

Truth and Spirit Ministries

The Gifts of the Spirit

Lesson III

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

The Gift of Prophecy

“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.” ~ I Corinthians 14:3

Among the nine gifts or manifestations of the Spirit listed in I Corinthians 12, it seems that the most misunderstood and rejected gift other than tongues is the gift of prophecy. I believe that this statement can be supported through the writings of the apostle Paul but also that it's clearly made evident in many Churches today because they tend to ignore, disregard, mishandle or even outright reject this gift when it's being manifested in their local assemblies. There are several reasons why and they will be addressed in this study. The first thing that we need to understand concerning the gifts of the Spirit is that God doesn't want us to be ignorant concerning *any* gift of the Spirit. (*I Corinthians 12:1*) Why? It's because he wants us to derive the benefits that he intends for us have when these awesome gifts are manifested by the Spirit in our midst.

Proof that the gift of prophecy was misunderstood and sometimes rejected by those in the Church during the first century is the fact that Paul had to take additional time to teach specifically about this gift in some of the Churches. After teaching on all the gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 12 and giving a profound teaching on love in I Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul tells believers at the beginning of I Corinthians 14 to eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, *especially the gift of prophecy*. Why did Paul put such emphasis on the gift of prophecy here? Evidently the spiritually immature Corinthians were placing greater emphasis on another gift (speaking in tongues). Paul let them know however that one who speaks in tongues without having the interpretation are really only speaking to God and not men. They are uttering mysteries that cannot be understood by others. (*I Corinthians 14:1-25*)

Those who prophesy though are speaking to men in a language that they can understand. Paul said in verse three:

“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.” ~ I Corinthians 14:3

The Gift of Prophecy Can Contain Predictions of the Future

¹³ *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

The scripture that I just quoted in I Corinthians 14:3 has often been used to teach believers today that when they are moving in the gift of prophecy that there should never be any element of foretelling the future. I disagree with this however based upon the word of God. Although we learn from the New Testament scriptures that there is a great difference between the anointing of a believer moving in the gift of prophecy alone and the ministry gift of the prophet, the Greek meaning of the gift of prophecy in I Corinthians 12:10 means *prediction* (Greek, 4394, propheteia). A prediction of course means to *foretell* or *prophesy*. The gift of prophecy then can and most often will have a prediction of the future contained within that word of prophecy due to the nature of the gift.

According to Paul's teaching in I Corinthians chapters 12 and 14 all believers can predict or prophesy something by the Spirit as he wills through the gift of prophecy but not all believers will exercise the office of the *prophet* (4395, *propheteuo*, 4396, *prophetes*) or prophetess. (4398, *prophetis*) [Greek] [Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible]. (I Corinthians 12:10, 29) However, in the New Testament anytime that the word **prophecy, prophecies, prophesy, prophesying or prophesied** is used it always has the element of *foretelling* or *predicting* the future. When the gift of prophecy is manifested by the Spirit then that word will give us something that pertains to the future. According to the Word of God, the Spirit can move through both the believer and the prophet with the gift of prophecy to strengthen, encourage and comfort other believers or the body of Christ.

The difference between the operation of the gift of prophecy through a believer that doesn't stand in the office of a prophet and a leader who does stand in the office of the prophet is distinct. Paul taught about these differences in his letters to the Churches. According to the Word of God, all believers can move in the gift of prophecy as the Spirit wills but not all are prophets. (I Corinthians 14:1-5; I Corinthians 12:27-29) The Holy Spirit can manifest the gift of prophecy through any believer he chooses for a specific purpose and time to bring strength, encouragement or comfort to a congregation. This gift will be sporadic at best whereas the gifting of the prophet (or prophetess) will operate with a greater level of anointing which will contain revelation from God to the Church. (I Corinthians 14:29-30) New Testament Prophets will also have an abundant grace given to them by God to flow in a preaching or teaching anointing in order to teach foundational truths to the Church, equip the saints to do works of service and to help them spiritually mature in the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The Spirit of God will also manifest multiple gifts of the Spirit through the Prophet in order to bring a deeper level of ministry to the believer. The Prophet's prophecies will contain more specific detail, accuracy and direction. Although all believers have been given God's grace and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the grace and flow of anointing on the Prophet life will

be much more abundant due to their divine calling and responsibilities to the body of Christ. Other responsibilities given to those that stand in the prophetic office are that they bring *confirmation* of God's word to the saints in order to strengthen and encourage the Church. The Spirit of God also prophesies through Prophets that are among the elders of the Church to confirm the gifts and callings among the leadership as well as the saints of God and then releases them through the prophetic word and the laying on of hands. (*Acts 13:11-3; 15:32; 1 Timothy 4:14*)

One last thing before I move on. Pastors and other Church leaders that teach believers that there should never be any element of predicting or foretelling future events when they are operating in the gift of prophecy are doing so in ignorance. They have the false assumption that believers can't receive or speak forth a prediction for the future. The very fact that all believers have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them however proves that they can. Let me give the scriptural proof for that.

