament, the first disciple directly called by Christ.

Matthew 10:1-2 And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these [I want you to notice]; The first . . . Peter,

He is the only one designated as the first. He is not only named first, he is called the first by Matthew, who was also an apostle, and an apostle ought to know who his leader was, at least on earth here. The first, Peter, and then the other eleven are named. Verses 6 and 7 don't have an immediate impact, but they will a little bit later.

Matthew 10:5-7 . . . Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

I want you to notice that at this point they were to go only to Israelites and that was as far as their office would allow them to go. In Matthew 16:16-18, the question was asked by Jesus, whom do people say that I am?

Matthew 16:16-18 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it.

It is Peter who most frequently responds and answers for the group, and you almost begin to get the picture that when Jesus asks a question, that everybody kind of glances over to Peter to see whether he is going to respond. It's almost as if there is a deference there that, while not written into the scripture, it seems to be their thinking in regard to him.

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.

Why is only Peter mentioned out of the twelve? Why is he singled out? Well, we're going to see the answer to that, but I will give it to you right now. It is because Jesus thrust upon Peter the responsibility of strengthening His other disciples after he repented. And of course we have to understand that Satan desired to sift them all, but Jesus only addresses Peter and then gives him the responsibility of being the one who bucks everybody up.

Why Peter? Why didn't He say, "*John you son of thunder, I want you to be a rod of lightning to these men and really buck them up and encourage them after these things happen*" No, it's Peter. He didn't say to John, "*I want you to work with your brother and really strengthen him.*" No, He said it to Peter, because the responsibility was given to him to be the bulwark of strength (humanly speaking) amongst these twelve.

Luke 22:60-63 And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, you shall deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him.

Why is it always Peter who is singled out, who is focused upon? It's because God is faithfully following the pattern for the sake of our faith and He will not deviate it because He doesn't want to get us confused. He wants us to understand how doctrine is established in His church so that we all have the choice of making the right choice so that we don't have to deviate because we can trust God. It's not the man. You trust God because He is faithful to the patterns.

John 21:1-3 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He Himself. There were together Simon Peter [again listed first], and Thomas called Didymus [the twin], and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter said unto them, I go a fishing.

Who's the leader? Who decides for the group? They all looked to the leader, and if Peter was going to go fishing, they all went. They knew the pattern.

John 21:3 They say unto him, We also go with you. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

So, again, seven apostles and Peter is mentioned *first* again, and then we're going to find (in verse 15) the giving of the commission—"feeding of the flock"—to Peter.

John 21:15-17 So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, love you Me more than these? He said unto him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said unto him, Feed my lambs. . . . Simon, son of Jonah, love you me? . . . Feed my sheep. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, love you me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Love you Me? . . . Feed my sheep.

It is Peter who was focused upon. Seven outstanding men there and Jesus thrust the responsibility of the care of the church on Peter—not John, not James, not Thomas, but Peter, the first among equals. Peter refers to this back in I Peter 5. We won't go into that, but he had this responsibility of caring for the sheep.

We all know the sequence of events here in Acts 2:14 on the day of Pentecost. A lot of people saw and heard what was going on, but guess who it is who stands up and speaks. Now apparently they all spoke at one time or another, but it is Peter only who is singled out in the scripture as the one who spoke.

Acts 2:14-15 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words For these are not drunken, as you suppose,

In verse 38, it is Peter who responds and tells the people what they need to do.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 3:4, when they healed the lame man,

Acts 3:4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

Acts 5:12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

It is Peter who is singled out to demonstrate the healing power of God and to show the source of their power which is God. It is Peter who gave the sermon. It is Peter who gives the advice as to what they are to do, and then He uses Peter to lead some 2,000 baptisms.

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, You

rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you.

I wanted that verse because even though John spoke, again Peter is listed first, again showing a measure of preeminence.

In chapter 5—a tragic sequence of events with Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Acts 5:15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

So it is Peter who pronounces the death sentence on these people, and it is Peter's shadow that is used by God to heal.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Again, others spoke, but only Peter is singled out.

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Acts 8:18-22 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

Okay, it is Peter and John who go to Samaria. It is Peter who rebukes Simon Magus. Now I ask you to hold in your mind Matthew 10: 6-7. It was for this cause (at that time) that God limited the sphere of influence of these people, of these disciples, these apostles, only to Israelites. Now we see the first step being made to the Gentiles.

The Samaritans were a conglomerate, a mixture of Gentile and Israelite people. There had been a great deal of inter-marriage with them and now Peter and the apostles are sent to a people of mixed blood whom the Jews very much disliked because of the mixed blood. These people palmed themselves off as Jews. Why? On the basis of the fact that they used the Old Testament as part of their religion.

You might remember the women at the well in John the 4th chapter that Jesus spoke to. She said, "our father Jacob." She thought of herself as an Israelite. She was a Samaritan. But she thought of herself as an Israelite and the Jews had a hatred of these people because they thought of them as interlopers, hypocrites, palming themselves off as Israelites.

I also want you to note that the Holy Spirit was withheld until Peter was there. Philip went, but Philip did not lay hands on these people. God waited until Peter was sent and then gave the Holy Spirit through the chief apostle, first among equals. In Acts 9: 32-34, it is Peter who heals Aeneas. It is Peter in Acts 9: 38-41 who raises Dorcas from the dead.

Then in chapter 10, beginning in verse 1 it says, "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band." We begin here to see the expansion of God's work which began in Judea and spread to Samaria. Do you remember that in Judea it was Peter who stood up and gave the sermon? When it expanded out to Samaria it was Peter who was sent there. And when he laid hands on people they were given the Holy Spirit. And now we're going to see in chapter 10, who God uses to expand to the Gentiles? *Peter*. Always *he* is singled out.

