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# *The Prophet's Voice*

*By*

*Mark A McGee*

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# The Prophets

What do you think of when you hear the word “prophet”? Moses? Elijah? Isaiah? Ezekiel? Jeremiah? Micah? Obadiah? Daniel? Malachi? John the Baptist? All of these men prophesied concerning Israel and we can learn much about God from reading their prophecies, but what about the Church prophets? Did you know the Church has prophets?

*“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”*  
*Acts 13:1*

The Church at Antioch in Syria was the first primarily Gentile church, but it also had many Jews in its membership. The city was located about 300 miles north of Jerusalem on the Orontes River in Syria, about 20 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea. Many Jews of the Diaspora (Dispersion of Jews from Israel to other parts of the world that began after the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC) settled in Antioch of Assyria. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire at the time and Jews enjoyed many rights of citizenship there.

One of the first deacons was from Antioch. His name was Nicolas. Acts 6:5 describes him as “a proselyte from Antioch.” The stoning of another deacon, Stephen, led to a time of great persecution against followers of Christ in Jerusalem. Many believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria and some eventually made their way to Antioch.

*“Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Acts 11:19-21*

God prepared the Jewish followers of Christ in Jerusalem for what was going to happen in Antioch by giving the Apostle Peter a vision about Gentiles coming to faith in Christ (Acts 10). When questioned about preaching Christ to Gentiles, Peter told the Jewish leaders about the vision God had given him and how the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles even as He had on the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 11:15) When the Jewish leaders heard what Peter said, they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” (Acts 11:18)

When the news about people believing in Christ in Antioch reached the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem they sent Barnabas to go to Antioch. You might remember that Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus who was one of the early followers of Christ in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36-37). He was also the man who introduced Paul (Saul) to the apostles and vouched for him soon after Paul was saved (Acts 9:26-28) The Jewish leaders trusted Barnabas and sent him to Antioch to learn more about what God was doing there. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch and saw the work of God’s Grace in the lives of Jews and Gentiles, he encouraged them to continue with the Lord. Acts 11:24 says that “a great many people were added to the Lord” during that time.

Barnabas had a unique understanding of Paul’s ministry and traveled to Tarsus to find Paul. Barnabas told Paul what God was doing in Antioch and they both left Tarsus and went to Antioch. Barnabas and Paul taught in Antioch for a full year and it was there that believers were first called “Christians.” (Acts 11:26)

Barnabas and Paul were both prophets. So were other men who joined them from Jerusalem to minister to the people in Antioch (Acts 11:27). One of those Jewish prophets, a man named Agabus, prophesied in the Antioch church that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which did happen in about 45 AD during the time of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28). The disciples in Antioch determined to send relief to their brethren living in Judea, so they sent the gift to the elders in Jerusalem “by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:30).

Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch after they fulfilled their ministry in Jerusalem and brought with them Barnabas' cousin John Mark (Acts 12:25). We learn in the next sentence (Acts 13:1) that there were several prophets and teachers in Antioch – “Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” We know that Barnabas and Saul were Jews. Simeon who was called Niger and Lucius of Cyrene were both from Africa. Cyrene had a large Jewish community in the 1st century AD, so Lucius may have been Jewish. Simeon is also a Hebrew name, so it is possible Simeon was Jewish. Manaen is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Menahem. He is described as the *suntrophos* of Herod the tetrarch, which may mean he was a childhood friend who was welcome at Herod's court.

*“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” Acts 13:2-3*

With those words we have the beginning of the Holy Spirit's massive outreach to the Gentile world that continues to this day. Though Paul usually began his ministry in new cities by preaching the Gospel to Jews (e.g. Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1-4, 10; 18:1-5; 19:1-8), his primary emphasis ended with Gentiles.

That would eventually cause Paul many problems. Even though God had demonstrated clearly through Peter's ministry that He had "granted to the Gentiles repentance to life" (Acts 11:18) and the Holy Spirit had told the prophets in Antioch, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2), many Jews had a problem with Paul preaching the Gospel of Grace to Gentiles.

*"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.'" Acts 15:1-5*

This was a huge issue for the ministry of Church prophets. Would they preach Grace **and** Law? Would Gentile followers of Christ have to become Jews through circumcision and obedience to the Law of Moses? Was that God's Plan for Gentiles around the world? Is that what you and I should do today? After much discussion, a powerful presentation by Church prophets Paul and Barnabas, and Peter speaking boldly to his fellow Jewish apostles, James, the half-brother of Christ and head of Jewish believers in Jerusalem, decided that Gentile believers would **not** have to be circumcised or obey the Law of Moses (Acts 15:19-20).

Paul, Apostle and Prophet to the Church, shared more specifics of what happened at the Jerusalem Council in his letter to the churches in Galatia.

*“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.”*

*Galatians 2:1-10*

The apostles and elders, along with all the believers in Jerusalem, sent two men from their assembly to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Their names were Judas (also named Barsabas), and Silas. We learn in Acts 15:32 that both Judas and Silas were Jewish prophets. They exhorted and strengthened the brethren in Antioch with many words, then were sent back to Jerusalem to share greetings

from the Gentiles to the Apostles (Acts 15:32-33). However, Silas decided to stay on in Antioch and minister with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:34).

Paul had a strong desire to return to the cities where he and Barnabas had preached the Gospel to see how they were doing. Barnabas was determined to take John Mark with them, but Paul resisted that because Mark had left them in Pamphylia. The contention became so sharp between Paul and Barnabas about Mark that they parted from each other. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:37-39). Paul chose Silas and began his second missionary journey from Antioch. They went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches (Acts 15:40-41)

The voices of the prophets were powerful in Jerusalem and in Antioch in those early days of the Gospel. Are they powerful in the Church today? Should they be?

## The Gift of Prophecy

I believe that **prophecy** is a neglected gift in today's Church. Think about it. How many "prophets" do you know in your church? I'm not talking about people in your church who get up in front of other people and talk about spiritual things. I mean how many people in your church have the "spiritual gift" of prophecy? When they speak, you know you are hearing from God. You know God's Spirit is communicating to your spirit through the prophet's spirit. You know God is revealing deep insights about Himself and bringing glory to His Name and His Name only. When you and others in your church judge the words of the prophet, you know it's from God. How many prophets do you know in your church? How many should you know?

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned the number of prophets who should prophesy in one church meeting: "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge." (1 Corinthians 14:29) What this means is that there were at least two or three prophets in the church, probably more since Paul put a limit on how many should speak during the same meeting. Paul also pointed out that if a prophet was prophesying and God revealed something to another prophet, the first prophet should be silent and hear what God revealed – "But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent." (1 Corinthians 14:30) Paul told the other prophets who weren't prophesying to "judge" (*diakrinetosan* - "separate throughout, discriminate, discern, decide") the prophecies spoken to see if they were from God and how to use them for the edification of the church.

You might wonder how this would work since prophecy is speaking words God gives a prophet to speak. The beauty of true prophetic utterance is that God will guide the spirits of the prophets – "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the

churches of the saints.” (1 Corinthians 14:32-33) If a prophet is speaking the words God gives them to speak and God gives a prophecy to another prophet in the meeting, the first prophet will know to be silent because God will communicate with him through his spirit. God is not the author of confusion but of peace. A wise prophet will listen to the words of another prophet and will know whether the prophecy is from God. If it is, then they will be silent and acknowledge the wisdom that comes from God. If the prophecy is not from God, the wise prophet will know it and speak forth those words God gives him to reveal the false prophecy. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Prophets who are under the control of the Holy Spirit will be able to control themselves in a meeting with other believers.

Have you ever been in a worship service or church meeting like that? Most church meetings look little like the one Paul described in 1 Corinthians 14. Keep in mind that the Corinthians were carnal and immature and were not using their spiritual gifts properly and were not meeting together for the right reasons. Paul, in describing the correct path for the Corinthians to follow, gives the proper worship model for all churches to follow. That model is the orderly Movement of the Holy Spirit among His people.

