

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

September, 2003

The Other Kind of **PROPHECY**

"In Acts 11 Agabus prophesied that a famine would come shortly on the world. In Acts 15:32 the activity of two further prophets is mentioned -- Judas and Silas, who '**exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them**'.... There seem to have been two kinds of prophecy -- the first *foretelling* of the future, and the second simple *exhortation* through inspired utterance." --Michael Harper

* * *

The cure for **mis-use**
is not **dis-use**
but **right use**.

**29th ANNUAL
CENTRAL LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

November 17 - 20, 2003

Theme: GODLY LIVING IN PERILOUS TIMES

MONDAY NIGHT

7:00 p.m. **Perilous Times (II Timothy 3:1-9)** Darren Johnson
All youth ages 10 and up will be dismissed at this time nightly for their session.

TUESDAY

Prayer Time daily, Tuesday - Thursday at 9:30 A.M.

10:00 **Training Faithful Men (II Timothy 2:1-2)** Robert Garrett
11:10 **Titus 1: Godliness in the Church** Julius Hovan
1:15 **Single minded soldier (II Timothy 2:3-5)** Eddie Olberding
7:00 **Prophesied Times** Earl C. Mullins, Sr.

WEDNESDAY

10:00 **An Enduring Farmer (II Timothy 2:6-13)** Mike Abbott
11:10 **Titus 2: Godliness in the Home** Julius Hovan
1:15 **A Diligent Workman (II Timothy 2:14-19)** Dennis LeDoux
7:00 **Pressing Times (II Peter 3:7)** Don McGee

THURSDAY

10:00 **A Sanctified Vessel** Glen Baber
11:10 **Exposition of Titus 3: Godliness in the World** Julius Hovan
1:15 **A Gentle Servant (II Timothy 2:24-26)** Harry Coultas
7:00 **Promising Times (II Peter 3:13)** Dale Offutt

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Special Service nightly for youth 10 years and up in the fellowship hall.
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All messages will be taped by Donald R. Stump, 1720 Plum Creek Rd., Taylorsville, KY 40071 (502-477-2252) Messages can be ordered at the fellowship.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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The Other Kind of Prophecy

Do We Underdo What Some Others Overdo?

Alex V. Wilson

By 150 A.D., when the church was about one hundred and twenty years old, in many congregations a single leader had taken over almost all responsibilities in the meetings of the saints. Thus the majority of believers had gradually become passive spectators only. This was one main factor in a widespread decline from faith to mere beliefs, from active participation to bored attendance, from high moral standards to laxity, and from hope to blah.

Responding to these conditions, a man named Montanus [*mon'tanus*] began a movement of protest against the growing formalism and deadness. He stressed the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of prophecy. He also preached that Christ would return very soon. But George Mallone observes that Montanism was a movement of reaction, and the Montanists "*overdid what other Christians underdid.*" For example, while Montanus kept the hope of our Lord's return alive (*cheers!*), he also taught that his own province -- in present-day Turkey -- would be the site of His coming and that He was bound to come right away (*sigh!*). While Montanus emphasized the Holy Spirit (*yay!*), he seemed also to claim that he was the Spirit's most exalted instrument and other believers were only 2nd-class Christians (if saved at all) compared to him and his followers (*boo!*).

Sadly, Montanism was not the first nor the last movement to overreact. Church history is full of examples of such leaders and movements. From too little regard for baptism and the Lord's Supper to superstitious faith in them. From ultra-emotional meetings to frigid ones. From individualism run wild to clone-like conformity. From anti-intellectualism to hyper-intellectualism. From under-emphasizing good works to under-stressing grace. Back and forth. Forth and back.

One area of belief and practice where this has occurred is spiritual gifts. That's why it seems important to re-study them -- with prayer, love and patience. Amid various views and diverse practices, one thing is sure: God's word does not tell us to **oppose** spiritual gifts, nor just **tolerate** them, nor merely **accept** them -- but *earnestly desire* and *use* them. Listen to the recurring refrain:

*Eagerly desire the greater gifts. *Try to excel in gifts that build up the church. *Do not neglect the gift you have.... *Rekindle -- *stir into flame* -- the gift of God that is within you.... *Each one should *use*

whatever gift he has received to *serve* others, *faithfully administering* God's grace in its various forms. *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us *use them*: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.... *Follow the way of love and *eagerly desire* spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. (1 Cor.12:31; 14:12; 1 Tim.4:14; 2 Tim.1:6; 1 Pet.4:10; Rom.12:6; 1 Cor.14:1.) Well, our Lord couldn't make it much plainer, could He? This is not something trivial. And notice that those last two verses (plus others, of course) both mention the gift of prophecy.

Seeming Barriers Blocking the Way to Belief in a Present-day Gift of Prophecy:

Let me share questions and problems which have made it very difficult for me and others to believe in a credible gift of prophecy today: 1. We're not even sure what this gift is! There are conflicting ideas. 2. Where has this gift been for the past 1600 years? And where are real, true prophets now? 3. True prophets have to be 100% correct, and who is? [Deut.18:21f.] 4. There've been scads of *false* prophets -- many of them kooks! If we promote the prophetic gift -- whatever it is -- aren't we just encouraging more of such nuts, counterfeits and rip-offs? 5. Prophets think their sayings are equal to the Bible in authority. That's caused havoc! 6. What about women? At least three times the NT mentions women prophesying [Acts 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Cor.11:5]. 7. Paul said prophecies will cease, so there is no such valid gift today.

But as I've studied this subject off and on through the years, it seems to me some solutions to those puzzles have been found. #1 is the basic question, which will be discussed in later articles this month and next. At present let us merely assert the plain truth that much prophecy has nothing to do with foretelling the future. #2: A partial reply here is that *preaching* may sometimes contain elements of prophecy, or occasional flashes of it. In that sense at least, the gift has been here all along (though unrecognized) -- in Spirit-guided sermons. More later. #3: Deut.18:21 ("If what a prophet proclaims ... does not take place ... the Lord has not spoken") must of course be balanced by conditional prophecies like Jonah's forecast that Nineveh would be smashed in 40 days. See Jeremiah 18:7-10, which makes the principle clear. Other clarifications on this question will be made later.

#4: The NT provides safeguards against kooks and counterfeits, as we'll see. And consider this too: There have also been scandalous evangelists and abusive pastor-teachers, but we don't reject all the good ones, nor the calling itself, due to that. #5: The gift of prophecy in the churches was not considered on the same level as Scripture. Unlike God's inspired word, it was to be tested, and if necessary rejected.

#6: Yes, those scriptures are really there. Various interpretations and applications of them have been made. #7. We dealt with this question in last month's exposition of 1 Cor. 13 plus the article about the expiration date of miraculous gifts. Also see Wayne Grudem's major article this month.

Four paragraphs earlier we saw many scriptural exhortations to desire and use spiritual gifts in general. Now let's note the emphasis placed on the gift of prophecy above all others. 1 Cor 14:1, 39, 29-31, NAS. ...Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially *that you may prophesy* Therefore, my brethren, *desire earnestly to prophesy* Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can *all prophesy* one by one, so that *all may learn and all may be exhorted*. 1 Thes.5:19-22. Do not quench the Spirit; *do not despise prophetic utterances*. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

With all that emphasis made by Paul, we cannot pretend that this is unimportant.

Are These Valid Present-day Prophecies?

Here are some examples of statements made in a congregation in Ohio that Ruth and I once visited. The believers there called them prophecies. See what you think. During the meeting, a time for sharing was provided. A member stood and said something like this: "I believe the Lord is saying, 'Take off your masks; I see through them. Come out from your hiding places; you can't keep secrets from Me.'"

Afterward the minister, whom we had gotten to know at a conference, shared two of many examples from the past. One time a member stated, "I think the Lord has laid this message on my heart: 'You have repented. The past is behind you. You are under grace, so move forward now.'"

Do you think those statements measured up to being called prophecies? They were not unbiblical in content. Of course they didn't seem to be supernatural. They were not even especially dramatic -- unless you happened at that time to be a hypocrite wearing a mask of pretense! Or a flawed but penitent disciple who needed both assurance and prodding right then!

On another occasion in that congregation someone had declared, "There are four couples in this church engaging in immoral relation-

ships and thus crucifying Jesus Christ again.” It turned out to be true, made known by a direct revelation from the Lord rather than based on the speaker’s foreknowledge. Three couples repented and confessed their sin (whether right away or later, we were not told). The fourth couple left the church.

Hmmm, how does that grab you? Would *none... some... or all* of those pronouncements qualify as prophecies in the sense that Paul speaks of? Think about it. Is such a practice Biblical, anti-Biblical, or somehow in between?

