

Spiritual Gifts: *Prophecy*

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Introduction

Good afternoon, brethren. Thank you, Tom Hardesty, for your lovely party invitation. I'll be there. If anyone here did not get an invitation, see Tom. He said that everyone is invited.

Today, I'll be speaking about the gift of prophecy. **AND THE LORD SAID!**

But first, let me direct your attention to the insert in your bulletin. This flier highlights some of the key points of today's topic. At the bottom you will note a set of *contrasting characteristics* which you can examine later. *Any* spiritual gift can be misused and the gift of prophecy is no exception. When used in the Spirit, a set of godly qualities is exhibited, but when used in the flesh, an opposite set of worldly ways is revealed. The key to using *any* spiritual gift is to stay close to God and constantly seek His will.

Prophet – Truth

There are many *definitions* for each of the spiritual gifts we are covering. The definition in today's bulletin reads: "This is the ability to recognize sinful behavior and a driving compulsion to confront individuals, groups and/or cultures." The definition in the Spiritual Gift Analysis book says, "The gift of prophecy is the ability to communicate God's Word with power, conviction, and clarity, and to apply it to the specific situation of the hearers." For the purpose of today's talk, prophecy refers to speaking the truth, especially regarding right and wrong.

Here's a *sound-bite description* of the prophet: The prophet boldly speaks the truth in love by faith for freedom. The prophet's words are linked with faith and based on truth – the scriptural authority of God.

The apostle Paul begins his list of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 with prophecy and ends it with mercy. First and foremost, we need the truth, but all that we do must be rooted and grounded in love and forgiveness.

Let's begin with Jesus as our model. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. His Word is Truth. Our fellowship has been blessed in having a *yearning desire* for truth – to *know* it and to *live* it.

That is the *heart* of the prophet. The prophet has a *passion* for the truth. He has a passion for the truth because God *loves* truth and God *is* truth and because the prophet knows that the truth is a *prerequisite* to freedom.

The truth sets us free.

Perhaps that is why Paul encourages the use of prophecy – because the voice of the prophet can benefit the body of Christ and help people find true freedom in Christ. Notice what Paul says:

1st Corinthians 14:1,3 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ...
But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

Edification, exhortation and comfort all require an understanding of the truth.

Edification would include the truth of God's greatness, our utter helplessness *without* Him, and that we are more than conquerors *with* Him.

Exhortation to know God, love Him and develop an ever-deeper relationship with Him.

Comfort to know that God does love us, that He calls us His children, and that He can be counted on in every circumstance. Indeed, that *the Ruler of the universe will literally move heaven and earth to come to our aid*. What an *awesome* God!

I'm prejudiced. I *love* the song we just sang – "How Great Thou Art." It *moves* me, and for me, that is the *song* of the prophet. Whenever there is a thunderstorm I am at peace because of the message of this song. It speaks to what I just said: *the Ruler of the universe will literally move heaven and earth to come to our aid*.

Prophet – Faith

Paul makes an interesting statement in his letter to the Romans. He writes:

Romans 12:6 if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.

Here Paul *links* prophecy with faith. The gift of prophecy is closely *connected* to faith. The prophet speaks out boldly. *Why?* Because he *sees* the truth, he *knows* it's the truth, and he *believes* that God *means* what He says. So, the prophet has faith in God and in God's Word. In that faith, the prophet speaks boldly and clearly.

Sometimes that boldness and clarity of expression can be misinterpreted as a lack of compassion or insensitivity. But, as author Charles Stanley said, the prophet is interested in the *origin* and the *destination* – not the *trip*. He sees the *problem* and he knows the *solution* and he wants to help others get from where they *are* to where God wants them to *be*.

Another aspect which can cause discomfort over the prophet's message is that the sword of truth is *sharp* – *cutting* to the core of one's conscience. People generally don't like correction or dealing with issues of the heart.

Prophetic Examples

Peter is the *apostolic* example of a prophet. On the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who preached the truth of the gospel. Later, before the Sanhedrin, Peter audaciously charged those who had the power of life and death with the murder of the Son of God.

The Old Testament prophets were just as bold because they heard the voice of God tell them the truth. They heard and then spoke the truth God had given them. Often the prophet was the voice of *doom* – but he pointed to the path to *redemption*.

The Prophet Today

In like manner today, the prophet is perceptive to the truth and receptive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This affinity for truth enables the prophet to perceive insincerity and to identify hypocrisy. As such, the prophet is generally a good judge of character, understands the motivation of people, and is able to discern the moral implications of situations.

The prophet sees God's truth and its liberating power in people's lives. He sees the big picture. He recognizes the existence and consequences of sin and evil and he wants to help people go in the right direction.

The prophet heeds his conscience and takes God at His word. So the prophet will speak plainly with straight talk as he speaks the truth. He will say what is right and what is wrong, citing Scripture as his authority. He will say, "This is the way, walk in it."

Though he may appear to give simple solutions to complex problems, those solutions actually work because they are based on the Word of God. He believes God, he believes that "we *can* do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us," and he believes that "*Nothing* is impossible with God."

Indeed, the prophet knows God's miracles are but a prayer away and that nothing can stay the hand of God in the lives of His people.

The prophet's heart has been convicted of the truth and he wants to share that truth with others. The prophet is also concerned with the correct *application* of biblical principles. Equally important, he is concerned about God's reputation and will correct those who try to impugn God or limit His unfathomable greatness.

Self-examination and repentance are a regular part of the prophet's life, as is a desire to live a holy life. Prophets have a willingness to experience brokenness in order to help others who are broken and in need of God's redemption and healing. They understand that brokenness is part of the process of redemption and of spiritual growth.

It's interesting that in Romans chapter 12, Paul lists the gifts, beginning with prophecy and ending with mercy. The very next verse returns to the prophet, saying "Let *love* be without hypocrisy. *Abhor* what is evil. *Cling* to what is good."

That would be an appropriate *slogan* or *bumper sticker* for a prophet.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, remember that out of love for God, for God's Word and for God's people, the prophet boldly proclaims the truth of God in faith for freedom. The prophet takes God's Word as gospel truth, takes God at His word, and trusts that God *will* fulfill His word.

The prophet knows that there is no *sin* God cannot forgive, no *wound* God cannot heal, no *soul* God cannot save, no *situation* God cannot master. And the good news is that *we can trust God in all things through eternity*.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"