



Gift of Prophecy

Biblical

Prophecy - *propheteia* (προφητεία, 4394) signifies “the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God” (*pro*, “forth,” *phemi*, “to speak”: see PROPHET); in the NT it is used (a) of the gift, e.g., Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 13:2; (b) either of the exercise of the gift or of that which is “prophesied,” e.g., Matt. 13:14; 1 Cor. 13:8; 14:6, 22 and 1 Thess. 5:20, “prophesying (s)”; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Rev. 1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19¹

Wigglesworth on the Gift of Prophecy:

Utterance in prophecy has a real lifting power and gives real light on the truth to those who hear. Prophecy is never a mind reflection; it is something far deeper than this. By means of prophecy we receive that which is the mind of the Lord; and as we receive these blessed, fresh utterances through the Spirit of the Lord the whole assembly is lifted into the realm of the spiritual. Our hearts and minds and whole bodies receive a quickening through the Spirit given word. As the Spirit brings forth prophecy, we find there is healing and salvation and power in every line. For this reason it is one of the gifts that we ought to covet.

In 1 Cor. 12:10, speaking of the diversities of gifts by the same Spirit, Paul writes, “To another prophecy.” We see the importance of this gift from 1 Cor. 14:1, where we are told to follow charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that we may prophesy. We see also that he that prophesieth speaketh unto man to edification, and exhortation and comfort. How important it is then that we should have this gift in manifestation in the church in order that the saints might be built up and made strong and filled with the comfort of God. But with this as all other gifts we should see that it is operated by the Spirit’s power and brought forth in the unction of the Spirit; so that everyone who shall hear prophecy, as it is brought forth by the Spirit of God, shall know that it is GOD who is bringing forth that which is for the edification of those who hear. It is the Spirit of God who takes of the deep things of God and reveals them, and unctionizes the prophet to give forth that which is a revelation of the things of God.

While we appreciate true prophecy, we must not forget that the Scriptures warn us in no uncertain manner concerning that which is false. In 1 John 4:1 we are told, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” And John tells us how we can tell the difference between the true and the false, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; but this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come.” There are voices which seem like prophecy and some have got into terrible darkness and bondage through listening to these counterfeits of the true gift of prophecy. True prophecy is always Christ-exalting, magnifying the Son of God, exalting the blood of Jesus Christ, encouraging the saints to praise and worship the true God.

¹ Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). In [Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#) (Vol. 2, p. 492). T. Nelson.



False prophecy deals with things that do not edify and is designed to puff up its hearers and to lead them into error.

Paul wrote at the commandment of the Lord, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” If you are not humble enough to allow your prophecy to be judged, it is as surely wrong as you are wrong. Prophecy has to be judged. A meeting such as this one that Paul suggests would certainly be the greatest meeting you ever had. Praise God, the tide will rise to this. It will all come into perfect order when the church is bathed and lost in the great ideal of only glorifying Jesus. Then things will come to pass that will be worthwhile.

Coupled with prophecy you will have the fruit of the Spirit that is goodness. They were holy men who spoke in prophecy in days of old as the Holy Ghost prompted them, and so today the prophet who can be trusted is a man that is full of goodness, that goodness which is the fruit of the Spirit. But when he gets out of this position, and rests upon his own individuality, he is in danger of being puffed up and becoming an instrument for the enemy.

Peter Wagner on The Gift of Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely anointed utterance.

Since the word “prophecy” today usually means predicting the future, it is difficult for some people to realize that the biblical use of the word includes not only the future but also a word for the present. In fact, the gift of prophecy has been used much more for dealing with present situations than with future events. The meaning of the Greek word is basically “to speak forth” or ‘speak for another.’ Those who have the gift of prophecy receive personal inspiration as to God’s purpose in a concrete situation. God speaks through the prophet.

The prophet can err. There he or she must be open to correction by the rest of the Body. True prophets are willing for this. They want their words to be tested, and when they are wrong, they will admit it. They want their prophecies to be confirmed, by the Word of God and by the Body as a whole.

Those who receive the benefit of the gift of prophecy can expect comfort, guidance, warning, encouragement, admonition, judgment, and edification. Some prophecies are directed by God to individuals, some to the body of Christ as a whole. In any case they should be received as authentic and authoritative messages. As Michael Green says, “the Spirit has taken over and addresses the hearer directly through the prophet. This is the essence of prophecy. Once the spiritual gift is confirmed by the Body, the person with the gift should be highly respected.

Derek Prince

Prophecy is the ability, granted by the Holy Spirit, to a believer, to speak forth words that proceed from God that do not come from the believer’s own understanding or reasoning or education.

Now this gift of prophecy has been in operation throughout the history of God’s people from the earliest time. We find it several times in the book of Genesis. For instance, in the case of Isaac blessing Jacob, this is a remarkable case. Isaac, the father, imagined that he was blessing the older twin, Esau, but Jacob had impersonated Esau and presented himself to his father, Isaac, who was blind. Isaac, in his blindness, laid his



hands on Jacob, supposing him to be Esau, and blessed him. Later on, it was discovered that he had blessed Jacob, not Esau. Esau pleaded with his father to reverse the blessing, but Isaac said, "I can't do that. I've blessed and he shall be blessed."