I should add that the elders there didn’t allow just any crackpot to say any old thing in the meetings. If someone believed the Lord had given him a message (prophecy?) to share, he first approached one of the elders and shared it privately for his evaluation. The elder might approve, or perhaps say, “I do not believe that is from the Lord, at least to be shared in this meeting. If you wish I’ll tell you why when the meeting is over.” [For other possible examples of the gift of prophecy in the church, see the articles by Dr. Wayne Grudem in this issue, plus my expositions of 1 Cor. 14 regarding prophecy.]

Hmmm. Well now, what are you thinking? Keep alert as we turn to see what 1 Cor. 14 teaches. But before we say more about the controversial gift of prophecy, we need to deal with the controversial gift of speaking in tongues! Not because we like to deal with debatable issues, but because there’s no other way we know of to expound 1 Corinthians 14.

Friends, we realize we’re dealing with complicated subjects here. Some of you may have helpful insights from Scripture or your experience that would be valuable for all our readers to hear. And some of you may even disagree with us! That’s your privilege, it’s part of our freedom in Christ. So, after the October issue, we’ll take a break from the 4-month themes of spiritual gifts in general & the gift of prophecy in particular. Then **we’ll revisit the subjects, hearing from *you*.** Feel free to send us feedback: short observations or testimonies, or regular articles written either by you or someone else.

In January 2004, D.V., we’ll have a 5th issue related to these subjects, **with your input put in!** You need not agree with us, *but you may!* So long as what you send is based on the Bible, and is not written in a cantankerous manner, we’ll consider running it -- or parts of it. We reserve the right to condense, especially if several writers cover the same ground in similar ways. Also, if for important reasons you prefer to write anonymously, you may do so. In such a case, inform the editor of your identity, but add “Keep this anonymous.” If the article is worthy of being published, we’ll do so but respect your confidentiality.

Expositions of 1 Cor. 12-14 * Alex V. Wilson

Building Up One Another

1 Cor. 14: Speaking in Tongues

This chapter is long (40 verses) and deals with such difficult and contentious subjects as the gifts of prophecy, and tongues, and the form that church meetings took among the early Christians. We won't be able to cover all the details in the chapter here, but we'll try to see Paul's overall goal, explain his main points if we can, and apply his teaching. *Fasten your seatbelts and put on your helmets!*

Introduction

Actually Paul's main concern here is neither tongues nor prophecy *per se*. Rather it is **edification** -- a word he uses 7 times in the chapter. To edify means to build up (for example, to build an edifice), or strengthen -- fortify, reinforce. We all need this, and Paul makes edifying the church the *plumbline* by which he evaluates the gifts of tongues -- which many Corinthians prized so highly -- and of prophecy.

Regarding Speaking in Tongues

Tongues-speaking is a topic of **great interest**. In a book about spiritual gifts, chapter 11 was about tongues. It began, "Aha! This is the chapter you turned to first, wasn't it?" (Yep, it was.) This charisma is also surrounded with **great tension**. It arouses fear; many people feel threatened by it.

Well, let's try to relax. *Neither you nor I* put 1 Cor.12-14 in the Bible; *God* did! And *neither you nor I* included tongues-speaking among the rest of the charismata; *God* did! He also put chapter 13 right in the middle of this section, so we would realize the importance of *disagreeing agreeably and loving each other always*. [See last month's issue.]

Let's start by listening carefully to Paul, even though he might make some **anti-tongues** folks among us mad! Then we'll go on listening to him, or rather to the Holy Spirit speaking through him, even though this might upset any **pro-tongues** folks among us. Or, better yet, let's determine not to get mad or disturbed by either set of these statements!

Here's a 3-point preview of my own stance toward tongues-speaking: *Nobody must* (here I differ with many Pentecostals). *Somebody may* (here I differ with many non-Pentecostals). *I haven't* (I'm neither

bragging nor complaining about that). It seems to me this chapter gives us 3 warnings about this charisma.

WARNING #1: Beware of being Totally Negative about Tongues, as though it would have been better had God never given this gift.

Did He make a mistake? Are we wiser than He is? Do we really want to “speak where the Bible speaks”? Are we willing to accept clear Bible statements, or do we feel obligated to muzzle or muffle or even erase some of them so that we won’t have to change our traditional beliefs? (On the other hand, in case you missed the 1st article in this series, let me point out that 2 months ago we observed that tongues (and other gifts) might be genuine -- from God -- or might be merely fleshly or even demonic in origin. (1 Cor.12:2-3; Matt.7:22.) Spiritual abilities and miraculous powers are not self-authenticating. They can be counterfeited. And even genuine gifts from God may be severely abused, which is why Paul wrote 1 Cor. 14. But don’t evade warning #1 spelled out above. Study carefully what Paul says.)

Notice Paul’s Inspired Statements:

In 1 Cor.12:10 & 28 this gift of “speaking in different kinds of tongues” is included along with many other charismata, God’s gifts of grace to us. Remember, God doesn’t give bad presents!

But what are the **PURPOSES** of this gift? Chapter 14 tells several. **1) 14:2**, “Anyone who speaks in a tongue ... **speak[s] ... to God.**” I know I’m omitting most of the verse! But hold on, we’ll look at the rest soon. Nonetheless you can’t deny that Paul says that. And speaking to God is a good thing, isn’t it? Paul repeats this thought in v. **14**: “If I pray in a tongue, **my spirit prays.**”

2) 14:4, “He who speaks in a tongue **edifies himself.**” Again, that’s only 1/2 the verse. But isn’t it *good* if I’m edified? “NO,” say some; “we should only seek to edify *others.*” But you know what? If I myself am strengthened I can probably strengthen others better.

In **14:5** Paul says, “*I would like every one of you to speak in tongues*” Hold on, I know that’s only 1/4 of the verse, and we’ll look at the whole thing soon. But he doesn’t sound negative. And (here’s a **3rd** purpose) in the last 1/4 of this same verse Paul states that **if** the tongues-speaker also *interprets* what he says, then “**the church may be edified.**” And that’s good: tongues + interpretation = prophecy, a helpful message from God.

Purposes **4 & 5**) Verse **16** states, “You are **praising God** with your spirit.” And verse 17 mentions “...your **thanksgiving....**”

How do praying, praising, and giving thanks *in tongues* edify or **strengthen** the tongues-speaker? In his excellent commentary on 1 Corinthians, David Prior names six edifying benefits of private speaking in tongues, including “a particular sense of God’s presence, relaxation from tension, freedom in intercession when verbal prayer is inadequate or impossible, and freedom to worship God when ‘lost in wonder, love and praise.’”

Moving on to **14:18**, Paul makes an *astonishing* statement if valid tongues-speaking is as harmful and dangerous as some folks feel. He does not say, “Now I hate to admit this fact, but....” Nor, “Folks, it embarrasses me no end to confess this to you, but....” No, he writes, **“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.”** I realize that *his very next sentence greatly shrinks that remark*, but it does not eliminate it! *Our belief-system somehow needs to include the opinion he expresses here -- and also his concluding statement in 14:39b*, “... *Do not forbid speaking in tongues.*” This is God’s Word; dare we scissor out any of it?

Of course in verses **27-28** the apostle *sets limits to the use of tongues in public meetings*: In any meeting no more than “two -- or at the most three -- should speak, one at a time ... and if ... there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep silent in the church and speak to himself and to God” -- that is, pray quietly in his heart so no one else is disturbed.

But, *so long as tongues-speakers comply* with Paul’s regulations in verses 27-28, *we should comply* with his regulation in **v.39**, “Do not forbid speaking in tongues.” We really can’t pretend that statement is not there. *He never says the gift of tongues per se was bad*, only that the Corinthians’ use of the gift was bad. They were abusing it. *He never says tongues-speaking is bad*, but he *strongly and repeatedly says prophecy is far far better*.

In other words, this chapter makes it obvious that tongues-speaking has very *limited usefulness “in the church”* -- that is, in *public meetings*. It seems the gift of interpreting tongues was rare, and **Paul greatly preferred the gift of prophecy in public**. Since this is so, the only logical conclusion is that **tongues is primarily for private prayer and praise**. The late Donald Gee of England, a leading teacher in the Assemblies of God, took that view. And I heard a preacher from the 4-Square Gospel Churches (Pentecostal) say, “In our churches a number of people pray in tongues quite often in their personal devotions, but we don’t use that gift in our meetings.” And Chuck Smith, the leader in the Calvary Chapel movement -- which is not Pentecostal but has some members who are -- told me the same thing.

The Other Side of the Coin

Now let's revisit chapter 14 and see the other side of the coin, the parts we skipped earlier. We'll notice how strongly Paul *de-emphasizes* tongues and accentuates speaking clear messages from God. As a result, I believe we'll see the need for two more warnings.

Remember that the first warning was: Beware of being overly-negative about tongues-speaking, as though it would have been better had God never given this gift. Now for other warnings:

2) Beware of Over-Emphasizing and Elevating Tongues, looking up to those who do this and looking down on those who don't, and thus dividing Christians into "haves" and "have-nots."