What did the people in Corinth understand the words Paul used about prophets and prophecies to mean?

**Prophecy** (noun) - *propheteia* - a speaking forth, declaring openly

**Prophecy** (verb) - *propheteuo* - to speak forth, declare openly

**Prophet** - *prophetes* - one who speaks forth, declares openly

**Prophetic** - *prophetikos* - of or relating to speaking forth, declaring openly

Here's what Paul wrote about the gift of prophecy in the middle of the 1st Century AD.

*“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11*

*“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:28*

*“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” 1 Corinthians 14:1*

Here's what Paul wrote about the gift of prophecy a few years later.

*“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.” Romans 12:6*

I believe that the Spirit-inspired prophecies that led to the writing of the New Testament ended with the Apostle John and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Here's what the Apostle John wrote in the last words of the last chapter of the last Book the Holy Spirit inspired.

*“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”*  
*Revelation 22:18-19*

God is no longer using prophets to write His Word. The Spirit of God brought that to an end with the death of the last Apostle. So, what about people with the gift of prophecy since the completion of the Bible? The history of the post-apostolic Church reveals the ministries of many prophets and teaching-prophets. They did what the Apostle Paul said they would do.

## **1) Evangelism**

*“Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”* 1 Corinthians 14:23-25

## 2) Edification, exhortation, comfort, profit

*“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?” 1 Corinthians 14:1-6*

## 3) Teaching, revelation, encouragement

*“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints ... Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Corinthians 14:26-33, 39-40*

#### **4) Exhortation and doctrine**

*“Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” 1 Timothy 4:13-15*

#### **5) Explaining mysteries and knowledge, revealing what was hidden**

*“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ...” 1 Corinthians 13:2*

#### **6) Equipping believers for their service to God**

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:11-16*

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## Important Questions To Answer

Based on what you've seen so far, how would answer these questions?

- 1) What is the purpose of prophets in a local church?
- 2) Do you have prophets in your church?
- 3) If not, why not?
- 4) If you do have prophets in your church, do you know how to test them to make sure they're from God?
- 5) If you do have true prophets in your church, are you listening to them?
- 6) What will happen to churches if they don't have true prophets or won't listen to them?

# The Church Needs Prophets

Paul taught that every church should have gifted prophets – just like every church should have gifted leaders, teachers, exhorters, givers, servers, and mercy showers. So, where are they? Where are the prophets? The Church today is way out of balance and the lack of prophets' voices may be one of the reasons. God has used prophets for thousands of years to communicate His Truth to the world. He told Paul to tell the Church, the Body of Christ, that He was going to continue using prophets in the Church.

But What Will They Say?

So, what will a person with the gift of prophecy say today? What they hear God say today. What does God say today? What Jesus says today.

*“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.”*  
*Hebrews 1:1-2*

In these **last days** (and we are in the last days), God speaks to us through Jesus Christ. He is the **Chief Prophet of the Church**. It's clear from Matthew 1 to Revelation 22 that God is speaking to us in these last days “by His Son.” Everything the Church needs to fight the good fight and battle the forces of evil is found in the pages of the New Testament. We need prophets in churches who understand that, know how to “rightly divide” the Word of Truth, and proclaim it with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 that when Jesus ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.

*“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” Ephesians 4:7-10*

This reminds us of what King David wrote in Psalm 68. During ancient times a victorious warrior king would return with his soldiers, captive enemy soldiers, and those of the king’s soldiers who had been taken captive by the enemy that the king had freed. Those soldiers were known as “recaptured captives.” Once the king returned to his capital city, he would receive as gifts those things he had acquired in battle and then give those gifts to his people.

*“You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the Lord God might dwell there. Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation! Selah. Our God is the God of salvation; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.” Psalm 68:18-20*

This is a beautiful picture of what Christ did for us. The enemy (Satan) took the human race that God Created captive. The Son of God came to earth in the likeness of humans and defeated the enemy through the shedding of His Blood on the Cross. Jesus ascended on high (returned to His Capital City), was highly exalted by God and given the Name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9), led captivity captive (recaptured the captives), received the spoils of the

great battle He won, and gave gifts to men. Hallelujah!

You and I are among those who Christ made free through His Death on the Cross. He was buried (descended into the lower parts of the earth), rose from the dead, ascended back to Heaven and took His rightful place next to God the Father on the Throne. You and I are recaptured captives to the glory of God!

## Gifts To Men

What gifts did Jesus give to men?

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ...” Ephesians 4:11*

Why did Jesus give them to the Body of Christ?

*“... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:12-16*

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are “gifts” (*doma* – Greek noun that means “a gift, a present”) from Jesus to His Body. The purpose for

Jesus giving these gifts is to build up (edify) the Body of Christ “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ ... may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”

Notice the goals:

1. Unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God
2. To a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ
3. May grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ

Does anything stand out to you here? Everything is about Christ! The goal is Christ! The reason is Christ!

A true church prophet will not have another message. **It will always be about Christ!** It will never be about them or their programs or their aspirations or their earthly passions. The message of a true prophet of the Church will be about Christ – what Christ thinks – what Christ feels – what Christ wants. Nothing else – nothing less.

A true prophet of God in your church will confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and will test the spirit of anyone who says otherwise.

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

The Apostles warned believers that people would come to them with false teachings for the purpose of destroying the faith of many. A true church prophet will point out false teaching and help protect the church from false prophets and teachers.

*“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*  
Acts 20:28-31

*“But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”* 2 Corinthians 11:12-14

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”* 2 Peter 2:1-3

So, where does a young prophet go to learn how to speak for God powerfully and effectively?

1. *To the Word of God*
2. *To the Son of God*
3. *To the prophets of God*
4. *To the people of God*
5. *To the enemies of God*

Every true prophet of God speaks the Word of God – no exception. That's how Israel knew whether a prophet was true or false.

*“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” Deuteronomy 18:20-22*

It's interesting, though sad, that Christians don't look to the history of God's prophets to determine whether people who call themselves prophets of God are really prophets of God. We see the standard of prophecy in the Law, but what did Jesus say? What did Paul say? What did Peter say? What did John say?

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” Matthew 7:15-23*

*“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ... Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ... Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matthew 24:3-6, 11-12, 23-25*

*“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.” Revelation 2:2*

*“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Revelation 2:14-16*

*“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2:20-23*

*“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” Revelation 3:1-4*

*“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure*

*savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ” Acts 20:28-30*

*“But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” 2 Corinthians 11:12-14*

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber ... But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great*

*swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'" 2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-22*

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

God warned Israel and the Church to listen to His prophets and oppose Satan's prophets. So, what did Israel and the Church do? They didn't listen to God's prophets and did listen to Satan's prophets. The history of Israel in the Old Testament and the history of the Church in the New Testament confirm that. Also, the last 1,900+ years of Church history have confirmed that God's people all too often listen to false prophets and teachers instead of true prophets and teachers of God.

Young prophets need to know what God has said in the past to be sure about what they believe He's telling them to say now and what He will tell them to say in the future. One of God's non-moral attributes is His "Immutability." That means God is unchangeable in all His attributes, essence, consciousness, and will. That's a wonderful thing to understand as a prophet because we are depending on God always being Who He says He is and doing what He says He will do.

*"Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." James 1:16-17*

*"Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will have no end." Psalm 102:25-27*

*"For I am the Lord, I do not change." Malachi 3:6*

Here are some recommendations for what young prophets can do to know that what they're speaking is from God.

