

PAUL AS PRIMARY APOSTLE

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Some have questioned whether Paul belonged to the primary group of Jesus' followers called "apostles." During the early years of the Christian era, the Judaizing element in the church attempted **(1)** on doctrinal grounds to put him in secondary position. They tried to create the impression that he stood at odds with the primary apostles, those centering around Peter in Jerusalem. Judaizers believed that Gentile converts should become Jews in the process of becoming Christians. Paul opposed their call for circumcising Gentiles and thereby identifying them with national Israel and obligating them to keep the Mosaic Law. He understood in the first case, relative to the church, that Christianity does not have a political component. He observed in the second case, relative to salvation, that putting Gentiles under Jewish Law would in theory bring them under a perfection requirement for continued relationship to God—initial salvation by grace and continued salvation by works.

Paul's position on these issues eventually won out, but in the modern church other matters still make some interpreters unsure about his primary apostleship. **(2)** Classifying him with the original group makes thirteen apostles rather than twelve. **(3)** Paul did not accompany the followers of Jesus from the time of John's baptism until Christ's ascension (Acts 1:21-22). In fact, he was not even converted until a few years after the church began, and then did not set out on the first journey till another dozen years had passed. He was "*one born out of due season*," as Paul puts it (1 Corinthians 15:8). **(4)** When the Spirit did send him, it was with Barnabas in connection with the laying on of hands by other leaders in the Antioch church (Acts 13:1-4). **(5)** Paul defends his apostleship primarily on dynamic factors instead of positional ones. In 2 Corinthians 10-13, for example, he stresses natural leadership based on knowledge, ability, experience, and service more than formal leadership by appointment and authority. Since **(6)** the Greek word *apostle* in scripture has a wider application than to the original Twelve, perhaps Christians ancient and modern were meant to regard him as simply a "sent one" in the sense of "missionary." Paul's prominence was a function of his personality, zeal, and abilities, not an indication of higher office. Possibly he was like James the brother of Jesus, whom Paul classified with Peter and John as pillars of the Jerusalem church.¹

In keeping with these considerations, three attitudes prevail toward "the apostle to the Gentiles." **(a)** Paul was an apostle only in the general sense; the original Twelve of Acts 1:26 were apostles in the distinctive sense. **(b)** Paul was an apostle in the technical sense. Within that possibility some have gone ahead to regard Acts 1:15-26 as another instance of Peter's impetuosity; God perhaps intended in time to replace Judas Iscariot with Saul of Tarsus. A

final view attempts to rise above the argument by concluding that (c) no primary-secondary distinction existed among those called “apostles.” They spread across a graduated scale of prominence based on personal factors.

The best place to begin is with that last idea. In the New Testament over twenty-five men bear the label “apostle.” Besides the original Twelve plus Matthias and Paul, there are Barnabas, Apollos, Silvanus, Timothy,² Andronicus and Junias,³ Epaphroditus,⁴ two unnamed men in 2 Corinthians 8:16-23, certain false prophets (2 Corinthians 11:13), Christ himself (Hebrews 3:1), and perhaps James, the brother of Jesus.⁵ Especially interesting are instances of combining under one reference men traditionally thought of as apostles at different levels. Paul and Barnabas are together termed apostles in Acts 14:4, 14; Paul and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 4:6-9; and Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 + 2:6. In this last context, Paul’s claim of authority based on apostleship gets applied not only to himself, but to Silvanus and Timothy as well. As a result, all the men beyond fourteen appear in combination with Paul, traditionally considered a primary apostle.