3) Beware of Abusing this gift in Public -- by showing off, or wasting the time of others in unedifying ways, or causing distraction and even disorder.

Notice how Paul repeats these themes over and over:

Verse 2: "Anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men ... Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries...." It's mumbo-jumbo to the human hearers, who get nothing out of it. Moving on to verses 4-5: "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues...."

Someone may ask, "Hey Wait! If Paul is downplaying tongues, why does he say he'd like every one of them to speak in tongues?" It seems to me that he is speaking hypothetically here, since he already said back in 12:30, "All do not speak with tongues, do they?" I believe that in this later statement he's saying, Even if God gave this gift to every Christian -- and if He chose to do that it's o-k with me, but I know He doesn't and won't -- I still would prefer that you prophesy. I.e., even if tongues-speaking were as important as you feel it is, prophesying is *far more* valuable.

We find another example of this sort of statement in 1 Cor.7:7-8. Can you believe what Paul says there? "It is good for the unmarried to remain single as I do." (Have you ever heard a sermon on that verse?) He even goes further and declares, "*I wish that all were as I myself am*" -- meaning single! Now *he does not mean that literally*, because then there would be no Christian homes, no believers would have children, nobody would qualify as elders (since they're supposed to be married), etc. (Read that neglected chapter to discover his exact

meaning and motives.) But to make his point he uses *hyperbole* or deliberate exaggeration and says he wished all Christians were unmarried. In the very same way he later writes, I would like every one of you to speak in tongues -- as *you all* wish you could -- but you won't, and needn't, and prophecy is much more important.

Now **verse 6**: "If I come to you and speak in tongues, **what good will I be to you...?**"

You'll be none the wiser. He repeats that thought in **9-b**: "Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, **how will anyone know what you are saying?**" And verses **16-17** reiterate the idea: Since other folks don't know what you're saying when you speak in tongues, **they are not edified** -- which is what we all need most.

Verse 12 is vital: "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, **try to excel in gifts that build up the Church,**" the whole body. That's what he stressed in chapter 12, remember? *Don't be self-centered individualists, but loving team-members.* Then note **verses 14-15**: "If I pray in a tongue **my mind is unfruitful.** So what shall I do?" He answers that we should **pray -- and sing too -- with our spirit but with our mind also.** From the depths of our being, but thoughtfully as well.

We today can also easily and unconsciously abuse prayer and singing. If we're not careful we repeat *meaningless cliches when we pray*. Some of our prayers are more predictable and cut-and-dried than if we read them from a prayer book. Here are a few suggested cures: Once in a while *write out* a prayer! (That's what psalms are.) *Adore* the Lord for 2 attributes you have not praised Him for in a long time. *Thank* Him for 3 blessings you've never expressed gratitude for before. *Intercede* for 4 matters for which you've never prayed before. Be creative!

We also can slip into *singing songs very glibly*, especially if we know them well. Beautiful music may pour from our mouths without passing through our minds -- just as though we were singing in tongues! It feels good but means little unless our understanding and will are engaged when we sing "Take myself and I will be *ever, only, all* for Thee." (Song-leaders can help here, though they shouldn't preach too many sermonettes.)

Now on to **verses 18-19**. Paul says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But **in the church I would rather speak 5 intelligible words to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue.**" He leaves no doubt whatever that in Christian meetings, teachings from God's word and truths revealed by Him exceed tongues as the light of the sun outshines a candle. This shows that

Paul's own speaking in tongues -- for which he was *grateful* -- must have been exercised in *private* devotions. As mentioned above, a number of Pentecostal writers and churches acknowledge that fact, and act accordingly.

If you find this study of 1 Cor. 14 valid and not forced, then I pray that you will ponder and apply the three warnings we have extracted from this passage. Let me quit preaching and start meddling: If any of us are **overly negative and critical toward our Charismatic brothers and sisters**, I hope *Paul's statements* [not mine!] upon which we based **warning #1** might cause us to reconsider and adjust our beliefs, attitudes, practices and relationships. We and they could benefit much from mutual respect, listening to each other, and praying with each other if possible. I have found it so. (Of course many of them don't want to fellowship us any more than many of us want to fellowship them! But folks, building bridges is always so much more fun than erecting walls.)

If any of us (or our friends) have been **over-emphasizing tongues** and gotten **pushy and/or divisive** about them (or about miraculous gifts in general), I hope *Paul's statements* [not mine!] upon which we based **warnings #2 & 3** might cause us to reconsider and adjust our beliefs, attitudes, practices and relationships.

Regarding warnings 2 and 3, I believe those principles are taught not only in 1 Cor. 14, but also in chapter 12 plus Paul's other passages on this topic. Notice: 1. In each of Paul's three lists of gifts in 1 Cor.12 (8-10, 27-28, & 29-30) he puts speaking in tongues at the end of the list, even though he varies the order of other gifts. 2. His lists of gifts in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 do not mention tongues at all. 3. *1 Cor. 12:8-10*, condensed, says: "For to one is given by the Spirit [this gift]; to another [that gift] ... to another different kinds of tongues." This clearly shows that tongues-speaking is **not meant for all**, as extreme Pentecostals say. 4. *1 Cor.12:29-30*, condensed, says: "Not all are apostles, are they?...Not all speak in tongues, do they?" This again obviously shows that God does **not** intend for this gift to be for **all** believers. All these passages contradict those who magnify tongues-speaking above other gifts and feel that those who have never experienced this gift are second-class Christians. 5. We **know** that despite differing beliefs and practices, we should **love one another as our Lord God loves us!**

We've used lots of ink on chapter 14 already, but the most important part is still to come. The following articles take up the superior gift of prophecy. Don't get hung up about speaking in tongues, and fail to grasp and apply Paul's major point in this passage.

“Eagerly Desire the Gift of Prophecy”

1 Cor. 14: What is the NATURE of this gift?

Various commentators define it in the following ways: “The prophet was not merely a preacher but a spontaneous preacher ... [Prophets] did not practice beforehand how or what they should say.” (Hatch) Prophecy is “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.... Commonly, *prophet* and *prophecy* [in the New Testament] were used of ordinary Christians who spoke not with absolute divine authority, but simply to report something God had laid on their hearts or brought to their minds.” (Wayne Grudem; see his articles this month.) The gift of prophecy “is a means by which several members may participate in a service, prompted by the Holy Spirit to relate ideas or thoughts -- ‘a word’ -- which may edify, exhort or comfort. It is *A* word, always to be based upon and measured by *THE* Word.” (Jack Hayford; his emphasis.)

It is easier to tell its purposes, and even to give examples of it, than to explain exactly how it operates.

It is forth-telling more than fore-telling, though that is sometimes a part of it. For example, Agabus foretold a famine, and also Paul’s arrest: Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-14. And sometimes both elements are present. A clear example of this was the prophet Nathan’s sermon to King David: “Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? ... Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house” (2 Sam.12: 9,10).

Yet by and large prophecy is **more proclamation than prediction**. It is **making known what the prophet believes God has directly revealed to him**. The connection that exists between *revelation and prophecy* is shown in 1 Cor.14:29-30. “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. **If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one....**” So a revelation is some truth or message which the Lord imparts to a servant of His.

Also notice *verses 6-7*. “Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of **revelation** or of knowledge, or of **prophecy** or of teaching?” The first two terms, *revelation and knowledge*, are both internal, in the prophet’s heart or the teacher’s mind. The next two, prophecy and teaching, are external -- spoken to others. That is, if the revelation is

shared with the church it becomes a prophecy. If the knowledge is shared, it becomes a teaching.

Michael Baughen explains:

A *revelation* can be for our own assurance or comfort. This was true for Dr. Bryan Parry [a missionary with Overseas Missionary Fellowship] in Thailand. Just before the terrible road accident in which so many missionaries were killed, Bryan had a dream.

He was gazing up into a vast mansion bathed in light, with a wide staircase winding up through the center and on this staircase were his wife and two little girls. In his dream he thought, "Why am I not on the staircase, and why not Matthew?" (their son).

A few days later his wife and two girls died in the accident. Bryan and Matthew survive. This dream was a remarkable love-assurance from the Lord that He was over all. It was not a prophecy for he was not burdened to share it other than with his wife. So **not all revelation is prophecy but all prophecy is a forth-telling of revelation.** (From "Prophets and Prophecy," a sermon series.)

Here are Frank Viola's views:

"When a person prophesies, they are speaking from *a present burden* granted by the Spirit of God Himself. Prophecy may contain a word of wisdom [application] or a word of knowledge [facts]. It may be lengthy or short. It may be expressed through the language of Scripture (Luke 1:67-79) ... or a direct message (Acts 21:4).

