

Understanding Prophecy

Notes by Franklin

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

I. Facts About Prophecy

The Greek word: propheteia (pro – forth; phemi - to speak) signifies "the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God".

The Old Testament prophetic ministry was essentially foretelling the events to take place in the future.

Micah 5:2 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

And occasionally in the New Testament (John 11:51).

John 11:51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation.

Prophecy is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means

Matthew 26:68 Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?

It is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future.

Genesis 20:7; Deuteronomy 18:18; Revelation 10:11; 11:3

In the New Testament it is for edification, exhortation, and comfort.

1 Corinthians 14:3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

Predictive prophecy is in the New Testament and is sometimes spoken of as revelation. For instance, the last book of the Bible is essentially prophecy and called: "The Revelation to John."

One of the main reasons for this change is a change in the priesthood.

- In the Old Testament one inquired of the Lord through a priest.
- In the New Testament all believers are part of a royal priesthood, and may individually approach the Lord.

1 Peter 2:9 **But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for god's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.**

Also, until the fourth century A.D. the Bible was not with us. Today believers may go to the Bible for their spiritual guidance. One can also go to a minister for counsel, and guidance can still come from prophecy.

- Acts 21:10-13

Other Gifts often accompany the gift of prophecy:

- The word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and the gift of discerning of spirits. Acts 13:8-12; 16:16-18
- Healing Acts 14:8-10

II. Prophecy Is Supernatural In Function

The word "preach" (εὐαγγελίζομαι) in the New Testament (N.T.) is different from the word "prophecy" (προφητεῶν). Preaching requires careful preparation (prayer, study, guidance of the Holy Spirit). One does not prepare to deliver a message in prophecy, except to be waiting for the stirring of the Spirit and the arrival of His Word. Only the first several words often arrive and the remaining words come as the person begins to speak.

Prophecy – God speaking to a person supernaturally - may come forth during the preaching. But, it was not something prepared.

2 Peter 1:20-21 **But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, (21) for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

Prophecy is often associated with or happens when the **Holy Spirit** comes **upon** a person:

- Numbers 11:17, 25-29 Eldad and Medad
- 1 Samuel 10:6, 9, 10 Saul

The **Holy Spirit** may temporarily come **upon** an **unbeliever** or a person who is completely out of the will of God, and cause a gift to be manifested through him. **THEREFORE, THE OPERATION OF A GIFT OF THE SPIRIT IS NOT PROOF THAT THE PERSON'S HEART IS RIGHT WITH GOD.**

- The prophecy of Caiaphas: John 11:49-52
- The Messengers of Saul 1 Samuel 19:20-23
- Judas Iscariot healed the sick and cast out demons. Acts 1:17, 25

It is also possible for prophecy to come through one who is **NOT** a believer, who is **not** prophesying by the Holy Spirit but by another or evil spirit even though they say or claim to be prophets of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- This is confirmed by the words of Jesus: Matthew 7:22-23

Therefore, we **MUST** be **VERY CAREFUL** of Prophecy, or any of the gifts, as to their origin and validity.

- 1 Corinthians 14:29 **Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.**

ALL PROPHECY IS TO BE JUDGED by the elders and spiritual leaders of the church. Prophecy will never disagree with the written Word the Bible.

One very good way to judge a prophet and his trustworthiness is according to the way he studies, knows and lives by the Word of God.

- 1 Corinthians 14:37-38 **If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.**

III. False Prophets and False Prophecies

1 John 4:1-3 **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.**

One test of prophecy:

Deuteronomy 18:22 *When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously (the Lord did not speak to him); you shall not be afraid of him.*

IV. THE LIMITS OF PROPHECY

1 Corinthians 13:9 *For we know in part and we prophesy in part.*

A good measure for judging prophecy is by the compassion, care and concern the one speaking has for the one spoken to (1Cor.13:1-3). Any prophecy that introduces a new doctrine that is not in agreement with the Word, the Bible, must be dismissed, spoken to and corrected. Doctrine is to be taught by the Word of God and not from "revelation." Many cults began by a slight twist to the doctrine of the Word.