A positive presentation for Paul as primary apostle rests on the observation that he had characteristics traditionally used to identify primary apostles among the larger group that bore the label. Among those termed *apostles*, fourteen possessed a combination of special marks. The traditional distinctives of these primary apostles fall under four headings that we can discuss in reference to Paul. “Directness” is the common thread that runs through these qualifications. (1) **Apostles were direct witnesses of the resurrected Christ.** In Acts 1:22 Peter indicates that the replacement for Judas would serve as “*a witness with us of the resurrection.*” Upon his selection, Matthias joined the eleven apostles (1:26) in Peter’s statement on Pentecost, “*God raised up this Jesus of whom/which we are all witnesses*” (2:32). Being witnesses for Jesus in the context of resurrection language involves being witnesses of the fact that he arose (cp. 3:15; 4:19-20). Acts 4:33 speaks more pointedly, “*Very powerfully the apostles gave their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.*”⁶

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 Paul lists his own experience alongside other post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. He means to classify his with the others as equally objective experiences. Acts shows that the event was not merely subjective, because Paul’s traveling companions saw the light and heard Christ’s voice (22:9), though they evidently did not understand it (9:7).⁷ Paul himself was physically blinded because the light was so bright (22:6, 11). It was the kind of seeing and hearing that enabled him to be a witness of what he had seen and heard (22:14-15; 26:16). Paul has this in mind in 1 Corinthians 9:1 when he connects his apostleship to seeing the Lord. The fact that in his defense before Agrippa Paul calls his experience a vision does not mean that it was subjective. The same word *optasia* describes the angels’ appearance to the women at Jesus’ tomb (Luke 24:23).

In choosing the replacement for Judas, Peter called for someone who had accompanied the disciples from the baptism of John till the ascension of Jesus (cp. Mark 3:14). “*Till he was received up from us*” would include the resurrection as well as indicate that Jesus had not just left the area but gone to heaven. Peter did not explain his reason for the first qualification. Perhaps (a) he meant to avoid recent converts.⁸ If so, Paul fits the spirit of the requirement in that he appears not to have begun concertedly serving in any higher role than prophet and teacher until he and Barnabas left on the first tour some twelve years after his conversion (Acts 13:1-3).

(b) Peter may have intended to safeguard against any problem of mistaken identity by making sure a new apostle could not be accused of seeing someone he thought was Jesus resurrected. Such a view fits with the need for apostles to be credible witnesses of the resurrection, the culminating concern to which Peter connects the time span he specifies. In this case it becomes a moot question as to how much Paul interacted with Jesus prior to his death and resurrection. Paul would likely have known what Jesus looked like, because Paul lived in Jerusalem during the feasts Jesus attended. Paul may have occupied a seat in the Sanhedrin, because according to his defense before Agrippa he had “cast his vote” against disciples of Jesus at their execution, which fits with his prominent role in Stephen’s execution and the ensuing general persecution.⁹ If he held such office, he would have known as well as anyone who this Galilean was, both from the trials that led to his crucifixion and from the public scene on Golgotha afterward. Paul, an avowed religious activist, may have been among those who periodically investigated the work of Jesus and John the Baptist.¹⁰ In the Damascus-road experience, Paul did ask Jesus who he was, but that may have been more to protect against self-deception or Satanic influence.¹¹ “*Have I not seen Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 9:1) does not say “*seen the resurrected Christ.*” Seeing the resurrected Christ would seem, however, to fit best his concerns in the context to justify his apostleship.

Finally, (c) Peter may have wanted someone with long-term exposure to Jesus so he could serve as a primary witness of everything Jesus had done and taught. Such a man would have received his message directly from Christ and could benefit from the promise to bring to mind afterward what Jesus had said during his three and a half years with his close followers (John 14:26b).

(2) **Apostles were directly chosen and commissioned by Christ.** The gospels and The Acts record Christ’s original choosing¹² and commissioning of the apostles. As One having final authority in heaven and on earth, he directly sent the eleven to disciple those who in turn would be indirectly sent to perpetuate the process till it had reached every person.¹³ After the selection of Justus (Matthias) to replace Judas, Peter prayed that in the casting of the lots God would show which one he had chosen (Acts 1:24).