"The difference between teaching and prophecy can be summed up thusly: through teaching the believer interprets, expounds and applies the Scriptures. Through prophecy the believer reveals God's will for the present moment."

How are these 2 gifts Acquired?

[Our quote from Viola continues:] "*Teaching* is acquired mainly through *study*, while *prophecy* is acquired mainly through spiritual *insight*. Biblical teaching ministers to one's spirit primarily through the intellect, while prophecy ministers to one's spirit primarily through the heart. Oftentimes, a believer may prophesy while they teach." [or preach: that is, *teaching/preaching and prophecy overlap, though they are not identical.* --avw]

1) **Here's an example from early church history.** *Ignatius of Antioch* was a church leader whose ministry overlapped with that of John the apostle. He wrote seven epistles which have been preserved to this day; three of them were to churches also addressed by John in

Rev. 2-3. Ignatius was martyred sometime around 110 A.D. Here is an excerpt from one of his letters:

When I visited your church in Philadelphia there was a faction in the church that was undermining the authority of the church's leadership and questioning their decisions. *Now God is my witness that I knew nothing about this at all.* No one had told me about it, and no rumor of it had reached my ears.

So when I stood up to **prophecy**... "Give more respect to your bishop, your elders and your deacons!" it was the Holy Spirit in me who was speaking. Although I know some of you think I had been told in advance of the divisions at Philadelphia, and spoke from knowledge, the absolute truth is that this was the voice of God alone.

That is, the Lord laid on his heart a burden to address a situation which -- unknown to him -- was a major problem there.

Then from modern church history come some other examples. I remember reading (though I cannot place my finger on the source at present) how more than once a preacher -- *Charles Spurgeon*, I believe -- received revelations from the Lord while preaching. One example was *something* like this: During a sermon on "Thou shalt not steal," he spontaneously pointed to the rear balcony and said, "Why there's a man here today who just this past week cheated a poor customer by grossly overcharging him for a pair of boots..." And there was! The amazed hearer repented that morning. The preacher had not known the man nor had he heard about his deed. Was not that incident in the mid-1800s an example of a 'revelation' leading to a 'prophecy' -- like Ignatius' around 100 A.D.?

It's likely that a number of preachers have had some such experiences, though perhaps not so astonishing. I am unaware of any dramatic detailed revelations during my preaching, but once in Manila a striking experience occurred. For days I prayed and studied in preparing a sermon for the next Lord's Day. I thought He had led me to a subject and some texts, but there were repeated frustrations in bringing it all together or even settling on a definite purpose and applications. Saturday came and it all got worse, not better.

Finally in despair I said, "Lord, maybe You have something else I'm supposed to deliver tomorrow. What is it that You know the flock here needs?" As I kept praying and began thinking of past sermons, there came quite strongly to mind one I had preached years before. It was on Christ's searching words, "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.... If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.... If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?... And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others?" (Matt.5:38-48).

I ended up delivering that message again. The following Lord's Day a member said, "You did not know it, but two days before you preached that sermon, one of the men under me at work got so angry he publicly slapped me in the face. I was still struggling with anger over the shame and pain of that event when I came to church last week. And then you preached on those words of Jesus!" Thank God for messing up my preaching schedule, and laying on my heart words that would exactly fit that brother's need.

BUILD Up, STIR Up, CHEER Up

1 Cor. 14: What are the PURPOSES of this gift?

Paul mentions several valuable purposes of prophecy. In 14:3 he writes, "One who prophesies speaks to men for (1)**edification** [to build up, strengthen, reinforce], and (2)**exhortation** [to encourage, arouse or stimulate; compare a coach's pep-talks to his team at halftime] and (3)**consolation** [to comfort, soothe, pacify]." So the use of this gift can *build up* the ignorant or weak. It can *stir up* the lazy and careless. And it can *cheer up* the sad and downhearted and *bind up* the wounds of those emotionally hurting. Churches which are built up, stirred up and cheered up become strong.

Here is an example of a prophetic message of encouragement in a time of extreme distress in a group of churches. This prophecy was given at a gathering of missionaries, preachers and other church leaders in rural Colombia, South America, in 1964. It was a time of crisis among them, due to intense and sometimes extreme views held about spiritual gifts. Very strong disagreements and hard feelings threatened to divide the churches.

David Howard (not a tongues-speaker, but he held the "in-between view" about spiritual gifts) was about to give an important message dealing with the different beliefs and resulting conflicts among them, and what to do about them. He was deeply burdened, lest a split occur.

"At the time I wondered if I could bear it. As we prayed together, seeking the Lord's strength, He spoke to us in an unusual yet unmistakable way. A word of prophecy was given as follows:

Am I not sovereign, saith the Lord?
Are not these my people?
Do I not look down on them with eyes of love?
I have put upon you my yoke for them,
And is not my yoke easy, saith the Lord?

For I am in the yoke with you shouldering my burden.
Rest in me;
Look unto me;
I will shepherd my people,
For I am willing and able to watch over my flock.

"I felt the burden rolling from my shoulders....They were not my flock, but His, and He would be responsible for shepherding them. I went from that prayer meeting to the session where delegates from all the churches were waiting expectantly. As I stood before them, I spoke with a sense of liberty and power." (*Hammered as Gold*, p. 159.) As a result of his message extremism was checked, division averted, and love renewed.

That prophecy contained no predictions, and was not nearly so dramatic as the two examples we shall see in the following paragraphs. Yet it met the need of that missionary so that he could minister in that crisis. It strengthened, encouraged and consoled him, which is exactly what Paul said prophecy can do. All this is much *needed*. And it is *possible* because, unlike tongues, it is *spoken to others clearly, understandably and relevantly*.

Hmmm; spoken clearly, understandably and relevantly. This is an important reminder not only to tongues-speakers, but also to us who talk in a known language in church meetings. For sometimes people either mumble so softly that few can hear them, or talk in such highfalutin' vocabulary and theological jargon -- to impress folks -- that it mainly results in mystifying them. Let's "make the message clear and plain," so the unsaved and young believers as well as the veterans can understand it. Of course there are times to make it meaty also. We must feed ewes and rams as well as lambs. But put the food *within reach* of the lambs, even though it's o-k to make them *stretch* a bit to get it, as Brother Boll used to say.

In verses 25-25 Paul mentions **(4)conviction of sin** as another thrilling result of prophecy. "If the whole church comes together and ... an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, *he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"* Doesn't that make your heart leap for joy? Oh that we today might see that happen -- often!

Here's an exciting instance of a modern-day prophecy that caused an unsaved couple to know God was really among His people. Bruce Yocum's book tells this case (and several others) of God-given revela-

tion through the gift of prophecy in a church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This occurred in 1976:

Several months ago a young married couple, who were not Christians, began to come to our meetings. They were seeking God, but were not convinced that he could be found in Christianity. They were also troubled by jealousy and animosity in their own relationship.

During one of the first meetings they attended, the husband was feeling great doubt that Christianity held out any hope for him at all. He silently offered an almost despairing prayer, asking for some sign that God could be found among Christians.

At the very moment he concluded that prayer, another young man stood to speak: "I believe that God has shown me a young married couple present at this meeting tonight" (there were about 600 people at the meeting). "These people are seeking God, but are encountering doubt and confusion. Furthermore, they are having difficulty in their own relationship because of anger and jealousy." He went on to tell them, in the name of the Lord, that if they forgave one another and trusted in God, God would reveal himself to them and strengthen their marriage.

Of course, the young husband was thunderstruck. This person had perfectly described their situation, and offered a solution at the very moment he had asked for it. The young man who spoke to them in prophecy had neither met them nor ever heard of them. That young couple heeded God's word, repented of their anger with one another, and are now living happily as Christians." (*Prophecy -- Exercising the Prophetic Gifts of the Spirit in the Church Today*; published by Word of Life, 1976.)

Maybe at this point you are saying to yourself, "I don't know about this. Did the incidents mentioned in these article really happen or not?" Well, Ignatius was a godly leader whose lifetime overlapped with that of John the apostle, and who suffered martyrdom for Christ. And all three of the contemporary men quoted -- Michael Baughen, David Howard and Bruce Yokum -- are reputable, proved servants of the Lord. The first two do not classify themselves as Pentecostals, though they are not anti-Pentecostal either.

Here's another contemporary example. Chuck Smith is a pastor in Costa Mesa, California. He is a wellknown Bible teacher, has a regular radio program, and has authored many books. He spearheaded a "restoration movement" that began during the days of the hippies and the "Jesus people." In fact *Time* magazine back then ran a picture of him immersing a number of converts in the Pacific Ocean near his chapel. Not only did his own congregation have several thousand members, but in following years over 700 churches resulted worldwide. Each of them goes by the name Calvary Chapel.

