

The Patio Pulpit For July 7, 2021
“My take on the spiritual gift of prophecy”

Open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and we will begin reading at v.1. I will remind you as I begin our study tonight that I see no Biblical reason to say the gifts of the Spirit are no longer available for the church in our day and time. One of my favorite pastor/theologians, Dr. John MacArthur, disagrees. He is a cessationist. I am a continuationist, albeit, a reluctant one. The only reason I even hesitate to agree that the gifts are for today is I'm concerned that by saying the gifts are for today, some will take it as my approval of the myriad of false teachers and false prophets and false apostles who have infected the visible church in our day and who teach that the gifts are for us now when the gifts as they manifest them are false gifts. I have in mind men and women like Bill Johnson, Chris Valloton, T.D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Heidi Baker, and of course, the Copelands.

Here, in part, is what Dr. MacArthur says in his commentary on 1 Cor. 12:10, p.302, “There has long been a difference of interpretation among evangelicals as to whether or not prophecy is a continuing, permanent gift or, like healings and miracles, passed away with the apostolic age.” MacArthur has a great following, of which I am one., I happen to disagree with him on this matter that he states so matter-of-factly that “healings and miracles have passed away.” His interpretation is presented as though it is the correct one and those who disagree are in error. We all feel that way about our own understanding of different matters. He states as fact that prophecy and healings and miracles, “passed away with the apostolic age.” I disagree with him. However, when it comes to whom I will stand with when it comes to interpreting Scripture, it will be MacArthur every time, and never with the Pentecostal or Charismatic or Word Faith or New Apostolic Reformation perversions of Scripture.

There is a huge movement afoot these days, led by the men and women I named above, trying to sell the idea that there are prophets just like Moses and Isaiah and Ezekiel and Daniel operating in the church today. I deny that notion with everything that's in me. For one thing, the

OT prophets were sent by God to Israel and Judah to call them back to Himself. Under the New Covenant, He is no longer doing that. The apostle and prophet Paul did that work to a very small degree but only in passing. He was sent by God to the Gentiles rather than the Jews.

I say the movement is huge because it is, in fact, being followed blindly by millions and millions of people who attend congregations that belong to these movements. These people have been deceived by the voices of strangers and they do not know the voice of the Good Shepherd, plain and simple.

These men and women who are trying to sell their notions of modern-day prophets are clearly false prophets themselves, who decades ago abandoned the written word of God and the preaching of the word of God in favor of preaching another gospel and another Jesus. These are the ear-scratching men and women Paul warned us about in his second letter to Timothy, chapter 4 and verses 1-5. **2 Timothy 4:1** *I solemnly charge you, Pastor Johnny, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:*

² ***preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*** That, by the way, is the work of a Biblical modern-day prophet, preaching the word.

³ ***For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,***

⁴ ***and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.***

⁵ ***But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*** (2 Tim. 4:1-5 NAU)

The work of an evangelist is to preach the word. The work of a prophet is to preach the word.

And this, ¹⁵ ***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*** (2 Tim. 2:15 NAU). Other translations read, “rightly

dividing the word of truth.” That means that God-called pastors/teachers/evangelists/prophets are to study the word of God diligently by exegeting a passage of Scripture letting Scripture interpret Scripture, giving themselves wholly to the tasks of studying and preaching.

Notice this, **God is Sovereign in giving spiritual gifts.**

1 Corinthians chapter 12 and v.11,

¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1 Cor. 12:4-11 NAU)

Most of us don't remember those years before we were old enough to pick out our own Christmas gifts or birthday gifts. Our parents or grandparents and aunts and uncles did that for us. We had no say whatsoever in what kind of presents we got. And it was still totally ok with us. Our family members gave us some pretty cool stuff, not socks and underwear, the other gifts like toys. That's how spiritual gifts are given. We have no say so in what we may get. God our Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit pick out our gifts and we should be totally ok with whatever we get. *¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually **just as He wills.***

Now later, when Paul told the Corinthians to desire **spiritual gifts**, he wasn't saying that they would get what they wanted just because that's what they wanted. It is still in God's hands. There is not one spiritual gift that we choose as our own. Not one. It does not matter how much you may want to speak in tongues, if God doesn't give it to you, you cannot have it. I have known many, many Charismatics who tried to teach others how to speak in tongues, including yours truly, they tried to teach me how to speak in tongues. It didn't work. And it does not matter how loudly we clamor to be a prophet, if God doesn't make us a prophet, we cannot have it.

What is the Biblical gift of prophecy?

I am suggesting to you that prophesying in our day is simply preaching and teaching the word of God. Follow me.

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, and in his spirit he speaks mysteries. (1 Cor. 14:2 NAU)

³ **But one who prophesies speaks to men for, for what? edification and exhortation and consolation.**

So, speaking in tongues is speaking to God, period. But prophesying is speaking to men.

Now compare what Paul said about prophesying in 1 Cor. 14 with his second letter to Timothy concerning teaching. ¹⁶ *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for **what? teaching**, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

¹⁷ *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-4:1 NAU) Here are the two descriptions of how prophecy and teaching are similar. **edification and exhortation and consolation. reproof, correction, training in righteousness**; that is a parallelism we cannot overlook. The idea behind the two lists is one. Preaching/teaching in a language known by the hearers is edifying and exhorting and consoling and reproving and correcting and instructive. That's the fruit or the result of preaching the word of God. Thus I see preaching and prophesying as one and the same work, although there will be occasional and slight differences.*

Our modern-day breed of false prophets disregard the written word in favor of whatever they decide to talk about off the top of their heads. They require no study of the written word of God. They reject the labor of love that is involved in rightly dividing the word of truth. It doesn't take much to scratch the ears of their dupes.