Paul was also directly chosen and commissioned (although the same could be said of Barnabas). In the original conversion account, Jesus told Ananias that Saul of Tarsus was his chosen vessel to carry his name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites (Acts 9:15). The Lord told Paul directly that he had appeared to him to appoint him as a minister and a witness of what he had seen (Acts 26:16). Evidently as a reinforcement against recurring tendencies to challenge his leadership, Paul opens several epistles with a reference to his apostolic election.¹⁴ In his defense before the temple mob in Jerusalem, the last thing Paul could get said was that God told him he would send him far away to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; cp. Galatians 1:15-16). He wrote to the Galatians that God had entrusted him with the Gentile mission as he had entrusted Peter with the Jewish mission (2:7). Finally, to Timothy he expressed his gratitude to God for appointing him to his service (1 Timothy 1:11).

(3) **Apostles received their message directly from Christ** rather than from other disciples. The night of the betrayal, Jesus promised the eleven that he would send them the Spirit to bring to mind what he had taught them (John 14:26b) and to reveal further truths they had not been ready for earlier (John 16:12-15; 14a).

Paul especially stressed the primary origin of his message. Other men did not teach him gospel; Jesus Christ revealed it to him.¹⁵ Ananias reported to the persecutor that God had appointed him to know his will (Acts 22:14a). In The Acts 26:16b Jesus told Paul directly that he had appeared to him to make him a witness, not only of what he had seen (resurrection), but of what Christ would show him (message?). Paul never presented any teaching as something he learned from Christians or apostles before him (Ephesians 3:1-13). In fact, he went to considerable length, especially in Galatians, to say that he deliberately interacted in private with the Jerusalem apostles to avoid false impressions about learning from them (2:2). The chief apostles imparted nothing to him (2:6-7). If anything, Paul found himself at odds with the cultural and religious impulses of many earlier Jewish Christian leaders including apostles (2:11-14). He pictured himself as quite independent of them and quite directly dependent on Christ for his message. As a result, he must have had experiences like what the apostles had on Pentecost and Peter had on the housetop in Joppa. Such occasions would have fulfilled Christ's promise to make him a witness of the things in which he would appear to Paul (Acts 26:16).

(4) **Apostles were directly empowered by the Spirit** rather than through prayer (1 Corinthians 14:13?) or the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-19). Whereas in John the promise about receiving the Spirit stresses the message, in Luke it stresses power: "*I am sending my Father's promise upon you, and you stay in the city till you are dressed in power from on high*" (Luke 24:49; cp. Acts 1:4-5, 8). Acts 2 records the Spirit's visible descent on the apostles, which Peter identifies with the Father's promise (2:33). Subsequently the narrative speaks of miracles and signs they performed (2:43; 5:12-16; 5:32). Healing the lame man at Gate Beautiful was

particularly astounding (3:1-4:22), as was the exemplary condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). In fact, if not in the historical sequence itself at least in Luke's account of it, there is no clear case of miraculous manifestation through anyone but apostles prior to the ministry of Stephen, on whom the apostles had laid hands (6:8, 6). So, the record of Christian origins and expansion not only connects the Spirit's enablement directly with apostles but connects it primarily with apostles.

Apostolic empowerment to perform miracles was distinctive in three ways: (1) apostles received their empowerment directly, (2) could perform the broad range of miraculous manifestation, and (3) could pass on gifts to other people. The basic Twelve obviously received their empowerment directly. 1 Corinthians 12-14 discusses spiritual gifts in a way that creates the impression that individuals in congregations usually had one or two special endowments for edifying the body and assisting in ministry. On the other hand, the Acts statements that Stephen "*worked great signs and wonders among the people*" (6:8) and that Barnabas did signs and wonders (14:4) do sound as general as the statements about the original apostles in 2:43 and 5:12-16. Lastly, it works out that there is no clear case of "transmitting" gifts except by apostles, although that does not prove other leaders did not transmit them.¹⁶