But it wasn't always that way by any means. Listen to his testimony:

In a small prayer group we decided to pray one for another; we had the person to be prayed over sit in a chair in the center of the group. When it was my turn to be prayed for, someone spoke a word of prophecy by the Holy Spirit declaring that God's hand of blessing was going to come upon my ministry in a great way, that the people would come to hear the Word in such numbers that there would not be room in the church to contain them. The prophecy went on to declare that ... the Lord was going to make me a shepherd of many flocks.

Up until this time I had been struggling for almost 17 years in the ministry with such limited success that I was contemplating leaving the ministry for some other type of work. The church I was then pastoring was running around 100 in attendance in spite of all our efforts to increase its size through giving free hamburgers to everyone who brought a friend to Sunday school. As these words were being spoken, I was in my heart much like the man who... said, "If God should open windows in heaven, could such a thing be?"

Fortunately, God was merciful to me.... I have seen the fulfillment of the prophecy as we see the greatly expanded church facility filled to overcapacity, not just once but three times on Sunday mornings, and as we minister by cassette tapes and videotapes to hundreds of Bible study groups all over the world. [And now he is a leader of about 700 congregations around the world. --avw]

(--*Charisma vs. Charismania*, pp. 34-35.)

To review, we've seen that the charisma of prophecy **edifies, exhorts and comforts the church**, and may on occasion **predict** some future event, and also **convict sinners** of their sins -- even their secret ones.

Guidance Too?

Does God use this gift to guide us? Like me, you may have heard some horror stories about "prophetic messages" which had disastrous results. Years ago a leader in a charismatic church in Louisville "prophesied" to his congregation of eighty families, "The Lord says all of us as a group are to move" to some town in another state, hundreds of miles away. It divided that church. And one of our students in Manila told how his church came to believe that a woman member was a prophetess. The result was that instead of its leaders praying and consulting together to decide what the church should do, they always just asked her what God's will was. As a result some ridiculous steps were taken and conditions soon became chaotic.

What about guidance in apostolic times? Did God direct the church's decisions by means of this gift? Notice the following examples of **how prophecy was and was not used**:

1. A prophecy foretold a severe famine and led to a relief-project for the believers in Judea: Acts 11:27-30. But the prophecy was *not* worded as a divine command. Agabus “predicted,” and “the disciples decided.” The prophecy supplied information, but how to react to it was left up to the church.

2. Acts 13:2 tells how in Antioch “the Holy Spirit said” (*probably* through one of the prophets mentioned in the preceding verse), “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul” to go out on the first missionary trip. This may be the *only* time Scripture mentions the gift of prophecy being used (presuming that it was) to give specific directions to the disciples. 1 Tim. 1:18 & 4:14 say that prophecies were once made about Timothy, and that a gift was imparted to him “through a prophetic message” when the body of elders laid their hands on him (probably when he joined Paul’s missionary team; see 2 Tim.1:6). No details are told us. Other *possible* instances may be Acts 16:6-7, though the passage does not mention prophecy nor specify how the Holy Spirit prohibited Paul and his team from entering the areas named.

3. **No** prophecy was given to *decide the debate at “the Jerusalem conference”* (Acts 15). They did not say, “Let’s just ask a prophet what God wants us to do.” Instead the apostles and elders met to “consider” the question. We read of “much discussion,” and that Peter “addressed them” about his experience at Cornelius’ home, and Barnabas and Saul shared testimonies about miracles God performed among the Gentiles. Then James concluded by showing how the Scriptures agreed with the preceding views. As a result of this process, they unitedly said their decision “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (v.28).

4. **No** prophecy was used to settle *the “sharp disagreement” between Paul and Barnabas* regarding John Mark. (Acts 15:37ff.)

5. God did **Not** use a prophecy to lead Paul to *take his second missionary trip*. There was an obvious need to follow-up the converts made on the first trip. Doubtless he sought God’s confirmation in prayer, but the need was the lead.

6. More puzzling than any of the foregoing, later on *prophecies were given to Paul, but he did Not follow them!* (Carefully examine Acts 20:22-24; 21:3-5, 10-15.) Discussing those passages, Jerram Barrs observes,

In every town Paul visits, Christians prophesy that he will be imprisoned in Jerusalem. Those who give the prophecies tell Paul he should not go to Jerusalem; they try to dissuade him. Paul does not question the accuracy of the prediction. He even confirms it. He does not, however, regard the prophets’ demands that he not go to

Jerusalem as a command from the Spirit; he sees them as the people's human conclusion from what the Spirit had revealed. Instead he insists that the Holy Spirit is compelling him to go (20:22). Paul had to decide what he would do in light of what the Spirit had made known. These prophecies were only informative, not imperative.

Prophecy in the church is never a word of command from God, binding on its hearers, and it must not be used as such by either the elders or others anxious to get their way. When prophecies are given, even if predictions or specific messages are included, they must be weighed and tested; and the hearers are not bound to obey them. Rather, the hearers must seek the Lord's face to confirm for themselves what God's will is for their lives, just as Paul did when he decided to do the opposite of what the prophets suggested. [*Shepherds and Sheep*; my emphasis--avw].

Agreeing with that conclusion, Michael Harper says, "Prophecies which tell other people what they are to do are to be regarded with great suspicion. 'Guidance' is never indicated as one of the uses of prophecy.... This gift is not intended to take the place of common sense or the wisdom which comes from God and which manifests itself through our natural faculties." [1 Cor.16:12 is an interesting example of this: Paul "strongly urged" Apollos to go to Corinth with certain brothers, but "he was quite unwilling to go now." --avw] The writers Bridge and Pypers also add their assent: "Any attempt to give highly specific instructions to the group or to individuals within it, under the guise of prophecy, should be strenuously discouraged by the leaders."

Conclusion: We have now examined at some length both the nature and the purposes of the gift of prophecy in the churches. Many questions remain to be addressed, and other articles both this month and next will interact with them. We especially recommend the following article by Wayne Grudem. Don't let its length deter you.

Edward Fudge in *GracEmail* recently wrote the following, speaking primarily of the Holy Spirit and disputes surrounding His work in our lives: "What our churches need today, I propose, is less labeling and more loving, less disputing and more praying, less ranting and more repenting, less criticizing each other and more seeking after God. As we move closer to the heart of the Father, we will also find ourselves nearer to all his other faithful children. The more we learn to trust him, the more eager we will be to surrender our preconceived notions about how he works and to entrust ourselves to whatever path and power his infinite wisdom and love might happen to choose -- for each one of us, and for the faith communities with which we share regular fellowship and life." [*We plan to run some articles by brother Fudge next month.*]

Why Christians Can Still PROPHECY

Scripture encourages us to seek this gift yet today

Wayne A. Grudem

[Introduction by *Christianity Today* editor: *One key difference between many evangelicals and charismatic believers is their attitude toward the gift of prophecy. In charismatic worship, it is not unusual for one or more persons to deliver "a word from the Lord." Some evangelicals believe Scripture has ruled out that possibility. Others feel uneasy or just plain skeptical when face to face with someone who claims to speak on God's behalf.*

*In the following essay, condensed from the book **Tough Questions Christians Ask**, exegete Wayne Grudem examines what the New Testament says about the gift of prophecy and offers biblical counsel for us in both charismatic and non-charismatic churches.]*

Can evangelical Christians use the gift of prophecy in their churches today? What is this spiritual gift, and how does it function? And if we do allow for its use, how can we guard against abuse and preserve the unique authority of Scripture in our lives?

As examination of the New Testament teaching on this gift will show that it should be defined not as "predicting the future" or "proclaiming a word from the Lord," or "powerful preaching" – but rather as "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind." Once we understand prophecy this way, we can allow our churches room to enjoy one of the Holy Spirit's most edifying gifts.

Less authority than Scripture

How did the New Testament church regard the gift of prophecy? Did it have more or less authority than Scripture or apostolic teaching? Let us compare what the two testaments say about prophecy.

Old Testament prophets had an amazing responsibility – to speak and write words that had absolute divine authority. They could say, "Thus says the Lord," and what followed were the very words of God. They wrote their words as God's words in Scripture for all time (see Deut. 18:18-20; Jer.1:9; Num. 22:38; Ezek. 2:7). Therefore, to disbelieve or disobey a prophet's words was to disbelieve or disobey God. (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 8:7; 1 Kings 20:36).

In the New Testament there were also people who could speak and write God's very words and record them as Scripture. However,

Jesus no longer called them “prophets,” but used a new term, “apostles.” The apostles are the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament prophets (see, for example, Gal. 1:8-9, 11-12; 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8, 15; 2 Pet. 3: 2). It is the apostles, not the prophets, who have authority to write the words of New Testament Scripture. And when the apostles want to establish their unique authority, they never appeal to the title prophet, but rather call themselves “apostles” (Rom. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1).

Why did Jesus use this new term? It was probably because the Greek word *prophetes* at the time of the New Testament had a very broad range of meanings. It generally did not have the sense of “one who speaks the very words of God,” but simply “one speaks on the basis of some external influence” (often a spiritual influence of some kind).