Before Jesus went to the Cross, he shared with his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit and specifically the ministry work that he would conduct in the lives of all believers. One of the ways that the Spirit ministers to the believer is that he will give us information regarding the future. Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit:

¹² "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:12-15 NIV, emphasis mine)

God knows all things including the past, present and future. He can reveal any or even all three of these to a particular believer if he so determines. When he is revealing the past or present he normally does this by manifesting a word of knowledge to the believer. When he is revealing the future he normally chooses to reveal it through a word of wisdom or the gift of prophecy. As we have learned, the gifts of the Spirit are really *manifestations* of the Spirit, which means that they are not of human origin but from God. When someone is prophesying by the Spirit of God they are also speaking forth *the oracles of God*. When the Spirit wills or determines to move through a particular believer we must realize that it is not that person that we are hearing speak but the Spirit. When we see power manifest, it is not due to the believers ability or might but due to the power of the Spirit. (*Zechariah 4:6*) Of course whatever we see or hear needs to be judged as to whether or not it has come from God. There will be more about judging prophecy later. For now I want to kill another sacred cow among some spirit-filled camps.

The Gift of Prophecy Can Contain Correction for the Body

¹ *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.*

There are many pastors or other leaders in spirit filled Churches that teach that there should *never* be an element of correction given through the gift of prophecy when exercised by believers in a public assembly. If some sort of correction is given through a word of prophecy through a believer many leaders disregard or even reject that word based upon

this rule. Their reasoning is that believers should only operate within the guidelines of what they deem to be the simple gift of prophecy. They teach believers that they have not been given *the authority* by God to bring correction to the body of Christ. They also teach that this type ministry through the believer would not fall under the guidelines given by Paul of being *strengthening, encouraging or comforting*.

Many believers have been taught by their pastor that only the leadership has been given authority by Christ to give out correction in the Church. They tell believers it is not their place to bring correction to the body and most especially to the leadership of the Church. These teachings however are based upon faulty reasoning and lack of knowledge of the word of God. It also reveals a lack of knowledge and reverence for the One that resides or dwells within the believer that brings forth that word. It may come as a shock to these leaders to learn that the New Testament scriptures do not teach that believers don't have the authority to bring correction. Although the scriptures teach that Church leadership has been given the authority to reprove and rebuke with all authority, they don't teach that *only* Church leaders can bring correction. The reasons why will be made clear in just a moment.

Passages of scriptures such as I Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:1-11 and Galatians 6:1 teach us that when sin or other problems are present within the Church that believers have the authority to bring correction to one another, render righteous judgments and even put unrepentant sinners out of the Church. There is a particular scripture that I want to focus on that will provide ample proof that believers are directly taught that they can bring correction to a brother or sister that has sinned. Paul wrote this in the book of Galatians.

¹ Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

The word *restore* in this passage in the Greek means: *of one who by correction may be brought back into the right way.* [2675 Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament]

Sometimes correction is necessary to help us be brought back into the right way of godly living. When correction is given it should always be for the purpose of *restoration*. Please note here that Paul is speaking directly to believers and not necessarily leadership. This scripture also brings out another important point that is directed towards the one that does the correcting. "*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.*" I would like to focus on one phrase and that is "*you who live by the Spirit.*" Before I comment on that though I would like to give the Amplified Bible version of this scripture:

¹BRETHREN, IF any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also.

Please note here that the one doing the correcting will do so out of responding to the Spirit's leading and as they do the correcting they will allow the Holy Spirit to show them

how to act and also what to say. I am going through great lengths here to prove a major point. Since believers can bring correction and they are to do that correcting under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit, this also means that the Holy Spirit can use correction through a believer exercising the gift of prophecy.