Scripture does not say how Paul received his miraculous empowerment. The record says nothing about miraculous enablement until the rest of the Antioch prophets and teachers laid hands on him and Barnabas to set them aside for the work to which the Spirit had called them. The Acts record is about as vague that Paul the apostle did not receive his enablement through non-apostles in 13:3 as that Stephen the evangelist did receive his from the apostles in 6:6. About the closest Paul comes to claiming direct empowerment is in the preferred text of 1 Timothy 1:11: "*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who enabled me, that he counted me faithful, appointing me to ministry.*" Since on this matter we cannot arrive at our conclusion about Paul, it comes from a generalization from the other primary apostles.

The evidence is clear, however, that Paul did exercise several gifts (Acts 14:3; 15:12) and on several occasions referred to these signs and wonders as confirmation of his message and ministry.¹⁷ He spoke in languages (1 Corinthians 14:18), survived poisonous snake bite (Acts 28:1-6; cp. Mark 16:18), was brought back from a near-death experience (Acts 14:19-20); healed a variety of diseases (Acts 19:12) including a lame man (Acts 14:8-10) and an elderly man sick with fever and dysentery (Acts 28:8-9); resurrected a young man named Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12), and exorcised evil spirits.¹⁸ Paul may refer to this wide range of gifts when he says that "*the signs of an apostle*" were worked among the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:12).

As to passing on miraculous gifts, at Ephesus Paul laid hands on about a dozen men, giving them the gifts of languages and prophecy (Acts 19:1-7). He wrote ahead to the Romans saying that for a long time he had wanted to come and impart some spiritual gift to them.¹⁹ In

his final epistle, he reminded Timothy to stir up the gift he had through the laying on of Paul's hands.²⁰

Arguing for the existence of distinctive apostles among those labeled apostles rests on the four basic characteristics in combination. **(a)** Not all of the more than five hundred who directly saw the resurrected Christ were therefore apostles; the two from Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and Joseph Justus serve as ready examples not termed apostles (Acts 1:23-26). Some that were called apostles had presumably not seen the risen Christ—Apollos and Timothy, for example. **(b)** A number of prophets and teachers evidently received directly from God at least aspects of their teaching and guidance. Many workers in individual congregations possessed spiritual gifts; some of these gifts may have come directly in answer to prayer since Paul himself told language speakers in Corinth to pray that they might interpret (1 Corinthians 14:13). The household of Cornelius received a direct outpouring of the Spirit manifested miraculously by speaking in languages (Acts 10:44-11:18). By way of contrast, Apollos, though called an apostle, apparently got his message—or had it adjusted—from Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28). **(c)** Others besides Philip and Barnabas may, like them, have been directly commissioned at least on specific missions like that of the seventy during Christ's ministry (Acts 8:26-40; 13:2-4; Luke 10:1-20). Men like Barnabas and Philip even show a combination of two apostolic marks (commissioning and empowerment), but they do not show all four.

From New Testament evidence we can show in point-by-point fashion that Paul equaled the other primary apostles with the ambiguous exception of how and when he received supernatural enablement. Besides this inductive approach to each characteristic, Paul's primary apostleship becomes evident in his claims and actions in relationship to other primary apostles. **(5) Paul claimed equality with primary apostles.** Twice he told the Corinthians that he did not consider himself in any way inferior to the special apostles, though he considered himself nothing (2 Corinthians 11:5 + 12:11). He claimed to be equal to those of repute: they added nothing to him and even acknowledged his ministry to Gentiles as parallel to Peter's ministry to Jews (Galatians 2:2-10).

Beyond claims and actions relative to other primary apostles, **(6) Paul distinguished himself above other secondary apostles.** He distinguished himself from certain other men labeled apostles, which shows both that he differed from them and that the term *apostle* covered more than one class of people. He sent and summoned men in the "Pauline circle" like Timothy, Apollos, Silvanus, and the two unnamed apostles in 2 Corinthians 8:16-23.