Titus 1:12 uses the word this way, where Paul quotes a pagan poet: “One of their own *prophets* has said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons’” (NIV). The soldiers who mock Jesus also seem to use the word prophesy this way, when they blindfold Jesus and demand, “Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?” (Luke 22:64). They do not mean, “Speak words of absolute divine authority,” but “Tell us something that has been revealed to you.”

Many writings outside the Bible use the Greek word *prophetes* in this way without signifying any divine authority in the words of the “prophet.” In fact, by the time of the New Testament, the term *prophet* in everyday use often simply meant “one who has supernatural knowledge” or “one who predicts the future” – or even just “spokesman” (without any connotation of divine authority).

Of course, the words *prophet* and *prophecy* could sometimes be used of the apostles when the context emphasized an external spiritual influence (from the Holy Spirit) under which they spoke (see Rev. 1:3; 22:7; Eph. 2:20; 3:5), but this was not the ordinary terminology used for the apostles, nor did the terms *prophet* and *prophecy* in themselves imply divine authority for their speech or writing.

Much more commonly, *prophet* and *prophecy* were used of ordinary Christians who spoke not with absolute divine authority, but simply to report something God had laid on their hearts or brought to their minds. There are many indications in the New Testament that this ordinary gift of prophecy had authority less than that of the Bible, and even less than that of recognized Bible teaching in the early church.

Testing the prophecies

There are clear indications that New Testament prophets did not speak with divine authority. For example, in Acts 21:4, we read of the disciples at Tyre: “Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to

Jerusalem.” This seems to be a reference to prophecy directed towards Paul, but Paul disobeyed it. He never would have done this if this prophecy contained God’s very words.

Then in Acts 21:10-11, Agabus prophesied that the Jews at Jerusalem would “bind Paul and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles,” a prediction that was only nearly correct – the Romans, not the Jews, bound Paul (v.33), and the Jews did not deliver him voluntarily, but tried to kill him, and Paul had to be taken from them by force. Such inaccuracies in detail would have called into question the validity of any Old Testament prophet.

Paul tells the Thessalonians, “Do not despise prophesying, but test everything, hold fast to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:20-21). If prophecy had equaled God’s word in authority, he would never have had to tell them not to despise it, for they had “received” and “accepted” God’s word “with joy from the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:13; cf. 4:15). But when Paul tells them to “test everything,” it must include the prophecies mentioned in the previous phrase. He implies that prophecies contain some things that are good and some that are not when he encourages them to “hold fast to that which is good.” This could never have been said of the words of an Old Testament prophet, or the authoritative teachings of a New Testament apostle.

Moreover, in Acts 21:9, we read that Philip had “four unmarried daughters who prophesied.” Whatever we may think about the appropriateness of Bible teaching by women today, this prophesying would be difficult to reconcile with prohibitions against authoritative teaching by women (see 1 Tim. 2:12) if prophecy had absolute divine authority, or even authority greater than or equal to Bible teaching. Similar reasoning applies to 1 Corinthians 11:5 where Paul allows women to prophesy in church even though he later apparently forbids them to speak up publicly during the evaluation or judging of prophecies (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

Sifting prophecies in Corinth

Let us look more closely at 1 Corinthians 14 where extensive evidence on New Testament prophecy can be found. When Paul says, “Let two or three prophets speak and let the others weigh what is said” (v.29), he suggests that they should listen carefully and sift the good from the bad. We cannot imagine that an Old Testament prophet like Isaiah would have said, “Listen to what I say and weigh what is said – sort the good from the bad, what you accept from what you should not accept!” If prophecy had absolute divine authority, this would have been sin. But here Paul commands that it be done.

In verse 30, Paul allows one prophet to interrupt another one: “If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one.” If prophets had been speaking

God's very words, it is hard to imagine that Paul would say they should be interrupted and not allowed to finish their message. Paul suggests that no one at Corinth, a church that had much prophecy, was able to speak God's very words. He says in verse 36, "What! Did the word of God come forth from you, or are you the only ones it has reached?"

All these passages indicate that the common idea that prophets spoke "words of the Lord" when the apostles were not present in the early churches is simply incorrect.

There is one other type of evidence that New Testament congregational prophets spoke with less authority than the apostles or Scripture: The apostles did not solve the problem of who would speak for God when they were gone by encouraging Christians to listen to "prophets," but by pointing to Scripture.

So Paul, at the end of his life, emphasizes "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), and the "God-breathed" character of Scripture "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Jude urges his readers to "contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Peter, at the end of his life, encourages his readers to "pay attention" to Scripture, which is like "a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19-20), and reminds them of the teaching of the apostle Paul "in all his letters" (2 Pet. 3:16). In no case do we read exhortations to "give heed to the prophets in your churches" or to "obey the words of the Lord through your prophets."

There certainly were prophets in local congregations after the death of the apostles. But it seems they did not have authority equal to the apostles – and the authors of Scripture knew that.

Not "the words of God" for today

If the New Testament authors considered congregational prophecies to be sometimes flawed and definitely less authoritative than either Scripture or apostolic teaching, we in the church today should consider prophecy to be merely human words, not God's words, and not equal to God's words in authority. But does this conclusion conflict with current charismatic teaching or practice? I think it conflicts with much charismatic practice, but not with most charismatic teaching.

Most charismatic teachers today would agree that contemporary prophecy is not equal to Scripture in authority. Though some speak of prophecy as being the "word of God" for today, there is almost uniform testimony from all segments of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted. For example, Bruce Yokum, author of a

charismatic book on prophecy, writes, "Prophecy can be impure – our own thoughts or ideas can be mixed into the message we receive – whether we receive the words directly or only receive a sense of the message... Paul says that our prophecy is imperfect."

But it must be said that in actual practice much confusion results from the habit of prefacing prophecies with the Old Testament phrase "Thus says the Lord" (a phrase not used by any recorded prophets in New Testament churches). This is unfortunate, because it gives the impression that the words that follow are God's very words, whereas most responsible charismatic spokesmen would not want to claim it for every part of their prophecies anyway. There would be much gain and no loss if that phrase were dropped.

If someone really does think God is bringing something to mind that should be reported in the congregation, there is nothing wrong with saying, "I think the Lord is putting on my mind that..." or some similar expression. Of course, that does not sound as forceful as "Thus says the Lord," but if it is really from God, the Holy Spirit will cause it to speak with great power to the hearts of those who need to hear.

* * *

If prophecy does not contain God's very words, then in what sense is it a gift from God?

Paul indicates that God could bring something spontaneously to mind so that the person prophesying would report it in his or her own words. Paul calls this "revelation": "If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and be encouraged" (1 Cor. 14:30-31).

Paul is simply referring to something that God may bring to mind or impress on someone's heart in such a way that the person has a sense that it is from God. It may be that the thought is surprisingly distinct from the person's own train of thought, or accompanied by a sense of urgency or persistence.

Thus, if a stranger comes in and all prophesy, "the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you" (1 Cor. 14:25). I heard a report of this happening in a clearly noncharismatic Baptist church in America: A missionary speaker paused in the middle of his message and said something like this: "I didn't plan to say this but it seems the Lord is indicating that someone in this church has just walked out on his wife and family. If that is so, let me tell you that God wants you to return to them and learn to follow God's pattern for family life." The missionary didn't know it, but in the unlit balcony sat a man who had entered the church for the first time just moments before. The descrip-

tion fit him exactly, and he made himself known, acknowledged his sins, and began to seek God.

In this way, prophecy serves as a “sign” for believers (1 Cor. 14:22) – a clear demonstration that God is at work in their midst. And since it will work for the conversion of unbelievers as well, Paul encourages this gift to be used when “unbelievers or outsiders enter” (1 Cor. 14:23).

Many of us have experienced or heard of similar events. For example, an unplanned but urgent request may have been given to pray for certain missionaries. Much later those who prayed discovered that just at that time the missionaries had been in an auto accident or at a point of intense spiritual conflict, and had needed those prayers. Paul would call the intuition of those things a “revelation,” and the report to the assembled church of that prompting from God, a “prophecy.” It may have elements of the speaker’s own understanding in it, and it certainly needs to be tested; yet it is of value in the church.

The benefits of prophecy

Prophecy in the New Testament is not merely “predicting the future.” There were some predictions (Acts 11:28; 21:11), but there was also the disclosure of sins (1 Cor. 14:25). In fact, anything that edified could have been included, for Paul says, “He who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Cor. 14:3). Here is another indication of the value of prophecy: It could speak to the needs of the people’s heart in a spontaneous, direct way.

At two significant points in our marriage, my wife, Margaret, and I visited and prayed with Christian friends in another part of the United States. On both occasions, during our time of prayer, the husband of the family paused and spoke a sentence directly to Margaret. On both occasions, the messages hit home and brought the Lord’s comfort regarding deep concerns we had not mentioned at all. Here is the value of prophecy for “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.”