Now drop all the way down to verse 44 because a very significant thing occurred there.

Acts 10:44-48 While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

The important thing right here is something that is not mentioned. No circumcision was required. This becomes very important in just a little bit. To whom did God reveal this? They were all astonished, but Peter gave the authoritative answer and it was to him that God was speaking in these events. You don't need to be circumcised to receive the Holy Spirit. He didn't reveal it to the other twelve. He revealed it to Peter, first among equals, preeminent among them.

Then in Acts 11, Peter gives the story of the conversion of the Gentiles to those who were in Judea. It's good to note at this point that it was Peter, not Paul whom God used first to go to the Gentiles. Now in chapter 15 comes that very significant event.

Acts 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.

We just saw in chapter 10 that God didn't require circumcision. And so a dispute arose in the church regarding circumcision and all that it represented.

Acts 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Acts 15:6-12 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, you know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knows the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt you God [sound like Moses?], to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence [The arguing was over when Peter spoke.] and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

What are they doing here? Paul and Barnabas are giving testimony witnessing to the truth of what Peter had said, confirming that what Peter had said and what was done through Peter had also been done to them and with them and by them and through them.

Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace,

In other words when Paul and Barnabas got finished giving their testimony then James who was chairing the meeting, moderating things, said,

Acts 15:13-15 ". . . Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

Now all James did was add his two cents, as it were, confirming that he could see in the scriptures that what had happened to Peter in his first meeting with the Gentiles, with

Cornelius, God had shown previously in the scriptures that He was going to do it. And James then gave a practical application of the decision that had been made by Peter and the rest confirmed that this indeed was what was to be done.

In Galatians 2: 6-7, Paul explains a little bit of history behind his work to the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:6-7 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it makes no matter to me: God accepts no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me. [Because again what Peter and the other said, Paul had confirmed in his own ministry and he was convicted in his own mind that God was working through him in the same way that he was working through Peter.] But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

Because, then it became apparent (by the evidence presented in what they were doing, the evidence of their work) that God was now dividing the sphere of responsibility. God wanted Peter to concentrate his efforts on the Israelitish world and he wanted Paul to concentrate his efforts on the Gentile world.

Now this comes from the *New Testament Commentary* and I'd like to give you this quote as to what the man said about Galatians 2: 6-7:

"It is clear that equal honor is accorded to Paul and Peter. Now since in this combination nothing is said about John whereas we know nevertheless that Paul's designation those of repute, a term borrowed from the Judaizers, included John, it would appear to be a fair conclusion that Peter represents the twelve, including John, that among the twelve Peter was recognized leader is shown by the fact that in every list of apostles his name is mentioned first of all, that the Lord had been at work energetically operative in connection with Peter and this especially in connection with the latter's apostolic mission activity for the Jews is clear from many passages. That the same Lord who empowered Peter was also energizing Paul, but in his especially apostolic activity was now being made clear at Jerusalem where in both private interview and public gathering Paul and Barnabas gave a rundown of the astonishing results that had been accomplished."

Now one more verse and we'll call it quits for today. In II Corinthians 10: 12-16, a very interesting passage is here in regard to this subject. Now listen to what Paul says. It is really revealing.

II Corinthians 10:12-13 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves.

But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we [Paul, the apostles] will not boast of things without our measure,

Do you know what that literally means in modern day English? Without our measure means "beyond our province," "beyond our territory." A province is the equivalent of a state. A province can be a nation. It is an area, a sphere of influence. And so Paul says, we will not boast of things without our measure,

II Corinthians 10:13-16 ...but according to the measure [the sphere of influence, the province] of the rule which God has distributed to us [meaning himself and those with him], a measure [a province, a sphere of influence] to reach even unto you [Corinthians]. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure [that is, beyond our sphere of influence], as though we reached not unto you. For we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ. Not boasting of things [beyond] our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. It was his province, his area of rule, his area of influence. Paul was saying that he lived with it. He worked within it. He did not go into other men's areas to extend his influence beyond what was given to him. Peter was made first preeminent over them all and then as the work grew, God divided it up. He said, *Paul you concentrate on this. Peter you concentrate on that.* They had the leadership in those areas and it was almost like the two shall never meet.

Do you know the picture I get out of all of this? That not only did Paul adhere to the sphere of influence that God had given him, but so did the other twelve. They divided up the world, went to their area, and conducted their governmental responsibilities only within that area. That is the only way that God could keep order.

And the people in those areas who were responding to the teaching of those men were not confused by other voices speaking to them. Each stayed in his own sphere of influence, the one that had been given by God. And in that area, they were the top authority (as far as the doctrines that were to be followed) and I feel certain that God was able to keep order that way and they, the apostles, were all speaking the same thing.

So people were not confused as to whom they were to look to in their area for authorities in these matters pertaining to their relationship with God. It's a wonderful system. This is also, incidentally, why Herbert Armstrong said we used to need twelve men to do this. But, because of modern technology, that kind of thing can be taken care of by one man today.

God is not the author of confusion. Doctrine was put into the church as the work expanded in the way that He has always done it (as He did through Moses through whom He gave the first

five books, as He did through Samuel who may very well have been the author all the way from Joshua up until the end of II Samuel, and then others whom God used to add to the scriptures so that we might have the complete Bible today).

So the sum and substance of this message is *God* puts doctrine into His church by the man *He chooses* to be His ambassador (His representative) to those who have been called. That keeps things in order and we have to have faith in that, and in the pattern that God shows us. That will keep us on the right track if we will choose to make the choices we have to make.