

Spiritual Gifts #6

PROPHECY

The testimony of Jesus

- A genuine prophecy always testifies to Jesus (Revelation 19:10)
- It is always given in the spirit of Jesus
- It reflects the heart of Jesus

What it is not

1/It is not equal to Scripture

- Every prophecy must be consistent with Scripture but must never add to Scripture

2/It is not infallible

- It must be evaluated by the church (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21)

3/It supplements but never supplants the priesthood of believers

- Prophecies help us but ultimately every believer has a direct relationship with God (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:9-10)
- What we do with a prophecy is up to us Eg Paul with Agabus (Acts 21:10-14)

Definition

A prophecy is a message inspired by the Spirit of God which encourages and benefits the hearers.

Revelation

- See 1 Corinthians 14:29-31
- A genuine prophecy is a result of revelation
- It is often in the form of a vision (Joel 2:28; Act 2:17)

The purpose of prophesying

- The primary purpose is encouragement (1 Corinthians 14:3; Acts 15:32)
- All believers can encourage one another (Heb 10:24-25)
- A prophecy goes further.

Purposes of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3)

1/Edification

- A genuine prophecy will build up the church
- Edify = build up
- It will usually leave people feeling stronger
- Without prophesying, churches are poorer
- Everything we do in church, including prophesying, should be with the aim of edifying the people (1 Corinthians 14:12)

2/Encouragement

- A genuine prophecy brings encouragement
- Encourage = *parakaleo* related to *parakletos* = Counsellor
- Even when a prophecy rebukes, it will do so in an encouraging fashion
- Example of occasion when a congregation was rebuked through a prophetic word for not being friendly to newcomers and this resulted in a new attitude.
- See 1 Corinthians 14:3, 31; Acts 15:32

3/Consolation

- A genuine prophecy may bring consolation and comfort
- Eg Jesus to Mary and Martha
- Example of troubled family where a prophecy said, 'Your daughter will be all right.' This greatly encouraged them in the light of difficult circumstances unknown to the prophet.

The value of prophecy

1/Prediction

- Prophesying may predict the future
- Jesus frequently did this
- Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21
- See also Agabus (Act 11:27)

2/Conviction

- Prophesying may bring conviction of sin
- Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do this (John 16:8)
- See example in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25
- Example of former pastor who rejected a word of prophecy and in doing so his attitude and heart-secrets were disclosed

3/Instruction

- Prophesying may instruct us
- 1 Cor 12:31
- Following a genuine prophecy may help us to overcome sin (1 Tim 1:18)

4/Direction

- Prophesying may give us direction
- Examples of Jesus (eg to the woman at the well; to the disciples about the colt)
- Paul and Silas may have been sent out through a prophecy (Act 15:1-3)

5/Correction

- Prophesying may bring correction
- See the letters to the seven churches of Revelation eg Rev. 2:3-4

The need for prophecy

- All gifts of the Spirit are needed
- We are urged earnestly to desire spiritual gifts

- Especially prophecy
- See Numbers 11:29; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1
- Like all spiritual gifts, prophesying results from the Spirit's fullness
- See Joel 2:28; Acts 19:6
- We need to be Spirit-filled

Let's pray that God will pour out His Spirit more and more on our lives and that Joel 2:28 will be true of us today!

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:1-12, 24-25, 29-33

Biblical

1. It is often said that we should seek love rather than spiritual gifts. What do you think? (1)
2. What are the three primary purposes for prophesying? (3) Some people in WIC recently received anonymous emails 'prophesying' sickness and danger on them or their families. How do such prophecies relate to what Paul says here?
3. Why is prophesying of greater value in the church than speaking in tongues? (4, 5)
4. What are the four kinds of ministry that Paul encourages for use in public? (6) What do you think is the difference between them?
5. True or false? – 'Paul tells the Corinthians not to be so enthusiastic about spiritual gifts and to concentrate on other things that build up the church.' (12)
6. What do verses 24 and 25 tell us about the nature of prophesying?
7. It is sometimes argued that when we prophesy or speak in tongues it is entirely up to the Holy Spirit. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? (29-33)
8. An ancient early Christian book called the *Didache* says that the words of prophets should never be questioned. What do you think? (29b; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21)

Personal and Practical

9. What do you think verse 32 means?
10. Share testimonies of prophecies you have heard and how they have encouraged people. What about other prophecies you have questioned or been concerned about? What went wrong?
11. Ask the Lord to give you words of encouragement for people you meet or with whom you associate (1, 3).

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