- A prophet of the Church is going to spend a lifetime speaking forth God's Word, so I highly recommend that young prophets read the entire Bible at least twice before starting a prophetic ministry. You can finish reading God's Word in about four weeks by spending several hours a day reading and asking God for wisdom to understand what you're reading. Spending eight weeks to saturate your mind and heart with His Word through two complete readings will help you greatly in your future ministry. It will sensitize you to Who God is, what He thinks, what He feels, what He

- wants, and how He speaks. How much you love God's Word and how willing you are to invest yourself in learning, understanding, and speaking His Word is an excellent measurement to what kind of prophet you will be. God deserves our best in everything we do.
- Make notes from your Bible reading that you believe will be helpful in speaking to a variety of issues in your ministry. Organize the notes into physical notebooks as well as electronic files. You will refer to them many times during a prophetic ministry that could last many decades.
  - Continue to read through the Bible at least once every one or two years to continue diving deeper into the Mind of God. Your maturity as a prophet of the Church will necessitate a deep knowledge of God's Word and awareness of the leading of His Spirit. You cannot depend on something you learned years ago but have not thought about recently. The Word of God must ever be fresh in your heart, mind and mouth.
  - Learn enough about Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek so you can study God's Word in the original languages. Do not depend on what others tell you God's Word says and means. Go to the Source of the Word, the Holy Spirit, and know what He inspired in Hebrew and Greek and why. The Holy Spirit will always be your best teacher and guide in both studying God's Word and speaking God's Word. He will be your closest advisor for the rest of your life. Know Him well. Depend on Him always.
  - Be humble toward God. He knows things you do not know and will show you great and mighty things you cannot imagine. Do not be proud of your accomplishments—for a prophet of God has no worthy accomplishments aside from the Truth God reveals to you. All is to be to His Glory.

*“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That*

*I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord." Jeremiah 9:23-24*

## The Chief Prophet

As young Church prophets read through the Bible twice in a period of two months it will become clear that everything in Scripture points to one Person — Jesus Christ. As we read the New Testament we learn that Jesus is God, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, King of kings and Lord of lords, the High Priest of God, the Sacrifice for sin, and the Chief Prophet of the Church. It would be of great benefit for young prophets in the Church to learn from Christ Jesus their Lord.

Jesus was born of prophecy. The great prophets of the Old Testament spoke of His coming — from Abraham to Malachi. The angels of God spoke often of His coming. Mary the mother of Jesus prophesied of the great things her Son would accomplish (Luke 1). Simeon prophesied that Jesus was the salvation of God and would be a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and be the Glory of Israel (Luke 2). The prophetess Anna who was more than 100 years old saw the baby Jesus in the Temple and gave thanks to God and spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2). The renowned prophet John the Baptist preached of the coming of the Messiah Jesus calling Him “the salvation of God” (John 3).

One of the first things Jesus did in His Ministry was to read from the prophet Isaiah to demonstrate that He was the fulfillment of that prophecy.

*“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the*

*gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’ Luke 4:16-21*

The people closest to Jesus and many in the crowds that heard Him recognized Christ as the promised Prophet (John 6:14; 7:40). Even those who were not Jews recognized that Jesus was a great Prophet (John 4:19). So, did Jesus prophecy? Did He reveal the hidden things of God? Yes, He did, and the young prophet can learn much about prophecy by studying Christ’s Words.

Prophecy is not just about telling the future. It is primarily about telling the truth. And it is that truth-telling that causes prophets problems. Take Luke 4 for example. Jesus went into the synagogue where He grew up in Nazareth. It was the Sabbath day and He did as was His custom. Jesus stood to read to the congregation and was handed the Book of Isaiah. Jesus opened the Book and read Isaiah’s prophecy that described the Ministry the Messiah would have on earth. Jesus finished reading, handed the Book back to the attendant and sat down. Everyone was looking at Jesus to see what words of wisdom He might share with them — as He had done many times before. But this time it was different. Jesus sat before them in His Prophetic Office and said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” How did these people who had known Jesus since He was boy react to what the Lord said to them?

*“So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in*

*Your country.’ Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.” Luke 4:22-30*

Did you see that? The members of the synagogue where Jesus grew up – the men and women who knew Him from childhood – were so angry by what He said that they “thrust” Jesus out of the city intent on throwing Him over a cliff to kill Him! There are many things about the Lord’s Words that set off the people who had known Him most of His life, but the point for our study is that prophets will often not be accepted by the people they grew up with and even kicked out of their church. As Jesus said, “no prophet is accepted in his own country.” Keep in mind that this was His family’s synagogue. That’s why the people said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” Can you imagine how difficult it must have been for Mary and her other sons and daughters to see how angry Jesus made their friends?

The number of Americans who attend church regularly has been estimated between 20-30%. The percentage is less in Canada, Europe, and the UK. The number of people attending Christian churches is fewer and the number of people who are really saved is less than that. So, here’s a question for you: how many churches have you attended in your lifetime, so far? Most Christians in the countries mentioned above have attended multiple churches because of going

away to college, moving for a job, looking for a better church experience, etc. It was not that way for the first several centuries of the Church. People lived and died in the same villages and towns. Most Christians spent their lives in the same village church. If God called them to be a prophet in their church and they made their church angry, what would they do? Where would they go?

The language and interpretation of Paul's writing are based on the realities of society of the 1st Century AD. The directives Paul shared with church members dealt with them working things out with each other – not running out on each other. Running from place to place looking for the perfect church is not what God has in mind for the Body of Christ. The power of the Gospel is in changing lives, not in changing churches. Go where God sends you, but be sure it's God Who is sending you. Don't run away from problems in your church. Be one of the people who helps keep Christians on course in their walk with Christ and each other.

After Paul wrote the beautiful words of Ephesians 4 about why Jesus gave prophets to the Church, the apostle told the family of God in Ephesus that they should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Ephesians 4:17-18) Paul wrote, "But you have not so learned Christ." (vs 20) Paul implored the believers to "put off" the old man and be renewed in the "spirit of your mind." (vs 22-23) He encouraged them to "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (vs 24). Then Paul got personal with his brothers and sisters in Christ and did what prophets do – tell it like it is.

*"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working*

*with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:25-32*

Do you see any advice from the Apostle Paul about being defensive, fighting back, giving up, or running away? No. Paul's advice – God's Advice – is that we stick it out and find ways to make unity work in the Church. If God has called you to be a prophet in His Church, He's called you to become part of that solution. Did Jesus become defensive to His attackers? Did He fight back? Did He give up? Did He run away? No. Jesus pressed forward and obeyed everything that His Father in Heaven told Him to do. Jesus went all the way to the Cross and finished the work His Father had given Him to do. Because of Jesus we are one. It's our job to act like we're one people. That's the job of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

How well we have done our job is evidenced by the spiritual condition of the Church today. If Jesus were to come to your church this Sunday and speak at your morning worship service, what would He say about the spiritual condition of your church? I think we all know what the Son of God would say. There is much work to be done and it needs to begin with those who lead the flock of God.

# How Jesus Spoke

Jesus Christ spoke in four primary ways during His earthly Ministry: **Teachings**, **Commands**, **Prophecies**, and **Prayers**. Here are examples of each.

**Teachings** – “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:1-4)

**Commands** – “These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.’” (Matthew 10:5) “But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’ And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.” (Mark 1:25-28)

**Prophecies** - “Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of

the age?" (Matthew 24:1-3)

**Prayers** – “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’” (John 17:1-3)

Jesus is the **Master Teacher, Commanding King, Chief Prophet, and Praying Servant**. Whatever your spiritual gift, you can learn best how to serve God at the feet of His Son.

As we stated in the previous chapter, Jesus Christ is the Chief Prophet of the Church. Studying how Jesus prophesied is a great way for a church prophet to learn how to serve God in that position. You might wonder how studying the Lord’s prophecies will help a church prophet since the *charismata* come from the Holy Spirit. Remember what Jesus said about the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

*“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:12-15*

The Holy Spirit speaks the Words of Christ. Jesus had much more to say to His apostles, but they couldn’t bear them at that time. Jesus said that when the Spirit of Truth came, “He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own

*authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak.” The “spoken” Ministry of Jesus continues to this day through the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit. The goal of a church prophet is to **speak the Words of Christ**. They are not to speak on their own authority, but whatever they “hear” from the Spirit of Christ they will speak. Look at what the Apostle Paul said about the Word of Christ.