There is another great benefit of prophecy: It provides opportunity for everyone in the congregation to participate, not just those who are skilled speakers or those who have gifts of teaching. Paul says he wants all the Corinthians to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:5). And he says, “You can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged” (v. 31). Greater openness to the gift of prophecy could help cure the malaise in our churches where many are mere spectators. Perhaps we contribute to the problem of spectator Christianity by quenching the work of the Holy Spirit in this area.

Until the Lord comes

Many evangelicals claim that gifts such as prophecy were given to the church for the apostolic age only. The apostle Paul, on the other hand, expected prophecy to continue until the Lord returns.

Paul says, "Our prophecy is imperfect: but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away" (1 Cor. 13:9-10). So he says that prophecy will pass away at a certain time, namely, "when the perfect comes." But when is that? It has to be when the Lord returns, because it has to be the same time indicated by the word *then* in verse 12: "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but *then* face to face. Now I know in part; *then* I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood." *Face to face* is an Old Testament phrase for seeing God personally (see Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:11; Deut. 5:4; 34:10; Judg. 6:22; Ezek. 20:35 – the only Old Testament occurrences of this phrase, and they all refer to seeing God). The time when I shall know "as I have been known" also must refer to the Lord's return.

Some have argued that "when the perfect comes" refers to the time when the New Testament canon is complete. (Revelation, the last book to be written, was composed at the latest about 35 years after 1 Corinthians.) But would the Corinthians ever have understood that from what Paul wrote? Is there any mention of a collection of New Testament books anywhere in the context of 1 Corinthians 13? Such an idea is foreign to the context. Moreover, such a statement would not fit Paul's purpose. Would it be persuasive to argue as follows: "We can be sure that love will never end, for we know that it will last more than 35 years!?" This would hardly be convincing. The context requires rather that Paul be contrasting this age with the age to come, and saying that love will endure into eternity.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones observes that the view that makes "when the perfect comes" equal the time of the completion of the New Testament encounters another difficulty: "It means that you and I, who have the Scriptures open before us, know much more than the apostle Paul of God's truth It means that we are altogether superior ... even to the apostles themselves, including the apostle Paul! It means that we are now in a position in which... 'we know, even as also we are known' by God.... Indeed, there is only one word to describe such a view, it is nonsense."

The conclusion is that in 1 Corinthians 13:10 Paul says that prophecy will continue in the church until Christ returns.

Paul valued this gift so highly that he told the Corinthians, "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, *especially that you may prophesy*" (1 Cor. 14:1). Then, at the end of his discussion of spiritual gifts, he said again, "So, my brethren, earnestly desire to

prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:39). And he said, “He who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Cor. 14:4).

If Paul was eager for the gift of prophecy to function in Corinth, troubled as the church was by immaturity, selfishness, and divisions, then should we not also actively seek this valuable gift in our congregations today? We evangelicals who profess to believe and obey all that Scripture says, should we not also believe and obey this? And might a greater openness to the gift of prophecy perhaps help to correct a dangerous imbalance in our church lives, lives that are too often exclusively intellectual, objective, and narrowly doctrinal?

A cautious approach

All Christian who desire to use the gift of prophecy in their churches, but especially pastors and others who have teaching responsibilities, would be wise to take several steps:

*Pray seriously for the Lord’s wisdom on how and when to approach this subject in the church.

*Teach on this subject, if you have teaching responsibilities, in the regular Bible teaching times that the church already provides.

*Be patient and proceed slowly – church leaders should not be “domineering” (1 Pet. 5:3), and a patient approach will avoid frightening people or alienating them unnecessarily.

*Recognize and encourage the gift of prophecy in ways it has already been functioning – at church prayer meetings, for example, when someone has felt unusually led by the Spirit to pray for something, or when it has seemed that the Spirit was bringing to mind a hymn or Scripture passage, or giving a common sense of the focus of a time of group worship. Even Christians in churches not open to prophecy can be sensitive to promptings from the Holy Spirit regarding what to pray for in church prayer meetings, and can then express those promptings in the form of a prayer.

* If the first four steps have been followed, and if the congregation and its leadership will accept it, make opportunities for the gift of prophecy in the less formal worship services of the church, such as Sunday evenings, Wednesday prayer meetings, or smaller house groups. If this is allowed, those who prophesy should be kept within Scriptural guidelines (1 Cor. 12:29-36), should genuinely seek the edification of the church and not their own prestige (1 Cor. 14:12, 26), and should not dominate the meeting or be overly dramatic in their speech (and thus attract attention to themselves rather than to the Lord). Prophecies should be evaluated according to the teachings of Scripture.

*If the gift of prophecy begins to be used in your church, place even more emphasis on the vastly superior value of Scripture as the place where Christians can always go to hear the voice of the living God. Prophecy is a valuable gift, but it is in Scripture that God speaks to us his very words today. Rather than hoping at every worship service that the highlight will be some word of prophecy, those who use the gift of prophecy need to be reminded that we should focus our expectation of hearing from God toward the Bible, and we should delight in God himself as he speaks through the Bible. And rather than seeking frequent guidance through prophecy, we should emphasize that it is in Scripture that we are able to find guidance for our lives.

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Is Prophecy Too *Subjective*?

By Wayne A Grudem

The “gift of prophecy” requires waiting on the Lord, listening for his prompting in our hearts. Christians who are completely evangelical, doctrinally sound, intellectual, and “objective,” probably need most the balancing influence of a vital “subjective” relationship with the Lord. And these people are also those who have the least likelihood of being led into error, for they already place great emphasis on solid grounding in the Word of God.

Yet there is an opposite danger of excessive reliance on subjective impressions for guidance, and we must clearly guard against that. People who continually seek subjective messages from God to guide their lives must be cautioned that subjective personal guidance is not the main function of New Testament prophecy. They need to place more emphasis on seeking God’s sure wisdom written in Scripture.

Donald Gee of the Assemblies of God says, “*Many of our errors where spiritual gifts are concerned arise when we want the extraordinary and exceptional to be made the frequent and habitual. Let all who develop excessive desire for ‘messages’ through the gifts take warning from the wreckage of past generations as well as of contemporaries.... The Holy Scriptures are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths.*”

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Quotes regarding the Holy Spirit from Various Stone-Campbell Movement Writings Through the Years (Part 2)

The *Word and Work* of Feb. 1934 reprinted an unsigned editorial from another magazine called *The Evangelical Christian*. It was about Pentecostalism, and made these observations: "We have met in [the Pentecostal] movement some of the most earnest Christians, and some of the most devoted missionaries. But the general attitude has been one of intolerance toward the teaching of anyone who does not profess to speak in tongues, due to their conviction that no one can have the fulness of the Spirit, or the 'Baptism' unless it is thus manifest. If they could be brought to a place where Scripture teaching could deliver them from the extremes and extravagances that are not of the Spirit, their fervor and devotion could then be made a great blessing to the church."

Because some Pentecostals had taken offense at earlier articles in that magazine, the editor said, "Nothing we have permitted in our columns can compare with the sweeping statements recently published by one who for many years has been *an outstanding leader of [the Pentecostal] cause,*" Pastor Edward Jeffreys. The latter wrote:

The fanaticism of the past has ruined many a promising field. I have been in the thick of it for over 20 years and I am not surprised that some of the most spiritual Bible teachers have had nothing to do with it....

When a message is given on the Holy Spirit the text usually chosen is Acts 2:4: 'They all began to speak in tongues.' It is 'tongues' from one corner to another. Seldom have I heard a real good Bible reading on the Personality of the Holy Spirit, the Work of the Spirit, etc., etc.... The teaching that everybody must speak in tongues as the initial sign of having received their 'Baptism' (fulness) has had its day. We cry "Finis" to the [sterile] theory which has wrought such havoc to the work of God all over the country....

I have even noticed with some of these Ultra-Pentecostals a decrease in their spiritual power when they started to speak in tongues! They get filled with spiritual pride, become ... unteachable. [Jeffreys' emphasis; he continued:] I am writing from what I have seen.

For many years I have been thoroughly dissatisfied with this type of Pentecostal teaching and results. I know there are hundreds of people who have lost patience with the wild manifestations and the teachings of 'Tongues', but they have not had the courage of their convictions to come forward. [End of quote from Jeffreys and from *The Evangelical Christian*.]

Comments by avw now: A few W&W readers may be upset by my including such derogatory remarks. 1st, let me explain again that those latter comments are not mine, but were written publicly by a Pentecostal leader in "his official organ." In fact I condensed the article, deleting his additional terms *carnal, envious, superficial*, etc. 2nd, I remind you this was written in 1934, seventy years ago. In a number of places Pentecostals have heeded such admonitions as Jeffreys handed out, and have become much less extreme -- like Jeffreys and some others even back then. 3rd, notice that the non-Pentecostal editor who quoted Jeffreys also wrote this as his own opinion about the non-extremists: "We have met in [the Pentecostal] movement some of the most earnest Christians, and some of the most devoted missionaries."