Finally comes a confirmatory observation from canon criticism. **(7) Paul's writings were considered canonical by the ancient church.** Apostolicity provided the main criterion for canonicity. Apostolicity did not mean simply that a writing originated in the apostolic age. Apostolicity did not rest on the fact that someone might have the term apostle applied to him in a

generic sense; in that case any “missionary” could have authored canonical literature. Apostolicity meant that the books were written by apostles or those who served as extensions of the apostolic office. Clearly Paul was not an apostle by extension of other apostles’ office. If he had not been perceived as a primary apostle, no base would have existed for considering his writings canonical. Furthermore, Luke-Acts would also have had no basis for being regarded as apostolic since canonicity here depended on Luke’s work as an extension of Paul’s apostolic office.

Besides positive arguments, responses must deal with items that tend to obscure Paul’s primary apostleship. Strictly speaking, Paul’s apostleship makes thirteen apostles rather than twelve, but twelve may be viewed as a “stylized” number. There were twelve apostles in the same sense that there were twelve tribes of Israel. Although Israel had twelve sons, there were thirteen tribes because the two sons of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh—replaced their father in the enumeration; there was no tribe of Joseph. Furthermore, in allotted territories there were Manasseh East in Transjordan (Numbers 27:1) and Manasseh West, which would have made fourteen except that the tribe of Levi had no special territory but occupied cities among the other tribes. Twelve as a standardized number for the apostles fits with John 20:24 speaking of “the Twelve” when the real number had reduced to eleven by the death of Judas.

There is also no need to keep the apostolic number at exactly a dozen by supposing that Peter acted presumptuously in leading a move to replace Judas. The text nowhere indicates that his action was ill-advised. The opposite is implied by regarding the choice as divine (Acts 1:24) and is confirmed by the miraculous descent of the Spirit on him soon afterward (Acts 1:26 + 2:14).

A greater difficulty has been that Paul did not company with Jesus from his baptism till his ascension. Previously we indicated that Peter may have meant the qualification as a safeguard against novices, as a basis for confidently identifying Jesus resurrected, as natural preparation for testifying to what Jesus did and taught, or as a combination of these reasons. Here we observe that Peter made the stipulation as a lead-in to being a witness to the resurrection. The period of discipleship may be a practical prerequisite rather than a theoretical necessity. Other qualifying experiences could have the same effect of preparing someone for testifying to Jesus’ resurrection.

In addition, the qualification was time-specific for picking Judas’ replacement and was conditioned by that setting. The best men available at the time of Acts 1 would have been followers of that type. Because as yet no time had elapsed since the ascension, no one then under consideration had had special experiences that could serve the same purpose as the normal basis Peter proposed for testifying to the resurrection.

Finally, even if Paul were a secondary apostle, he was an inspired one. Under inspiration he claimed an apostleship equal to Peter's. If the time-span qualification were essential, Paul could not have been consistent in claiming inspiration while falsely claiming equality with Peter. The time-span qualification was a pragmatic reason rather than an essential one.

Paul and Barnabas were both simultaneously commissioned by the Antioch church. Even Paul sometimes mixes himself with secondary apostles in his usage of the term, but he elsewhere distinguishes himself from them in directing their ministries and claiming equality to primary apostles. When *apostle* has the distinctive sense, it includes apostle in the general sense; so, it can refer to groups that include both "levels."