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16*

Paul was so serious about the Words of Christ that he told Timothy to withdraw himself from anyone who would not listen to those Words.

*“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” 1 Timothy 6:3-5*

That’s strong language that should lead to strong action by Church leaders. Unfortunately, many in the Church today are deaf, weak, fearful, or just plain sinful. Church leaders have done a great disservice to the Lord of the Church by not obeying His clear teaching about how to deal with people who teach “otherwise” and do “not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ ... From such withdraw yourself.” How much clearer could God be about this problem!

## Prophetic Reconciliation

A church prophet should also be a “prophet of reconciliation.” That is the “Word” God has given us to preach.

*“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-20*

Jesus Christ came to earth to reconcile sinners to God. What is His example for us to follow? “But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Matthew 9:13) “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.” (Matthew 11:19) “This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

The calling of a church prophet is to **preach the Gospel to the lost**. Remember what Paul told the Corinthians about what happens when prophets speak during church meetings – “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” (1 Corinthians 14:24-25) When prophets prophesy, unbelievers will be convinced and convicted, the secrets of

their hearts will be revealed to them, and they will worship God.

## Prophetic Edification

Prophets speak the Truth as revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit then uses those prophetic words to **convict** the unbeliever of their sin and **convince** them of their need for Christ. That is the first step in prophetic edification.

“edify” (verb) – *oikodome* – to build a house ... “edification” (noun) – *oikodomeo* – the act of building a house

The words come from a combination of *oikos* (household, home) and *demo* (to build). The word can be used both for the literal building of a house, and the figurative building up of another person. Jesus used it in the literal sense in Matthew 16:18 when He spoke of building His Church – “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Paul used it in the figurative sense in Romans 14:19 of building up people spiritually – “Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”

Let's begin with Jesus. He has been “building” things since the beginning of the universe. He is the **Master Builder**.

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Colossians 1:15-18*

Jesus literally built the heavens and the earth and through that building edified everyone and everything in it. He has also managed several “households” (*oikonomia*- dispensations) during the thousands of years following Creation. In the process of creating and managing, Jesus has also “edified” (built up) hundreds of millions of people. In fact, the Church is called the “building” of God in 1 Corinthians 3:9 – “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are God’s building.*” The Greek for “building” is *oikodome* – the same word for “edify.” Jesus is the Builder of His Church – and the Cornerstone. Paul used the word *oikodome* for “building” in his letter to the Ephesians.

*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22*

Jesus is the Cornerstone of the Building He is building, and everything He is building is for us. What a Savior!

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:3-6*

What is the greatest way Jesus “edifies” those who believe in His Name?

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:7-12*

When will Jesus complete this amazing “edification?”

*“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14*

We are Christ’s “purchased possession” and He will bring us to Himself very soon.

*“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend*

*from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

Jesus Christ is the Chief Prophet of the Church, and as such He is the Chief Edifier. Though a church prophet cannot die for the sins of unbelievers, Jesus often calls on His prophets to die for the prophetic ministry (Matthew 23:33-35; John 16:1-3). As we know from the history of the Church, many church prophets were killed performing their prophetic ministry. In fact, church prophets are still being killed in our world today, and we know many more will die before our Lord's Second Coming.

Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles and a leading prophet of the Church. His primary goal was to win unbelievers to faith in Jesus Christ, then build them up in their faith. In fact, Paul said that Jesus gave him his apostolic authority for the purpose of edifying believers.

*“For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—lest I seem to terrify you by letters.” 2 Corinthians 10:8-9*

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul said, “But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.” All things! Paul did “all things” for the “beloved,” for their “edification.”

That's **key** – to understand that building up believers in their faith is a high purpose of a prophetic ministry. One of the great failures of the Church through the centuries has been in the area of edifying its members. Look at Paul's

prophetic teaching about edification.

*“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” Romans 14:19*

*“Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.” Romans 15:2*

*“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.” 1 Corinthians 10:23-24*

*“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.” 1 Corinthians 14:3-5*

*“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.” 1 Corinthians 14:12*

*“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” 1 Corinthians 14:26*

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ... from*

*whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*  
*Ephesians 4:11-12, 16*

*“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”* *Ephesians 4:29*

*“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”* *1 Thessalonians 5:11*

# Prophetic Exhortation

Evangelizing unbelievers and edifying believers are priorities #1 and #2 for a church prophet. # 3 is **exhortation**.

The English word is defined online as “an address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something; a speech or written passage intended to persuade, inspire, or encourage; language intended to incite and encourage; an utterance, discourse, or address conveying urgent advice or recommendations.”

The Greek word translated as exhortation is *paraklesis*, meaning “a calling to one’s side, to one’s aid.” Interestingly, Jesus called Himself and the Holy Spirit *parakletos*, from the same root word for “exhortation.” (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7)

This is important for a church prophet to understand because our work of “exhortation” must come from the Holy *Parakletos* rather than from ourselves. What equips any Christian to urge, persuade, inspire, incite, or advise anyone else? The Holy Spirit does that work and as long as the church prophet is coming alongside of another person and communicating to them what the Spirit says, we can truthfully say that we are ministering “in the Spirit.” No one knows the things of God “except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11), so we MUST hear from the Spirit to know what God is saying to us and others.

The Apostle Paul understood the importance of the ministry of exhortation in churches. Here’s what he wrote to the Thessalonians about his ministry.

*“You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12*

Notice how Paul included the ministries of comforting and charging with that of exhortation. Remember that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are Comforters (*parakletos*). Paul explained that his ministry to the Thessalonians included **exhortation**, **comfort**, and **charging**. The word “exhorted” is *parakalountes*. The word “comforted” is *paramouthoumenoi* (“speaking closely with tenderness”). The word “charged” is *marturomenoi* (“testify, witness” based on evidence – the word “martyr” comes from the root noun *martus*). Paul was so bold as to say that the Thessalonians were “witnesses” (*martures*), and God also, of “how devoutly and justly and blamelessly” he, Silas and Timothy had behaved themselves toward those who believed.

Church prophets should expect certain results from their ministry. Paul addresses those in 1 Thessalonians 2 – “that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” There is the “holy goal” of all ministry, that God’s people would “walk worthy” of God. The Greek words are *peripatein humas axios* – “conduct your behavior humans in the sphere of being worth the weight” of God.

How much does God weigh? Seriously. How much does He **weigh**? How much something weighs is an ancient idea of what something was worth. The idea of *axios* (“worthy”) and *axioo* (“worthily”) in a Christian’s life is connected to God’s weight (worth), so it is an important question to answer. Here are some answers from God’s Word.

*"I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies." 2 Samuel 22:4*

*"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house." Hebrews 3:1-3*

*"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." Revelation 4:11*

*"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!'" Revelation 5:8-13*

No question that God is WORTHY! His weight and worth are greater than that of the universe, which God created. So, what does that mean to a prophet of the church? Look at what the Apostle Paul said about the humble heart of the prophet John the Baptist.

*“And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’ Acts 13:25*

Humility before God is where we begin walking “worthy” of God. Look at what Paul told the Christians in ancient Corinth.

*“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” 1 Corinthians 15:9*

Paul wrote Christians about the importance of conducting their lives in a manner “worthy” of God’s **worth**. He “exhorted” them to live out their lives with God’s worth always in view.

