

Prophecy in the Local Church

by Pastor Donna Astern

For purposes of clarification and understanding, I would like to explain our understanding of the Word of God concerning prophetic ministry in the local church.

Whether or not you agree with every point, I believe you will see that at least our stance is Scripturally based. Additionally, we have seen excellent fruit borne as a result: people are encouraged to grow and mature in their personal relationship with the Lord, and commitment to the local church is strengthened.

1. The revealed will of God is that, in these last days, the people of God prophesy.

Acts 2:17-18 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

2. We are to have a working knowledge of the gifts of the Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:1 "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."

The word "ignorant" means "to be without experience or a working knowledge". Many believers believe in the gifts, but have not exercised them, therefore they are experientially ignorant.

3. God's will concerning spiritual gifts works in cooperation with the believer, just as salvation or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:11 "But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Many Bible scholars believe "he" in this verse refers to the man. This makes sense since it is clear that God's will is that we receive and function in the gifts. All believers are not willing, however.

4. All believers who desire to do so may prophesy.

1 Cor. 14:1, 24, 25, 31 "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.... But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.... For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."

5. The Word tells us to desire, even to covet to prophesy.

1 Cor. 14:39 "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues."

1 Cor. 14:1 "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."

6. We can restrain or activate the gift. No one operating by the Spirit of God is driven against his will.

1 Cor. 14:32 "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

7. Therefore, we are responsible to release the gifts within us to minister to the people.

1 Pet. 4:10 "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

1 Tim. 4:14 "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery."

2 Tim. 1:6 "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

8. Prophecy does not make one a prophet; neither does prophecy necessarily contain revelation. Its purpose is to build up, stir up, and cheer up.

1 Cor. 14:3 "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

1 Cor. 14:12 "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

9. Once the gifts are given, they remain in the believer's possession. Skill comes with experience and according to faith. (Although we do not mean to imply that the Holy Spirit needs practice, we certainly know that men do.)

Rom. 11:29 "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Rom. 12:6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith."

Heb. 5:12 "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (*Practice helps us mature in our ministry.*)

10. It is dangerous to call the operation of the Spirit of God the work of demons. This is blasphemy. (Mk. 3:22-30, Mt. 12:27-33) Some, not understanding the present operation and liberty we enjoy, criticize and therefore, put themselves in direct opposition to the Holy Spirit. The Lord will continue to challenge us with fresh insight of the Word.

Acts 5:38-39 "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work is of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Amos 3:7-8 "Surely the Lord will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

1 Chr. 16:22 "Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

2 Chr. 20:20b "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

11. A natural father may tell one child, "I love you", another "I want you to clean your room", or another "You can do it". No natural father would be at a loss as to what

to say to one of his children. Likewise, our Father God always has something to say to each of His children.

Mt. 7:11 "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask?"

In closing:

This is by no means a complete treatment of this subject. I believe that every local church needs the gifts of the Spirit in operation, especially prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1). It is not necessary to be a prophet to see this ministry established.

If a pastor would like to have a prophetic team developed in his/her fellowship, comprised of his/her members for the purpose of ministry to his/her congregation, I would be happy to help establish it through teaching, training, and setting up guidelines for accountable, productive ministry.

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