Paul defends his apostleship by dynamic factors. In dealing with the Corinthian church over the legitimacy of his leadership and with Philemon over the manumission of Onesimus, Paul did put in first position his love for the people (2 Corinthians 2:4; 12:15), his knowledge of the gospel (11:6), his ability, service, and experience with Christ (12:1-10). Paul appealed to authority, however, when he warned some Corinthians, "*If I come, I will not spare*" (2 Corinthians 10:11; cp. 1:23). He told Philemon that he had the boldness to command him to do what was fitting in Christ, but without his consent Paul did not want to keep Onesimus to help with ministry (Philemon 8ff). Paul defended his apostleship in reference to dynamic factors primarily, but he did not defend it that way only. He did so because the Christian concept of leadership puts dynamic matters in primary position and adds formal authority to them. He wanted his people to understand that the authority he did have was given "*for building them up, not for tearing them down*" (2 Corinthians 10:8; 12:10). Making that point clear was the best protection Paul could give against false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13).

A person might still say that Paul had authority, but the authority he had was based on founding the churches he directed and protected as well as on the service, knowledge, ability, and experiences by which he had earned that authority. Such an approach returns again to dynamic leadership *vs.* formal leadership. Many would even question whether anything but dynamic leadership existed anywhere in the church, much less in the case of Paul's apostleship. Without wanting to detract from an emphasis on natural leadership, we stress the fact that natural does not eliminate formal but precedes it. In Paul's case, (a) he did not have influence only, but authority as well. (b) His authority was not just earned; it was given. (c) His authority was not just given by those from whom he earned it by service; it was given by the Lord who sent him: "*For this reason I am writing these things while absent so that I may not, when present, deal sharply according to the authority that the Lord gave me . . .*" (2 Corinthians 13:10). We may even say that Paul de-emphasized authority; but he did not do so because he did not have it, but because Christian leadership appeals to authority only after it appeals to persuasion.

Being a prominent apostle stemmed from Paul's personality and service as an apostle, not from being an apostle in a distinctive sense. The idea is that no distinction existed among those designated "apostles" as shown by the large number of them and by references where both types combine under the one designation. There were no such things as church "offices."

In response we should observe that there was a process of selection to replace Judas. A selection process presupposes formal leadership; a distinct group among people with shared characteristics means official positions with assigned responsibilities and authority given to fulfill them. A specific apostle was selected from among those who qualified; those selected further shared the distinctives explained above. Paul shared these characteristics and claimed to be parallel to others who had them. His prominence was based both on his personality and service and on his distinctive qualifications, which show that Paul was a primary apostle.²¹

We can raise a concluding counter-question. There were those who called themselves apostles and were not (2 Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2). There must have been a technical usage of the term "apostle"; otherwise, there could not have been false ones. If apostleship consisted purely of dynamic considerations, would it be possible to have a false apostle making claims to serve when they were not legitimate?

¹Note also 2:12; Acts 12:17; his prominence in the Jerusalem Conference on Circumcision (Acts 15:12-21); and 21:18.

²The twelve (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-19; Acts. 1:13), Matthias (Acts 1:23-26), Paul (Romans 1:1, *etc.*), Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; cp. 13:2; 1 Corinthians 9:5-6; Galatians 2:9), Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6-9), Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1 + 2:6)

³In Romans 16:7, "*well known among the apostles*" may not mean that Andronicus and Junias were themselves well known as apostles, but that they were well-known to the apostles, particularly since *Iounian* may be the accusative form of *Junia* rather than *Junias*, which would probably make Andronicus and Junia husband and wife like Aquila and Prisca in 16:3.

⁴*Apostle* applied to Epaphroditus stands aside from the present issue since it is not a religious usage. It refers to him simply as one the Philippian church "sent" to deliver their offering to Paul (4:15-18).

⁵Regarding one of his visits to Jerusalem, Paul says that besides Cephas he "*did not see any of the other apostles except James*" (Galatians 1:18-19). It is possible to understand him to mean, "*I did not see any of the other apostles, except [I did see] James the Lord's brother,*" in which case the text would not be labeling James an apostle. By stressing "all" the apostles in 1 Corinthians 15:7, we could infer that James is being called an apostle.

⁶Compare also 3:15; 4:19-20; 5:32; 9:17; 10:39, 41; 13:30-31 as well as John 1:14 + 1 John 1:1 and 1 Peter 5:1 + 2 Peter 1:16-21.