*“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-3*

*“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” Philippians 1:27-28*

*“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:9-14*

*“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5*

*“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12*

Jesus Christ is the great **Exhorter** of His Church – coming alongside people through the Holy Spirit to call them back to Him. Christ sits at the right hand of God in Heaven, “far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” (Ephesians 1:20-21) Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords, “who alone

has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power.” (1 Timothy 6:15-16) Jesus is truly “our great God and Savior.” (Titus 2:13)

Church prophets can learn much from the Lord Jesus Christ about how to exhort Christians to live their lives in a manner “worthy” of God. Look at these prophetic pronouncements that Jesus gave the Apostle John to be delivered to seven churches in Asia Minor. Look at how Jesus approached each church and what was important to Him. As church prophets we want to be certain that what is important to us is always important to Christ.

*“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.’” Revelation 1:17-20*

First, Jesus identifies Himself to His messenger and defines His Power and Mission. Jesus is the First and Last. He was dead, but now lives and will live forevermore. Jesus has the keys to Hades and Death. Think about that—Jesus has the keys to Hades and Death! That’s Who we love and serve. Jesus explained His Mission to John and defined each of the images the apostle had seen. Jesus made it clear that John was to write the things which he had seen, the things which are, and the things which will take place.

Look for those three things in each of these communications from Christ to the seven churches.

### **Christ to the Church in Ephesus**

*“These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”*

### **Christ to the Church in Smyrna**

*“These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall*

*not be hurt by the second death.”*

### **Christ to the Church in Pergamos**

*“These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”*

### **Christ to the Church in Thyatira**

*“These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am*

*He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

### **Christ to the Church in Sardis**

*“These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

## **Christ to the Church in Philadelphia**

*“These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

## **Christ to the Church in Laodicea**

*“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I*

*rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

What is the first thing you notice that Jesus says in each exhortation? “I know your works.” God “knows” (Greek – *oida* – “to see, perceive with fulness of knowledge”) the “works” (Greek – *ergon* – “work, employment, task”) of every Christian and every Christian church. Remember that we are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10) The “work” we do in God’s Name is not what we determine to do, but what God prepared beforehand that we should do. We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for “good works.” It is important for a church prophet to understand that clearly and not be led to think anything different. Why do I say that? Because every church prophet will face the profane and idle babblings of people in every church. As Paul wrote Timothy, “their message will spread like cancer.” (2 Timothy 2:17) Paul also warned Timothy to avoid foolish and ignorant disputes and not quarrel, but humbly correct those who oppose you. (2 Timothy 2:23-25)

What Jesus did next in addressing each of the seven churches was to be specific about their “works.” He pointed out both what He liked and what He didn’t like. That’s also the work of the church prophet. Two of the seven churches heard positive Words from Christ about their work. Both were persecuted churches. The other five were better off in light of what the world might call success, but Jesus saw through that to their true hearts. That’s what a church prophet should do. Not an easy or popular thing to do, but it’s what we’re called to do. Keep in mind that Jesus deeply loves His Church. He did not say what He said to the five

churches because He didn't love them. He said what He said "because" He loved them. The same is true for a church prophet. We must love the church or churches God calls us to with the same LOVE that took Jesus to the Cross. When we speak from hearts and minds filled with God's Love, those who are true believers of Christ will hear God's voice rather than ours.

## The Prophet's Profit

There is truly great “profit” in being a church prophet, but it’s not how it sounds. Most people think of “profit” as personal gain (e.g. financial, possessions, position, power), but is that what God means when He speaks of the profit of the prophet? Let’s get a lesson about “profit” from the greatest Prophet Who ever lived — Jesus Christ.

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matthew 16:26*

*“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” Matthew 5:29-30*

*“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63*

*“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” Matthew 10:39*

*“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” John 12:25*

Jesus always had the “eternal” in view. His concept of “profit” is opposite of what most people believe. They see getting as gain. Jesus sees loss as gain and explained it beautifully during His Sermon on the Mount. His concept of loss is here on earth which is temporary, as compared to Heaven which is permanent. It also goes to the matter that what we value is what we worship.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The Apostle Paul also understood the Lord’s insight to “profit” and lived it out so that many might be saved.

*“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” 1 Corinthians 10:31-33*

So much is made about spiritual gifts (*charismata*) today, but many Christians have forgotten the purity of the purpose of these precious gifts. It is not for their personal profit, but for the “profit of all.”

*“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

Paul emphasized that the primary purpose of spiritual gifts is for the edification (building up) of the Church. He emphasized revelation, knowledge, prophesying, and teaching for accomplishing that work.

*“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?” 1 Corinthians 14:1-6*

Paul knew that the highest purpose of spiritual gifts was to reveal and demonstrate the Love of God.

*“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3*

Paul, like His Lord Jesus, saw things from an eternal point of view.

*“But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.” 1 Timothy 4:7-9*

Paul understood what was at stake in the decision the Galatians were making about how they would experience the Christian life. He knew that what they were doing would profit them “nothing.”

*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.”Galatians 5:1-3*

Paul reminded his student and friend Timothy to charge believers not to strive about words to “no profit” and to the “ruin of the hearers.” The real profit comes from the Word of God.

*“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:14-15*

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2*

*Timothy 3:16-17*

Paul often emphasized the importance of serving God as things that “are good and profitable to men.”

*“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Titus 3:8*

Many people in the Church are “profiting” from the Gospel in the wrong way. Their concern is for their own belly, prestige and purse. They care little about what their words and actions do to others. What they want is what they want and they will not stop until they get it. These so-called “prophets” of the Church remind us of the warnings of Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter and John.

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” Matthew 7:15-23*

*“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which*

*He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*  
*Acts 20:28-31*

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber ... But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is*

*brought into bondage.” 2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-19*

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

Jesus warned believers to “beware” of false prophets and said they would know them “by their fruits.” Paul warned church leaders to “watch” because the “savage wolves” would “rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Peter warned believers that the false teachers would exploit them “by covetousness” and “deceptive words.” John warned believers not to believe every spirit, but to “test the spirits, whether they are of God.”

It’s clear from the great prophets of the New Testament that many false prophets are in our churches today in disguise. It is also clear that we have the duty and right to warn Christians about them and teach how to “test the spirits, whether they are of God.” The idea that church prophets today should quietly “get along” with the false teachers and prophets exploiting Christians is ridiculous. That is opposite of our Lord’s clear directive. There is a great “profit” for prophets, but it is not in making a profit. It’s in making sure that all spiritual gifts are used “for the profit of all” and that no leader is seeking his own profit, “but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.”

# The Prophet as Teacher

We're learning what it means to be a "church prophet." Those are Christians who have the gift of prophecy as explained in Paul's Letters to the Corinthians and Romans. In previous studies we've seen that church prophets have an important part to play in **evangelism**, **edification**, **exhortation**, **comfort** and **profit** in local churches. Is there anything else? Yes, there is much more church prophets can and should do for the Church, the Body of Christ.

*"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Acts 13:1*

Let's begin with the ministry of **teaching**. The church at Antioch in Syria was the first "mixed" church of Gentiles and Jews. We learn from Acts 11:19-21 that after the persecution that arose over Stephen some of the believers traveled to Antioch, preached "the Lord Jesus" to Hellenists and "a great number believed and turned to the Lord." We're told those men were from "Cyprus and Cyrene." Cyprus is an island located west of the Syrian coast. Cyrene was located farther west on the coast of northwest Africa in what is now the country of Libya.

Five men served the Antioch church as "prophets and teachers." They were Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul (Paul). Barnabas, Manaen and Paul were Jews from Judea. Simeon, which is a Jewish name, was also called Niger, which translates as "black." He may have been of African descent. We are told that Lucius was from Cyrene, which was in northwest Africa. Though they were Jews, the Spirit of God led them to preach the Lord Jesus to Gentiles as well as Jews.