4th, some W&W readers may respond, "Why are you apologizing? Those people are still that way -- extreme, impulsive, disorderly, naive, sectarian!" Some are, true. Perhaps many (only God knows). But neither *some, many* (or even *most*) is *all*, by any means! Look at it this way. If you asked a typical Bible-believing, grace-trusting, Christ-loving non-Church-of-Christ person in 1934, "What are Church of Christ people like?" -- what answer would you probably have heard? "They're legalistic, cantankerous, divisive, talk about hardly anything but baptism, don't believe in the Holy Spirit, think they're the only ones saved, and always want to debate!" Would that have been true then? Yes, of some, many or most -- sad to say -- but *not all by any means*. Is it true now? Ditto, though much progress has been made in many places, thank the Lord. Bottom line: **We don't like to be lumped together with extremists who share our signboard. So we shouldn't treat others that way. It's called the Golden Rule.**

* * *

Through the years **R. H. Boll** wrote often in *Word and Work* about the Holy Spirit. For example: "It is the specific function of the Holy Spirit indwelling to strengthen us with power in the inner man (Eph.3:16). It is the Spirit indwelling that gives us power to overcome the power of the flesh.... [We] are able to overcome the world also, for 'greater is *he that is in you* than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). The Spirit helps us in all our infirmity (Rom.8:26), fits for service, endues with boldness (Acts 4) and wisdom, and brings forth His fruit in our lives (Gal.5:22-23).... This manifestation of the Spirit is, in my judgment, the greatest need of the church today." [Many other similar statements of his could be quoted.]

* * *

In 1989 **Carl Ketcherside** wrote thus in *Mission Messenger*: "I am not charismatic. I do not intend to become so. But looking at [the Charismatic Movement] from a distance I am convinced that it has led a lot of people to accept Jesus who were living in and practicing dire

sin. There are congregations of 5000 or more meeting all over the earth today. They are charismatic. The good news of Jesus shines through all of the gimmickry, and in some cases, chicanery [sham]. I am glad that [the Gospel] is such a powerful thing that nothing can keep it down forever.”

* * *

In 1989 Leroy Garrett wrote a series in *Restoration Review* about the various denominations -- including Churches of Christ -- in his hometown. Regarding the Assemblies of God he said, “One of their most prominent and respected pioneer ministers, F. F. Bosworth, though he himself spoke in tongues, concluded after long and painstaking study that a Christian might receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and not speak in tongues. There are other evidences of receiving the Spirit beside glossolalia, he decided, such as the fruit of the Spirit. Since this was at odds with the Assemblies of God position, Mr. Bosworth felt that he should surrender his credentials as a minister, which he did, finally joining another denomination. I found his letter of resignation interesting:

It is with regret that I return my credentials, but I believe it is the consistent thing to do, since I do not believe, nor can I ever teach, that all will speak in tongues when baptized in the Spirit. I pray that at the next Council the subject of the Bible evidence will be lovingly considered from the Scriptures.

“When Bosworth issued a tract entitled *Do All Speak in Tongues?*, many of his peers seemed to waver for a time in their traditional position. But the General Council ruled that it is the church’s position that ‘the baptism of the Holy Ghost is regularly accompanied by the initial, physical sign of speaking in tongues.’

“What impresses me about this story is that it was all done peacefully, without rancor and without division. Bosworth left in peace, with the blessings of his friends, and no sect formed around him as is usually the case in such disagreements.”

* * *

Thomas Langford is an elder of the Quaker Avenue Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. He has spearheaded bold and creative steps to reconcile people in the Stone-Campbell movement who had divided during past controversies. He writes a regular column in *One Body* magazine. And in July of this year he wrote an article in *Gospel Tidings* magazine about the Holy Spirit, from which we quote:

“There are many ways in which the Bible describes God’s gift (and our reception) of his Spirit. He baptizes (Matt.3:11), he pours out (Acts 10:45), he fills (Eph.5:18), we are renewed by (Eph.4:23), sanctified by (1 Thes. 2:13), indwelt by (Jam.4:5) and walk in the Spirit

(Gal.5:25). He floods our spirits with his own Spirit and thereafter we walk under his influence. Call this baptism, immersion, filling, quickening or renewal - it all signifies God's gift of new life, making us the instruments of his will and empowering us for service. We have all been thus baptized and gifted, flooded by God's grace to bear the fruit of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom.14:17)."

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Around the World: In remembrance of 9/11, President Bush is designating 9/11 "Patriot's Day" and is encouraging Americans to hold candlelight vigils and fly US flags at half-staff each year at this time. There is one better in case you haven't noticed from 1 Timothy 2:1-2 "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

Growing Threat...among liberal judges who will soon declare that homosexual marriages ought to be legalized. Pro-family forces have mounted an all-out campaign for a constitutional amendment that would stop that from happening.

Church of Christ Worldwide (Lexington, Kentucky) has sent out several letters requesting information to publish in this year's Prayer/Praise Booklets to be ready for distribution by Thanksgiving. Our desire is to keep everyone updated to the various mission works both home & abroad! Several have already responded and we look forward to receiving more.

Report on Greece...will be given by David & Mike Harding at the Sellersburg Church of Christ on

Sunday night Sept. 21 in the Christian Center. Everyone in the immediate area is invited to come and hear firsthand about the work by Bros. George Galanis (Athens) and Nick Tsagarakis on the island of Crete. If your church is interested in this work - you can contact:

Church of Christ Worldwide

P.O. Box 54842

Lexington, KY 40555

(859) 269-1312 or

E-mail: bhill40482@aol.com

SBS Extension Class...is being offered at the Cramer & Hanover congregation in Lexington. There are presently 4 students taking our Personal Evangelism class for credit and 2 audits. The class meets every Sunday afternoon from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. The same class is offered at Buechel every Tuesday afternoon from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. There are 4 taking it for credit and 2 audits. Thank the Lord for interest in learning how to share one's faith in a mixed up and confused world.

October Revivals:

Sept. 29-Oct 5 Lilly Dale (IN) with Julius Hovan.

Oct. 5-8 at Tell City (IN) with evangelist Dick Reuben, a converted Jew "gifted in teaching the new covenant in light of the old."

Oct. 6-12 at Salem (KY) with Mike Abbott. 7 p.m. nightly

12-15 at Ebenezer (KY) with Don McGee 7 p.m. nightly. Sunday Homecoming on Sunday 11 a.m. followed by Fellowship Dinner and then an afternoon service.

13-17 at Lagrange with Nathan Burks 7:30 each night.

17-19 at LeCompte (LA) with A.J. Istre

Is Your Church planning a revival (fall, winter, spring, summer?) Let us know so we can help advertise (FREE)

Next 5th Sunday Singspirations

November 30, 2003

Ralph Ave. (Louisville, KY)

Bohon (KY) 6:30 p.m.

Summer Short-Term Missions:

Here are reports W&W has received-- 16 members from **Lilly Dale, Ind.** went to Monterrey, Mexico. They helped in 2 VBSs & worked hard at a campsite. 18 folks from the **Gallatin, Tn. church** went on a weeklong mission trip to **Honduras**. They built 2 houses for poor people, conducted VBS & helped with a free medical clinic; also visited children's homes, a hospital and prison. 2 teen girls from the **Portland church** (Louisville) - Portland Christian High School students - went with a Goin' Fishing team to **Guatemala** for about 2

weeks, and 2 others went to **Barbados** with Teen Missions for almost 2 months. About **90 people in 9 teams** (one from the **Borden, Ind.** church including all 6 members of Mike Abbott's family) ministered in various youth-camps in **Russia** under the auspices of **Goin' Fishing/ ACSI**. And the **Westminster, Md Church** of Christ again sent a ministry team, as it has for several years, to the Caribbean area.

Christ in Prophecy on TV:

"Have you seen our television program? It is available in the Louisville area on DirecTV, the Dish Network, and Sky Angel." -- David Reagan, Lamb & Lion Ministries

Interested in Missionary Messenger through the years?

"I have Missionary Messenger as far back as 53. Anyone interested let me know." --Dartha L. Dance, P.O.Box 194, Walton, KY 41094

Opening a Parasite Clinic in Kenya...

Dr. James Overman & Missions Director, Dale McClean, both members of Berlin Christian Fellowship recently went to Nairobi, Kenya and opened a "Parasite Clinic" to minister to specific needs in the ghetto area of Nairobi. This is a huge undertaking! "At present we are sowing seed which we believe will result in a harvest of righteousness." (Dale McClean)