⁷They may not have understood because the Lord was speaking in classical Hebrew instead of Aramaic or Greek (26:14). The word for “Hebrew” in the text would cover both the classical language—known by the scholars but not necessarily by the populace—and Aramaic, the Semitic dialect that Jews came to speak after the Babylonian captivity. Against this suggestion is the use of the same word earlier in Acts when Paul addressed the temple mob, who understood him at least to some extent when he spoke “*in the Hebrew language*” (21:40; 22:2).

⁸Note Paul’s similar concern about elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:6, 10, 13.

⁹Acts 26:10-11; 7:59-8:3; 9:1ff.; 22:19-20

¹⁰John 1:19; Mark 3:22; Matthew 15:1 (= Mark 7:1); cp. Acts 25:7

¹¹“*Haven’t I seen Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 9:1) could mean more than “*seen the resurrected Christ*,” though we suppose Paul meant the same thing as later in that epistle where he lists resurrection appearances (15:8). The Damascus-road appearance is the only recorded instance of his seeing Christ.

¹²Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; John 6:70; 13:18 (15:16-17); Acts 1:2 + 8 + 13; 10:39-41

¹³Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:33-49; cp. Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:2

¹⁴Galatians 1:1 is especially pointed:

“ . . . *an apostle not from men or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.*” Elsewhere he says, “*called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God*” (Romans 1:1); “*called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:1); “*an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God*” (2 Corinthians 1:1); “*an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God*” (Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1); “*an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope*” (1 Timothy 1:1).

In letters where his authority was not an issue, he omits reference to apostleship by divine appointment: Philippians, the Thessalonian letters, Philemon, and Titus.

¹⁵Galatians 1:11-12, 16. Note also Ephesians 3:1-13 and 1 Timothy 1:11 as well as 1 Corinthians 7:8-17, 25-40, where Paul distinguishes between his advice and revelation from the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:3 he says he received certain doctrines from the Lord, not meaning by way of tradition (indirectly), as is sometimes suggested, because he explicitly denies that idea in Galatians 1:11-12.

¹⁶Acts 8:18-19 has been taken to imply that none but apostles could pass on gifts, but that treats as a generality what is not necessarily more than the specific case that Simon the sorcerer was witnessing. In the other direction, the case of Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14 does not

clearly represent a case of non-apostolic transmission because the text says, “. . . *the gift that was given to you . . . with [not by] the laying on of the hands of the eldership.*” 2 Timothy 1:4 indicates that Timothy’s gift was in him through the laying on of Paul’s hands.

¹⁷Acts 15:12-13; Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:12

¹⁸Acts 16:16-18; 19:12; however, the New Testament never calls exorcism a spiritual gift.

¹⁹Romans 1:11; this passage is reminiscent of the apostle’s terminology earlier in 1 Corinthians 12-14, although in Romans 1 the interpreter might entertain the idea that Paul meant his own influence and teaching that might give them greater stability in the faith (1:11).

²⁰In 2 Timothy 1:6 “gift” could mean “slot of service” rather than supernatural endowment (cp. Ephesians 4:7-11); scripture never records his performing a miracle. Nevertheless, it is probably best to suppose Timothy had such endowment since a number of other people in the Pauline circle were so endowed and since Paul evidently made a practice of so endowing even local personnel for ministry. If Timothy was specially enabled, he most likely received it from Paul even if this verse does not so indicate.

²¹The difference between the technical and general usage of *apostle* parallels other ministry terms in the New Testament: deacon, elder, disciple, overseer, ruler, teacher, shepherd. The proliferation of labels for the same office indicates that ministry terminology was still fluid, and the meaning of the words’ roots was still associated with the terms. For example, *elder*, *bishop*, *pastor*, *ruler*, *teacher*, and *leader* all designate the same slot.