This is an interesting group; different nationalities and backgrounds, but called together by the same Holy Spirit to start the great work of reaching Gentiles for Christ. They were gifted as both prophets (*prophetai*) and teachers (*didaskaloi*). **Teaching** was a primary role of these men. The words for “teaching” (Greek - *didache* and *didaskalia*) mean “doctrine, instruction, that which is taught.” These five men were responsible to God to teach the many people who were coming to Christ in Antioch. What they taught these new believers is what we call “Church doctrine.” Doctrine, the teaching of the Church, is the foundational instruction for all believers to this day and that is what Paul, Barnabas and the other “teaching prophets” did in Antioch, in addition to evangelism, edification, exhortation, comfort, and profiting for all. That was in contrast to other Jewish believers, also from Jerusalem, who preached the word “to no one but the Jews only.” (Acts 11:19)

It's obvious from these words that God was doing something different in Antioch. It was so surprising to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem that they sent Barnabas to go as far as Antioch to see what was going on. When Barnabas saw that Gentiles and Jews were believing Christ and worshiping together, he encouraged them to continue with the Lord and traveled to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul). When Barnabas found Saul he brought him to Antioch and they “taught a great many people.” Interestingly, it was in Antioch after Saul began teaching at the church that “the disciples were first called Christians.” (Acts 11:22-26)

I cannot emphasize enough the role of **TEACHING** in the prophetic ministry – not just because it's what the Bible tells us to do – but because that is specifically what is NOT being done in the Church today. I am **appalled** at how little Christians know about God's Word; especially the Word of God rightly divided, in context. I am **distressed** at what Christian leaders have done to public worship services that are supposed to be a time of **prophecy, revelation, knowledge** and **teaching** (1 Corinthians 14:6). They've turned it into a side show filled with

noise and distractions (1 Corinthians 14:7-8). No wonder Paul wrote the Corinthians to get their act together and behave in church meetings in an orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:26-40). What we have going on today in hundreds of thousands of churches around the world is truly a disgrace to the Name of Christ.

What's the cure? **Doctrine! Teaching! Instruction!** Paul made it clear in his last letters that teaching correct doctrine, rightly divided, would be paramount to the spiritual health of individual believers and individual churches.

*“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” 1 Timothy 1:3-4*

*“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” 1 Timothy 2:11-13*

*“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.” 1 Timothy 3:1-2*

*“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer*

*reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach.” 1 Timothy 4:6-11*

*“Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.” 1 Timothy 6:1-2*

*“But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” 2 Timothy 2:23-26*

Paul also made it clear that teaching prophets are to make sure that faithful and gifted people in their churches become committed to these same principles of ministry and pass along that commitment to other “faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

*“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from*

*the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Titus 1:10-16*

It is with great **sadness** that I tell you the many warnings of the Apostle Paul are true in a great many churches today. We live in a time when hundreds of thousands (possibly millions) of preachers and teachers around the world are claiming that their words are from God, when in fact their words are not from God at all. They are fables, lies, and outright distortions of the Truth. How have many in the Church responded to these lies? They eat it up. They love it because “they have itching ears.” They “heap up for themselves teachers” who give them what they want – a show – which is nothing more than a sham. They “turn their ears away from the truth” and are “turned aside to fables.” What’s the honest prophet-teacher to do about this terrible thing in the Church today? “Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

This is no time to let our guard down or give up. This is the time to preach the Word and convince, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching. This is the time of the **church prophet**.

*“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” Titus 2:11-15*

## The Prophet as Prophet

We've seen that Church prophets are involved in evangelism, edification, exhortation, comforting, profiting others, and teaching. It's probably obvious that prophets also **prophesy**.

*"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." 1 Corinthians 14:1*

The Apostle Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 12 & 13 that love is the "greatest" and the "more excellent way." Concerning the gift of prophecy Paul wrote, "And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2) Prophets, take note! We need to prophesy from hearts filled with love – love for God, love for the people God has saved, and love for the people God wants to save.

Paul began his teaching about believers prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul addresses both male and female prophets.

*"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered." 1 Corinthians 11:4-6*

Two key words in this passage are “praying” (*proseuchomenos*) and “prophesying” (*propheteuon*). *Proseuchomenos*, *proseuchomai* and *proseuche* are always used for prayer to God. *Propheteuon*, *propheteia* and *prophetikos* deal with “speaking forth” the mind and counsel of God (W.E. Vine). Christian prophecy is about God and for God, so we need to understand clearly what God wants us to do with the spiritual gift.

Every Church prophet should read, study, re-read, and re-study 1 Corinthians 14. Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles and senior prophet and teacher of the Church, gives us an unprecedented view of how prophets and others in local churches should conduct themselves.

*“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.” 1 Corinthians 14:1-5*

It’s obvious from what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians that the church in Corinth had some serious problems. The church was divided about many issues, one being the use of spiritual gifts. One of those problems concerned the gifts of **tongues** and **prophecy**. Both spiritual gifts concerned “speaking forth,” so it’s understandable how people might be confused how these “speech” gifts might work.

The Greek word for “tongues” is *glossa*. It is used 50 times in the New Testament for the tongue as an organ of speech, a language, the “divided tongues, as of fire” that sat on the head of each of the 120 people who gathered together on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3) to wait on the baptism of the Holy Spirit Jesus had promised to them (Acts 1:5), and the supernatural “tongues” that came with the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Many of the Jews visiting Jerusalem on Pentecost were from different countries of the world and spoke a variety of languages. All of them heard the 120 Christ-followers speaking “the wonderful works of God” in their native language (*dialekto*).

How could this be? It was a miracle – possibly the reversal of what God did when He confused the one language of the world into many languages. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved in the Christ-followers in such a way that people who spoke many different languages (*dialekto*) heard the Word of God from one language (*glossa*). Is that the same *glossa* Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians? Let's see.

The first mention of *glossa* in 1 Corinthians is in chapter 12:10 – “another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.” This is something new. There are “different kinds of tongues” (*hetero gene glosson*) and “the interpretation of tongues” (*hermeneia glosson*). “Kinds” is a translation of *gene* and speaks to “families” of *glossa*. “Interpretation” is *hermeneia* and means “to explain.” That's the first time we've seen the concept of “explaining” *glossa*. People in Acts who heard “tongues” understood the speech in their own native dialect. For some reason in Corinth, tongues (*glossa*) needed explaining (*hermeneia*). The time between the events in Acts and Paul's letter to the Corinthians is relatively short (between 20-25 years), so what happened to tongues that it would need interpretation in Corinth?

The next time we see glossa mentioned is later in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians.

*“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” 1 Corinthians 12:27-30*

In a list from first to last, tongues is mentioned last. Prophets are mentioned second, just behind apostles. Then Paul asks an interesting question that is easy to answer. Are all apostles? No. Are all teachers? No. Are all workers of miracles? No. Do all have gifts of healings? No. Do all speak with tongues? No. Do all interpret? No. Paul just told the Corinthians earlier in chapter 12 that they were part of one body with many different parts. Paul told them not to look down on others who didn't have their gifts and not to feel bad about themselves if they didn't have the more public gifts that others had. Why did Paul say that? "... that there should be no schism in the body." (1 Corinthians 12:25) Wasn't that the theme of Paul's letter? He started by writing, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you." (1 Corinthians 1:10-11) Division was the disease, unity the cure.

Paul continues about tongues two verses later: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1) Paul addresses those who speak in *glossa* first, then he speaks to prophets: "And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so

that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:2) Paul is an equal-opportunity apostle – no matter what the spiritual gift, if you don’t use your gift in love (*agape*) it is just noise and offers nothing of value to others.

Paul goes on to say this about some of the spiritual gifts - “Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8) Paul says that love (*agape*) never (*oudepote*) fails (*piptei*), but prophecies (*propheteiai*) will fail (*katargethesontai*), tongues (*glossa*) will cease (*pausontai*), and knowledge (*geosis*) will vanish away (*katargethesetai*).