So we see how the words that Isaac spoke, prophetically, did not proceed from his own understanding and actually were above his own ability to reverse, to undo. We get a similar case with Jacob, later on, blessing the two sons of Joseph. Joseph had his ideas of which should receive the greater blessing; but, inspired and prompted by the Holy Spirit, Jacob crossed his hands and blessed Ephraim, the younger, more than Manasseh, the older. And, again, Jacob said, "I can't change it. It's God's doing, not mine."

So we see that through prophecy a believer can become a channel of the counsel of God; of the purposes of God, given forth in words that proceed from God and not from the believer. They are given supernaturally by the Holy Spirit.

Now, the New Testament has a whole lot to say about the exercise of this gift. First of all, we look at the purposes for which it is given. These are stated in 1 Corinthians 14:3, where Paul says:

"But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation."

That is, the one who prophesies, speaks on God's behalf to men. And the end purpose is stated in three words: edification, exhortation, and consolation. You may say it a little more in contemporary speech. The purpose of prophecy is to build up, to stir up and to cheer up.

Definitely, the gift of prophecy is not given to produce dictators. People who go around making arbitrary declarations about what other people ought to do. Let me tell you this very definitely and firmly: There are no dictators in the body of Christ and anyone who uses prophecy to make himself or herself a dictator is misusing the gift. We need to look into this.

For this reason, the Scripture states very clearly that all prophetic utterances are to be subject to judgment. For example, in 1 Corinthians 14:29, Paul says:

"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment."

It's important to see that normally, though not invariably, in the New Testament, prophets operated together. They were fellow members of the same body. It wasn't a case of one man who was far above the level of the others making pronouncements that everybody else had to accept, whether they agreed with them or not. So Paul says, let two or three prophets speak and let the other prophets pass judgment. Let them determine on behalf of the body whether these utterances really are from God and we should give heed to them.

Again, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21, Paul says this:

"Do not quench the Spirit; Do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;"

Paul guards against two mistakes. The first is despising prophetic utterances and rejecting them altogether. The second is just believing all of them without any examination. He says don't despise them and don't quench the



Spirit. But, on the other hand, when a prophetic utterance comes, examine it carefully and hold fast only to that which is good.

I'm reminded of something I used to say to the Africans when I was working amongst them some years ago in East Africa. I said to them, "Remember not everything that the missionaries have brought you is good. Some things are good, some are not so good. But," I said, that's no big problem. When you Africans eat fish, you know what to do. You swallow the flesh and you spit out the bones. And I said, you do the same." And I say that again, today. We don't have to swallow all prophecy. We swallow the flesh, which does us good. We spit out the bones, which wouldn't do us any good.

I've said that prophecy needs to be judged. How are we to judge it? I want to give you now, three simple, practical, Scriptural tests. First of all, does the prophecy agree with Scripture? The Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture and the Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself. So the Holy Spirit will never say, through prophecy, something that is contradictory to Scripture.

The second test is this: Does the prophecy uplift Jesus Christ? The primary ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church is to reveal and uplift Jesus Christ. Anything that does not uplift Jesus Christ is not from the Holy Spirit. Revelation 19:10 tells us this, specifically:

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

All true prophecy centers in the person of Jesus.

The third question: Does the prophecy edify God's people? We remember that was the one primary purpose: edification of God's people. If the prophecy doesn't build up, doesn't strengthen, doesn't encourage God's people, then there's no reason to believe that it's from the Holy Spirit.

I'd like to look at one in the life of Timothy. In 1 Timothy 1:18, Paul writes as follows to Timothy:

"This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight."

Now, we have to fill in the background. Elsewhere in his epistles Paul says that Timothy was appointed to a special ministry by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, with prophecy. In other words, it would appear that the particular course of Timothy's life that God had planned for him was indicated through the gift of prophecy and that through the gift of prophecy, Paul and the elders were moved to lay hands on Timothy and set him aside for his ministry. And it would appear, also, that those prophecies gave great encouragement and promise to Timothy of what God could do through him. But when Paul wrote this first epistle, he was warning Timothy against the spirit of fear, against giving up.

Now, one of the things he said was: "Remember the prophecies that went before you. Remember that God is with you, and though you may have opposition and trouble, nevertheless, God is going to fulfill what He has promised." Well, this is a very beautiful use of prophecy, which I have experienced several times in my own life. When I have been discouraged or oppressed or wondered whether I could make it through, I've recalled prophetic utterances that had been given in the past and they've encouraged me and strengthened me.

However, we need to say one word of warning about directive prophecy:



It should not be the only means of guidance in your life. In 2 Corinthians 13:1, Paul says:

“In the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established.”

Don't act only on a prophecy. Let it be one of the means which will guide you into God's will.

Examples of those in the Bible with the gift of prophecy

- John the Baptist - Matthew 11:9-11, Luke 3:2-20, 7:18-29
- Anna - Luke 2:36-38
- Mary - Luke 1:26-56
- Ananias - Acts 9:10-17; 22:12-16
- Hosea - Hosea 1-4
- Jeremiah - Jeremiah 1-52

Discernment

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