Many of the false doctrines plaguing the church today owe their origin to some supposed "revelation." Many churches have been divided with quarrels and broken relationships as a result of false prophecies. The possibility of the human mind entering into a prophecy that sets forth a new revelation is too great a danger to allow the gift to be used for this purpose.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All **Scripture** is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine (or teaching), for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; (17) so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The Holy Spirit does not add to Scripture. The Scriptures are sufficient for all that a person needs to be completely equipped. However the gift of prophecy may emphasize or reveal a truth that is important to the need of the person being spoken to.

An example of a proper prophecy of revelation is:

- Acts 11:27-30 the early church was able to prepare for a famine.
- Acts 16:9-10 Paul guided to Macedonia
- Acts 20:23; 21:10-13 Paul warned of what lay ahead in Jerusalem
- 1 Cor.14:26 shows that revelation indeed has a place in the public assembly, but not to establish a doctrine.

V. The quality and depth of the prophecy depends on the maturity of the one prophesying.

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that **all may learn** and all may be exhorted.

- Patience must be exercised toward those who are learning.
- We must realize that when a person prophesies or interprets it is **NOT** just God speaking – otherwise the need for instruction and learning would not be necessary as said in 1 Cor. 14:31. The Lord gives the inspiration and the person then, with his mind, puts it into his words. It is the combination of infallible God and fallible man. Therefore again, prophecy must be carefully weighed and judged as the person's mind can easily go beyond and add to the Word of the Lord.
- Verse 32 says: "**the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets**" which means that people who prophesy are in control and responsible for what they say and do. They are not being totally controlled by the Holy Spirit. The person is in control of what they do, what they say and how they say it. Therefore, again, prophecy must be carefully weighed and judged.

The **ability to prophesy** is available to **all**. All have the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 2:17-18 In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on **all people**. Your **sons and daughters** will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. (18) Even on my servants, both **men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Although only **a limited number have the "gift"** (Romans 12:4-6) and use it in a mature and acceptable way in the meeting.

VI. The Purpose of Prophecy

Revelation 19:10 the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy

The "New Living Translation" states the verse this way:

the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus.

The purpose of prophecy is to make known the love, compassion, care, and salvation of Jesus for the person or persons spoken to.

1 Corinthians 14:3-5 But one who prophesies speaks to men for **edification** and **exhortation** and **consolation**. (4) One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies **edifies the church**. (5) Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

VII. Prophecy Edifies

1 Corinthians 14:4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies **edifies** the church.

The word "edifies" is: oikodome (Greek) a compound of:

3624 oikos – home, house or temple, and

1430 doma – to build

Therefore: to build a home or structure; to build up

Edify – to speak to a person in such a way as to encourage spiritually, morally or intellectually.

Romans 14:19 So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the **building up** (oikodome) of one another.

VIII. Prophecy Exhorts paraklesis (Greek)

To exhort means: to urge by strong, often stirring words, admonition, advice or appeal.

1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:16

2 Timothy 4:2

1 Thessalonians 4:1

Titus 1:9; 2:15

2 Thessalonians 3:12

1 Peter 5:1

IX. Prophecy Comforts paramuthia (Greek)

To Comfort – to console, sooth, ease, relief, in times of affliction or distress.

2 Corinthians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

A certain amount of tribulation and sorrow happens to every Christian and it has a purifying and maturing effect.

The person in the Corinthian church who had committed sin Paul said to “forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.” 2 Corinthians 2:7

Prophecy may act as a healing ointment to those going through great troubles. Divinely given words bring peace and comfort to those who experience severe trials and tribulations.

X. Prophecy Brings Conviction to the Sinner

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 If during prophesy and an unbeliever or someone who does not understand enters, he will be convinced by all, and convicted by all; (25) as the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

Prophecy blesses believers and convicts sinners. It causes the unbeliever to realize that a supernatural event has taken place and that the LORD GOD is with you. Something in the prophecy will strike home like an arrow and cause the unbeliever to feel that God is talking directly to him.

We must remember that conviction is not conversion. Prophecy is not sufficient to convert sinners. An explanation of the gospel is a necessary follow-up to truly bring a person to a decision to surrender and receive Jesus Christ as their savior and to obey Him as Lord.

XI. THE FINAL WORD

1 Corinthians 13:8 – 14:1

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love. Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.