Paul addresses three of the spiritual gifts he listed in chapter 12 – prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. Prophecies will “fail” and knowledge will “vanish away.” Both words – “fail” and “vanish away” – come from the same root word *katargeo*, which means “to reduce to inactivity, render idle, abolish, be done away.” Both grammatical uses of the Greek word in 1 Corinthians 13:8 are 3rd person, singular, future, indicative, passive. That means **something else** would act on prophecies and knowledge at a future time to reduce them to inactivity. Tongues would “cease” (*pausontai*), which means “to stop, to make an end.” The grammar for *pausontai* is 3rd person, plural, future, indicative, middle. That means *glossa* would stop on their own at a future time.

These gifts are compared to **love** which never “fails” (*piptei*), which means “to fall” in the sense of from a higher place to a lower place. Love will always rank at the top. It will never fall to something less than first and best.

When Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians about prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, he used the future tense for what would happen to each one. Sometime in the future prophecies would “fail,” tongues would “cease,” and

knowledge would “vanish away.” Did that happen soon after Paul wrote to the Corinthians? Later? Or is it still a future event?

Coming from atheism to Christianity was a wonderful experience, but it was also a bit of a culture shock. I quickly learned that Christians have many sub-cultures that often divide believers from fellowshiping with each other. I had been a Christian for only a short time when I started hearing that some Christians spoke in “tongues” and others didn’t. Those who spoke in tongues questioned the spirituality, even the salvation, of those who did not speak in tongues. Those who did not speak in tongues questioned the spirituality, even the salvation, of those who did speak in tongues. It seemed strange to me given the simple facts about salvation from Scripture (e.g. Acts 16:31; Romans 10:8-10) and Christ’s call to unity within His Body (e.g. John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:1-6). I wondered why there wasn’t more clarity about something that had become so divisive, then I learned that tongues was divisive as early as the Apostle Paul’s ministry.

It was obvious from my early reading of the Book of Acts and 1 Corinthians that the gift of “tongues” changed dramatically in a short period of time (less than 30 years), so I wondered why. The Apostle Paul wrote that he spoke in tongues, but would rather prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:18-19). Paul explained that tongues were for a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:20-23). I saw that statement consistent with what Jesus said (e.g. Mark 16:17) and what Luke wrote in Acts (e.g. Acts 2:11; 10:45-46).

Our current study is about the spiritual gift of **prophesy**, so what does that have to do with tongues? Paul groups prophesy, tongues and knowledge together as three *charismata* that will “stop” in the future.

*“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.” 1 Corinthians 13:8*

We've seen that prophecies will fail and knowledge will vanish away. Both words come from the Greek word *katargeo*, which means "to reduce to inactivity, render idle, abolish, be done away." The grammatical structure for both is that something else would act on prophecies and knowledge at a future time to reduce them to inactivity. Tongues would "cease," which means to "stop, to make an end." The grammatical structure is that tongues (*glossa*) would stop on their own at a future time.

Prophecy, knowledge and tongues are the only *charismata* Paul specifically says will "stop" at a future time. Why is that? Why not mention the word of wisdom, faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles, discerning of spirits, and interpretation of tongues? Will they not stop in the future? Or does Paul not mention those gifts for another reason?

The process of discovering God's Truth (rightly dividing the Word) is carefully observing the text with the help of the Holy Spirit, asking questions from those observations with the help of the Holy Spirit, answering those questions with the help of the Holy Spirit, and interpreting the answers with the help of the Holy Spirit. I emphasize the Holy Spirit in every step of Bible study because the Spirit of God "inspired" the human writing of Holy Scripture. We must depend on His Guidance to rightly divide His Word.

The purpose of Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians is not difficult to discern. Paul was clear at the beginning of the letter about the main reason. Look at the wording of Paul's theme carefully. What do you see?

*"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the*

*revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you." 1 Corinthians 1:4-11*

Paul thanked God that they were “enriched” (*ploutizo* – to make wealthy) in everything in Him in all “utterance” (*logos* – speech, discourse) and “knowledge” (*gnosei* - seeking to know, investigation, enquiry). He said that they had “come short” (*hustereisthai* – come late, suffer want, left behind, be inferior in power) in “no gift” (*medeni charismati*), even as they were “eagerly waiting” (*apekdechomenous* – to wait or expect with eagerness) for the “revelation” (*apokalupsin* – uncovering) of our Lord Jesus Christ, who would also “confirm” (*bebaiosei* – make firm, establish, make secure) them to the “end” (*telous* – the limit at which something ceases to be, the purpose, end-goal, reaching the aim, reaching the finish), that they might be “blameless” (*anenkletos* - that which cannot be called to account, nothing laid to one's charge, free from accusation, guiltless) in the “day” (*hemera* – day, period of time, opportunity) of the Lord Jesus Christ (used in New Testament for the time when members of the Body of Christ meet Him face to Face – e.g. 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). Paul followed that statement by pleading with the Corinthians to be united in the same mind (*noi* – seat of reflection, consciousness, frame or state of mind, faculty of perception and understanding) and same judgment (*gnome* – purpose, opinion, sentiment, means of knowing).

The theme of 1 Corinthians is overcoming divisions within the Church through spiritual knowledge and purpose for the goal of being unified so that Christ would be glorified in His Body, the Church. Paul addressed both “utterance” and “knowledge” and emphasized that the Corinthian believers were not short in any spiritual gift as they awaited the “uncovering” of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This thematic statement by Paul is important to our understanding of everything in his letter and it comes full force in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. The division that existed in the Corinthian church concerning spiritual gifts was intense. Some thought so highly of their giftedness that they made other brothers and sisters think that they had “come short” in the area of spiritual gifts. The most vocal members of the church were those with “utterance” and “knowledge” gifts. Paul told them that their gifts of prophesy (spiritual telling and foretelling), tongues (unintelligible spiritual language unless interpreted), and knowledge (spiritual recognition and understanding) were one day going to “stop.”

Can you imagine what the Christians in Corinth thought when they read that for the first time? It’s the kind of language that puts people in their place. Any Christian who reads 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14 should never again think proudly of their spirituality. All our gifts are from God. May God be glorified in everything!

Paul’s thematic statement in 1 Corinthians 1 also gives us a clue about when the *charismata* of prophesy, tongues and knowledge will stop.

*“For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall*

*know just as I also am known.” 1 Corinthians 13:9-12*

Paul told the Corinthians that we “know” (*ginoskomen*) “in part” (*merous*) and we “prophecy” (*propheteuomen*) “in part” (*merous*). Then Paul added that when “that which is perfect” (*teleion*) “is come, then that which is in part” (*merous*) “will be done away” (*katargethesetai*). That refers back to verse 8 about something or someone doing away with (*katartethesetai*) those gifts.

Paul told the Corinthians they “know” **in part** and “prophecy” **in part**. The Greek word *merous* means “a portion of the whole.” What the Corinthians were experiencing with their *charismata* of knowledge and prophecy was not the whole, not the completed portion. It was just a “portion” of the whole. Paul went on to say that when “that which is perfect has come,” then that which is in part (*merous*) would be abolished (*katargethesetai*). Now we’re getting somewhere! Paul tells us when the *charismata* of prophecy and knowledge would be abolished – “when that which is perfect is come.”

The Greek word for “perfect” is *teleion*. It means “finished, having reached its end, complete.” Remember Paul’s theme statement in 1 Corinthians 1? What did he point to as the completion of a believer’s life and ministry? “.... that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:5-8) Our lives are complete at the “revelation” (*apokalupsis*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, Paul added, will also confirm us to the end, that we may be “blameless” in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul continued to help the Corinthians understand his point about the specific *charismata* by sharing concepts they would understand – childhood and mirrors. They had all been children and many were parents of children. They understood

Paul when he wrote, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). He used the terms “spoke, understood, thought” in the context of the spiritual gifts of prophesy and knowledge. The Corinthians who had those *charismata* were speaking, knowing and thinking like children who had not yet grown up and reached maturity, but when they became adults they would put away (*katergeka* – from same root as *katargethesetai*) childish things. When do Christians come to full maturity? At the “revelation” of Jesus Christ.