Accountability of Leaders to the Church

Leaders must bear in mind that they are not only personally accountable to the Lord concerning their words and actions; they are also accountable to the body of believers that they have been given charge of by Christ. (*1 Peter 5:1-4*) Leaders must never forget that they are not above the congregation *but part of it*. The believers that they minister to are also their brothers and sisters in Christ. According to the word of God believers can bring an accusation with the intent of correction to another believer even if that believer happens to be a Church elder or leader. However it must be brought by at least two or three people. (*1 Timothy 5:19*)

It's important that all leaders keep a humble and teachable spirit among the brethren. Pride must be cast off in order for all of us to receive correction. If we have done something wrong then we are wrong and should admit that fact, apologize and then receive the correction that we need. The New Testament scriptures teach us that the qualifications that one needs to have to be able to bring correction to a brother or sister in Christ is not that they are in leadership but that they are *spiritual*. (*Galatians 1:6*) This teaches us something very important.

The reason that there can be an element of correction given through believers with the simple gift of prophecy is that correction is not coming directly from that person per se but through the Holy Spirit. We must always remember that when the gifts of the Spirit are in operation that they are a *manifestation of the Spirit* and not man. He determines who he will speak through to the Church and when. When a believer (whether a laymen or leader) is moving under the unction of the Holy Spirit with the gift of prophecy, it is no longer that person speaking but *God*. Of course the word of God instructs us to judge prophecy so that we may know whether it is really from God. If that word of prophecy is from God however, we should receive it.

Exercising the Gift of Prophecy in Public Worship

According to the teachings of Paul when the Spirit is manifesting the gifts through believers in a public assembly it is for the purpose of strengthening, encouraging and edifying the entire Church. (*1 Corinthians 14*) Even when a word of **correction** or **prediction** is given to the Church through the gift of prophecy, it will strengthen, encourage and bring comfort to the entire Church *when it is received*. When a prophecy contains an element of correction for the Church, it is given for the purpose of exposing a spiritual weakness contained within that particular body of believers that God wants to strengthen. We must always bear in mind that correction should always be given in love and that God's goal is to bring restoration.

When the manifestation of a word of prophecy comes through a believer that has an element of correction and it is received by the Church (including the leadership); this word

will strengthen the entire congregation and bring the Church up to the level of spiritual growth that the Lord desires. In the same manner when a manifestation of a word of prophecy comes through a believer and reveals something about the future to the Church, the whole congregation can be encouraged and comforted by the fact that God is preparing them for what is yet to come.

This is why it's so important that when the Spirit moves upon a believer with the gift of prophecy that the entire Church hears that prophecy. I place emphasis on that point for a reason. If the individual giving the prophecy is not heard by the entire congregation, how can that prophecy benefit the Church as it's supposed to? In addition, if it's not heard by others in the Church, how can it be judged and accepted or rejected? If believers don't exercise the gifts of the Spirit, how can the Church receive edification? (*1 Corinthians 14*) I'm addressing this issue because many leaders (even if they do believe in prophecy) don't make room for this essential gift to be manifested in their Church or may even try to control it. This however can cause others to quench the Spirit. There will be more about this in the final lesson of this study on the Gifts of the Spirit.

You may be thinking by now, *"What if a believer has a prophecy for only one other believer and not the entire Church?"* It's still beneficial and even necessary for the entire Church to hear that word of prophecy. Why? First of all it's necessary that others within the Church can hear, weigh and judge that prophecy. (*1 Corinthians 14:29*) Also should a word not be from God it must be dealt with properly or it can bring harm to others. Even though that word of prophecy may be for a particular brother or sister often it can help strengthen, encourage and comfort other believers who hear it. Sometimes when the Holy Spirit ministers a word through someone it may apply to someone else or even several people in the congregation. The Lord knows the needs of his people and will supply those needs in great abundance.

The most important reasons however have to do with giving honor to each other. First and foremost when a prophecy is truly from God we will be honoring the Holy Spirit among us by stopping and hearing what he has to say. In this way we can show proper reverence for not only the Holy Spirit among us but the Lord Jesus and our heavenly Father as well. It would be irreverent not to honor or listen to our God when he is speaking. Secondly we will be honoring our brother or sister in Christ who is receiving the prophecy. The Bible teaches us that when one member of the body of Christ is honored that we are all honored. When one member is hurting or suffering, we all suffer. There are no unimportant parts in the body of Christ. (*1 Corinthians 12*) When we stop and listen we are honoring them and showing that we care about them. And finally, we are taught in the Holy Scriptures that God is a God of order and not confusion. The Holy Spirit will lead in an orderly fashion so that confusion will not ensue within Church meetings. (*1 Corinthians 14*)

Don't Despise Prophecyings

Churches should make room for the gifts of the Spirit and especially the gift of prophecy to flow within their congregations. The responsibility for this mainly falls upon the leadership of the Church. Unfortunately many Pastors discourage or even forbid believers from exercising the gifts of the Spirit during worship services. This attitude and practice however goes contrary to the instruction of Christ for the Church. The truth is many Church leaders

and saints have come to despise prophecy although we are taught in the word not to. The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit admonished the Church to:

