

Eternity Daily Bible Study

(A ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Walking In The Spirit - 39

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Topic: NT Prophecy 4 – Who Can Prophecy?

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When Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost he answered the question of who is able to prophesy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:16-18 MKJV *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "And it shall be in the last days, says 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. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy.*

Here we see sons, daughters, young men, old men, men-servants and maid-servants included in the God's prophetic activity. Prophecy is a universal spiritual activity in the New Testament. It goes along with the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believer. It is also part of the abundance of revelation given through the promised Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-16) and the writing of God's laws within our hearts (Hebrews 8)

In fact it seems that a whole congregation could participate in the prophetic:

1 Corinthians 14:31 MKJV (31) *For you may all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be comforted.*

And that even young women are not exempt:

Acts 21:8-9 MKJV *And the next day those around him going out, Paul came to Caesarea. And entering the house of Philip the evangelist, he being of the seven, we stayed with him. (9) And there were four virgin daughters to this one, who prophesied.*

Praying and prophesying seem to go together as twin activities available to all believers and which are exercised by both males and females:

1 Corinthians 11:4-5 MKJV (4) *Every man praying or prophesying (5) But every woman who prays or prophesies*

At Pentecost, Cornelius' house, and at Ephesus we find whole groups of completely new believers prophesying:

Acts 19:6-7 MKJV *And as Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (7) And all of the men were about twelve.*

Thus prophesy is so general and universal an activity that it must be very different from teaching and preaching.

Indeed while on one hand everyone is encouraged to desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1); yet on the other hand James warns that 'not many' should desire to be teachers:

James 3:1 ISV *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more severely.*

Thus the old argument that NT prophecy is "just the same as teaching and preaching" starts to fall apart. There are just too many differences:

- a) NT prophecy is for all believers, teaching is for a few mature believers
- b) Women could prophesy freely, while only men could teach in NT times (1 Tim 2:12)
- c) Brand new believers with little understanding still prophesied - while as yet they would have been completely unable to teach the Word.
- d) Young people 'sons and daughters' could prophesy whereas generally only elders would teach in the church

NT prophecy is simply reporting the spiritual impression that you are receiving from the Holy Ghost; using words which are given to you by God:

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 EMTV (9) *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. (11) For who knows the things of a man, except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, in order that we might know the things granted to us by God; (13) which we also speak, not in words taught in human wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

God can and does speak to anyone, and through anyone, that He wishes - and they can be young or old, male or female, slave or free. NT Prophecy is an immediate word from the Holy Spirit that comes to a believer because God wants it spoken in order to reveal something. Prophecy does not require age or education. However it does require spiritual openness and sensitivity. Prophecy is freely available to all whose consciences have been sensitized to the voice of the Holy Spirit (more on that later in this series).

If everyone can prophesy then what is the difference between 'someone who prophesies' and a prophet?

A NT prophet is someone that the body of Christ recognizes in that role, whose prophetic utterances have been tested and found to be accurate, and whose prophetic gift is well developed and mature so that it is available for ministry at any time. Such prophets are only second to apostles in the body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 12:28 EMTV (28) *And those whom God has appointed in the church are: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, kinds of tongues.*

Ephesians 4:11-12 EMTV *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (12) for the*

perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ,

Because prophets can ordain others and impart gifts e.g. the gift of evangelism that Timothy had (2 Timothy 1:6, 4:5), they are essential to the development of other ministries and for the building up of the Church as a whole.

God willing, we will look more in detail at the office of 'prophet' in the tomorrow's study.

Blessings,

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