Ancient Corinth was famous for the quality of its polished metal mirrors. Though they were well-made, the mirrors of the 1st century AD did not have the clarity of modern mirrors. Paul wrote, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly.” The Greek word for “dimly” is *ainigmati* and is transliterated as “enigma.” It meant that the reflection people saw of themselves in mirrors was an obscure hint of the reality. It was like a riddle that was hard to understand. Paul compared that obscure hint of reality to what will happen when “that which is perfect has come” with “but then face to face.”

The phrase “face to face” hearkens back to Paul’s theme where he tells the Corinthians they were “eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Why so eager for the *apokalupsis* of Christ? Because that’s when we will see Jesus “face to face.” What a day of rejoicing that will be when we see Jesus in person! That’s when our journey will be finished. That’s when we will be complete.

Paul added that “Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” At this time, Paul wrote, we “know” (*ginosko*) “in part” (*en merous*), but then “I shall know” (*epignosomai* - fully perceive, recognize) just as I “also am known” (*kai epegnosthen* - exact or full recognition). *Epignosomai* is future tense, indicative mood, middle voice. *Epegnosthen* is aorist tense, indicative mood,

passive voice. Paul said that in the future he would have a full recognition of himself even as he had been fully recognized by someone else at a past time that included the present. When would that happen to Paul? At the “revelation” of Jesus Christ. That’s when all Christians will fully recognize themselves in the same way Jesus has known us from the beginning (e.g. Ephesians 1:3-6).

If you have the spiritual gift of prophecy, tongues or knowledge, know this – your gift will end one day and it’s not about you. The Spirit of God gave us spiritual gifts so we would use them in service to God, that Jesus Christ would be glorified, souls would be saved, and believers built up in their faith. If you feel a bit puffed up at times because you speak and others listen, remember that what you have is temporary. What is important is faith, hope and love, “these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

[Note: since the *charismata* of tongues will stop on its own and the Apostle Paul made a special addition not to “forbid” speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39), tongues may have already ceased or will cease before the return of Christ. If tongues continues to this day, the regulation of tongues also continues and church prophets should speak clearly to any misuse - “Let all things be done decently and in order.”]

One of the least understood portions of Scripture in the Church today is 1 Corinthians 12 – 14. Thousands of books have been written and millions of sermons preached to explain every imaginable interpretation about what Paul meant when he wrote – “Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.” (1 Corinthians 12:1) Interesting that Paul wrote this specifically to address the ignorance in the church about spiritual matters (Greek - *pneumatikon*) and what has come from it is more ignorance in the Church about spiritual matters. I don’t think that’s what Paul had in mind when he wrote it. He expected Christians to understand clearly his meaning and purpose.

Even though so much of this portion of 1 Corinthians addresses spiritual gifts (Greek – *charismata*), Paul first addresses the Corinthians' ignorance about spiritual matters. The Church then and now is ignorant about many things pertaining to the spiritual world. Look at what Paul wrote next - "You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:2-3) The Corinthian Christians were Gentiles who had believed in dumb (Greek – *aphonos* – voiceless) idols (Greek - *eidola*) before they believed in Christ. Even though the idols could not talk (being made of wood or metal), there was a spiritual language involved in the worship of those false gods. That language included saying Jesus was "accursed" (Greek – *anathema*) because of the opposition of pagan worshippers to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is not the spiritual language that comes from the Spirit of God. In fact, no one can say that Jesus is Lord (Greek – *kurios*) except by the Holy Spirit.

We live in such a material world ("me, me, it's all about me") that Christians often get caught up thinking about spiritual matters in the same way. Paul is diving into what was a huge problem in Corinth and is still a problem in churches around the world today. He was trying to clear up their ignorance about the spiritual world. Why? Because of how they viewed the spiritual world before they were saved. Paul reminded them that they had been "carried away" (Greek – *apago*) to worship voiceless idols. Those idols were likenesses or "phantoms" of the spiritual power they represented. Though the images were voiceless, there was certainly a spiritual voice behind the images – the voices of Satan and his demonic force. Their combined voices cursed Jesus and could not call Jesus their Lord because that came only through the Holy Spirit. Satan does not operate through the Holy Spirit. The spirit of Satan is evil, always and only.

Let's not miss the main point of Paul's main point. Christians are vitally attached to and immersed in the spiritual world. There are amazing powers in that world. There are important protocols in that world. There are languages in that world. We must "not" be ignorant about spiritual matters. Before Paul mentions any spiritual gift (*charismata*) by name (e.g. word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, prophecy), he makes clear to the Corinthians, and to us, that the Holy Spirit of God is the Spiritual Power behind the gifts. We are to speak His language and not the language of Satan and demons.

## The Prophet as Revealer

We've seen that church prophets are involved in evangelism, edification, exhortation, comfort, profit, and teaching. What else do prophets do? They **uncover hidden things** from the spiritual world.

*“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 14:26-33*

The word “revelation” is the Greek word *apokalupsin*. Wait a minute! Isn't that the word for “apocalypse?” Yes, it is. The world is generally ignorant about what an **apocalypse** is because of books and movies. The word is made up of two words – *apo* (from) and *kalupto* (to cover) – and means “an uncovering, unveiling.” People often think of the APOCALYPSE as an end-of-the-world event. It is true that the Book of Revelation (*Apokalupsis*) does address amazing future events that will impact the world as we know it, but the word *apokalupsis* is used in many other places in the Bible for other reasons.

When Joseph and Mary presented the baby Jesus to the Lord at the Temple, a just and devout man named Simeon took Jesus into his arms, blessed God, and spoke these prophetic words: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32). The word “revelation” is *apokalupsin* and certainly wasn’t used as an end-of-the-world reference. God’s salvation would be a spiritual light that would bring an “uncovering, unveiling” to the Gentiles.

The Apostle Paul used the word *apokalupsin* in Romans 16 when he wrote about the Gospel and preaching of Jesus Christ according to “the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations.” (Romans 16:25-26) Paul used the word *apokalupsin* again in 2 Corinthians 12 when he wrote about the many “visions and revelations” he had received from the Lord. Those were not end-of-the-world events, but “unveilings” of spiritual Truth for Paul to guide him in his ministry to the Gentiles.

So, when we talk about church prophets having an *apokalupsis* during a meeting of believers, we understand that it’s an “uncovering” that the Spirit of God gives to them. If you have ever seen a church prophet “uncover” a spiritual truth during a church meeting, it is wonderful. God is glorified. Christians are edified. Problems are solved. Issues are clarified. Who receives the glory? The church prophet? They better not. Only God can get the glory.

Even as Paul gave the Corinthians directions about the orderly process about speaking and interpreting tongues, so he gave church prophets directives about keeping order during an *apokalupsis*.

*“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 14:30-33*

Two or three prophets are allowed to speak during a church meeting, even as other prophets judge (*diakrinetosan* – discern, determine) what is said. If the Spirit of God reveals a spiritual matter to another prophet, the first prophet is to keep silent. The purpose for prophesying is not to be heard but “that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” How wonderful it would be if that would be the heart and purpose of all who spoke in Christian churches around the world today. Unfortunately, many people speak primarily to be heard, seen and lauded, not so that people would learn and be encouraged.

If you have the spiritual gift of prophesy, you have a big responsibility. God has chosen to gift you with the ability to “uncover” things that are hidden. That doesn’t mean the Holy Spirit will reveal new Scripture that you should get published into every new Bible. There is nothing new to add to the Bible (Galatians 6:1-9; Revelation 22:18-19). What it does mean is God will give you special spiritual insight that will reveal His Truth in ways that will help saved and unsaved people understand spiritual things in ways they may have never seen before. What a blessing you can be to the Body of Christ for the glory of Christ! May that always be our clear purpose in serving God as His prophets.

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