Despise not prophesyings. (I Thessalonians 5:20 KJV)

Other translations read:

Do not treat prophecies with contempt. (NIV)

Do not scoff at prophecies. (NLT)

Don't despise what God has revealed. (God's Word Translation)

Do not lightly esteem prophecies. (Darby Bible Translation)

Do not spurn the gifts and utterances of the prophets [do not depreciate prophetic revelations nor despise inspired instruction or exhortation or warning]. (AMP)

Why do some leaders and saints alike do this? Unfortunately some people within the Church reject a prophecy simply because they don't like the package (vessel) that the prophecy comes through. God knew the proclivity of man to despise the weaker brethren who they may deem unworthy to listen to. *This is why he has taught us in his word not to judge the messenger but the message.* We are instructed in the scriptures to judge prophecy according to the word of God and by the witness of the Holy Spirit. Both will help us to know whether the prophecy that is being brought forth is truly of God or not. We should be accepting or rejecting a prophecy based upon these biblical principles then and not because we may feel that God wouldn't speak through a certain person. (*Matthew 7:1-2; I Corinthians 14:29; I John 4:1; 5:6-8*)

We must realize that the Spirit of God manifests the gifts through each believer *as he determines*. In other words, we don't get to pick and choose who God wants to minister through but he does. (*I Corinthians 12:11*) If we despise and reject a prophecy simply because we don't like a certain person in the Church, then in reality we are also despising and rejecting our brother or sister in Christ that the God has chosen to speak or act through. If we don't respect or esteem our brother or sister in Christ, this will also cause us not to esteem the prophecy that they are speaking forth either. Even worse than all of this we are actually showing irreverence towards the Holy Spirit who is divinely at work among us. This in turn can cause him to be grieved and quenched. This means that we should not be making the Spirit sad or putting out his fire among us. We are admonished in the word to not sin against the Spirit in this manner. (*Ephesians 4:30; I Thessalonians 5:19*)

We Are All One Body

The Apostle Paul had to deal with these kinds of problems in the Corinthian Church. He had to teach these new believers not only how to properly exercise the gifts in public worship but how to do so in love. He began by teaching them about how the entire Church is like one body. We wouldn't mistreat or harm one of the members of our own body on purpose would we? No, of course we wouldn't. We also wouldn't think that any of our body

parts were dispensable would we? No. If we really thought about it we would never want to do without our own eye, ear, arm, leg, or any of our hidden internal parts that are so necessary for our body to function properly. The truth is, even our weaker body parts are *indispensable*. The facts are we need every one of our members if we are to operate together properly as an entire unit! (*1 Corinthians 12:12-26*)

We would never think of dissecting our own body and deem some parts to be worthy or unworthy to remain with our body. Yet that's what many believers do right in their own congregations when they do not esteem or even reject one of their own members. God clearly teaches us in his word that he doesn't want us to have any divisions among us. The reason why is that division will weaken or tear down our body over a period of time and cause it to operate in a dysfunctional way. (*1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 12:25*) When we are all working together in unity however this will strengthen us to operate in a healthy and functional way as a whole or complete body. All of this in turn will cause us to be highly effective for Christ and bring him great glory.

Love Is the Greatest Gift of All

Paul let the Corinthian believers know that love is like the bonding factor that holds us all together as one with our Head the Lord Jesus Christ. (*1 Corinthians 13*) Even if we have the gift of prophecy manifested among us in the Church, that prophecy will do us no good if we are not exercising love towards others or reject the prophecies that are given through them. To despise is the opposite of love. Even if a brother or sister in Christ would give a prophecy that was judged not to be of God, where would the love be if we held that against them in some way? Love keeps no record of wrong. Mercy should triumph over judgment. (*James 2:13*)

There will be times when a believer may give a prophecy out of their flesh rather than the Spirit. When this happens our first response should be to walk in love towards the one who spoke it forth. Paul taught us that love is patient and kind; it is not rude or easily angered. When we walk in love we will want to cover the mistakes of others and protect them from suffering pain or rejection. (*1 Peter 4:8*) Giving them loving correction and teaching through the word of God is the way to help the individual learn from their mistake not judging them. It's important that all believers have a safe environment in which to learn how to properly exercise and flow in the gifts of the Spirit. Then they will flourish in the house of the Lord and be highly effective when they minister to their brothers and sisters in Christ and also to the unsaved of the world.