

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 9
THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

As we continue in our series Foundation of Faith this morning we are specifically looking at the gifts of the Spirit or those spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us. And we have been slowly going through these spiritual gifts over the past several weeks because I think it is important that we understand them. The problem today with spiritual gifts is that there is so much confusion about them that many don't know what to believe and they either dismiss it or abuse it and neither is good. My prayer as we go through these studies is that the Holy Spirit would clearly show what these gifts are about and how the Holy Spirit uses them in our lives because I believe that all these gifts are for today.

In this study this morning we are going to be looking at the gift of prophecy and see what that is all about. Paul tells us in I Corinthians chapter 12, starting in verse 7, **“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.”** I Corinthians 12:7-11.

Several weeks back we studied the office of a prophet that is spoken of in Ephesians chapter 4. Remember that the prophets spoke forth words from God, either foretelling or speaking of future events and forth-telling or just speaking forth the Words of God and many times both. And when they spoke they were to speak with 100% accuracy. There was no room for error, if you spoke for God and it did not come to pass or there was an error, you were a false prophet and the punishment was death!

Now in Hebrews chapter 1 we read beginning in verse 1 “**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, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.**” Hebrews 1:1-2. God was giving us doctrine, His Word through the prophets. And as their ministry or office came to an end, as the Scriptures were completed, there was no longer a need for them. God is not giving us new doctrine as some like to teach.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:19-22, “**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 corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined 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.**”

You see, both the apostles and the prophets were laying down the foundation, the doctrine for the church to be built upon. And now we, as living stones, are being joined together making a building for the Spirit of God to dwell in. And what has replaced the apostles and prophets are evangelists, pastor-teachers, and teachers who are taking this foundation, this doctrine, and giving it to the people, equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. And as the people receive it and as people get saved, another living stone is placed in this building that has been built upon a strong and sure foundation, the Word of God!

So does that mean that this spiritual gift has passed off the scene, that there is no longer the gift of prophecy today? Some feel that way as the following study shows us. Listen carefully to what he is saying about prophecy and then I will expound on his words. We are told,

Certainly, in my mind, the most disturbing aspect of the Charismatic movement and their thirst for supernatural experience and supernatural encounter is their claim that God is still revealing Himself verbally to them. As we saw in our last study, they claim that God is speaking to them: that is a constant claim. In fact, there probably is nothing more commonly expressed among Charismatic's than that, "The Lord told me!" Or, "Jesus told me!" They believe that the Lord is still telling them specific things in specific terms. God is still breathing out revelation.

It has been a curiosity to me and should be to us, I think, that if God is still giving revelation, the only ones that He gives it to are Charismatic's! Nobody else seems to be getting revelation with the exception of the founders of various cults. But apart from the cults and the Charismatic's I don't see people within the framework, the broad framework of Christianity, claiming revelation.

Now, I want to be very clear that when I talk about the fact that God is no longer giving revelation, I don't want to be misunderstood. I do believe that the Holy Spirit does lead Christians. Romans 8:14 says that, "As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the children of God." I believe the Holy Spirit guides us. I believe He empowers us to witness, to speak, to write, to act with Spiritual Power and impact. I believe the Holy Spirit impresses His will on our minds leading us to praise, leading us to obedience, leading us to righteousness, leading us to spiritual service. We as believers can be confident of his moving on our minds to lead us to truth. However, He does not speak to us in audible words. He does not place inaudible, but specific words in our minds. He is not breathing out any more revelation.

- John MacArthur, Does God Still Give Prophecies?
Charismatic Chaos Series, Part 3

The problem with what this teacher is saying is that he is mixing the office of the prophet with the gift of prophecy and they don't mix. God does speak to us in a still small voice I believe. We are called to listen to His voice and I truly believe it goes beyond the Scriptures. Now before you turn me off, I believe God speaks to us in accordance with His Word not apart from it. But make no mistake about it; this gift of prophecy is still in operation today.

Let me explain quickly the difference between the office of a prophet and the gift of prophecy for a minute. The difference between the office of a prophet and the gift of prophecy is simple. The apostles and prophets brought forth new revelations from God, it was the Word of God that came together to give to us the Scriptures. For this gift of prophecy, we are not getting new revelations from God in the sense of new Scripture or adding to the Word of God.

And keep in mind that there was no room for error for the office of a prophet. But for the gift of prophecy there can be human error at times. Paul said in I Corinthians 14:29, **“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”** They were to judge if what was spoken was of God or not. And Paul does not say that if they are wrong, if what they said went against the Word of God, put them to death! No, just judge them, and they could have been wrong about what they said, that is why they were to be judged!

Let me give you an example of what this gift is not. A few months back I received this card in the mail from EBH Ministries and it was about a new book that Ebony Blackmon Humphrey wrote. It was sent out because there was going to be a book signing with the release of this book she wrote at the end of May. What I found interesting was what she wrote on this card. It said, “In my obedience to the Lord; there is a prophetic word for the 1st 100 people. And only for the first One hundred.” I find that interesting that God is only interested in the first 100 people and if you are 101, sorry, you missed it by that much! That is not what this gift is all about. It is not something we manipulate for a book signing or whatever!

And if this gift is not around today, why would Paul tell us in I Corinthians 14:1, **“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“EAGERLY PURSUE and seek to acquire [this] love [make it your aim, your great quest]; and earnestly desire and cultivate the spiritual endowments (gifts), especially that you may prophesy (interpret the divine will and purpose in inspired preaching and teaching).”** And the Living Bible tells us, **“Let love be your greatest aim; nevertheless, ask also for the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives, and especially the gift of prophecy, being able to preach the messages of God.”**

Think about that for a minute. Why in the world would Paul tell us that his desire for the Corinthian church and for us is that we would pursue or seek after the gift of prophecy if it has passed off the scene? That would make no sense. And thus, this must have been important for Paul, who through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, told us to earnestly seek after this gift of prophecy! But why should we seek after this gift? Why is it so important to us?

I believe that it was that important in Paul's day and in our day, it is something that the church desperately needs. Listen to what Paul said in I Corinthians 14:3, "**But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.**" The Amplified Bible puts it like this, "**But [on the other hand], the one who prophesies [who interprets the divine will and purpose in inspired preaching and teaching] speaks to men for their upbuilding and constructive spiritual progress and encouragement and consolation.**" And The Living Bible says, "**But one who prophesies, preaching the messages of God, is helping others grow in the Lord, encouraging and comforting them.**"

Do you see how important this gift was and is in the church today? You see, if we truly understand what Paul is saying here, that is the only conclusion that you can come to, that this gift is that important and I believe that this gift is exercised as the body of believers come together. I want to take a few minutes here and expound on the three reasons that Paul gives to us regarding the importance of this gift from the verse we just read in I Corinthians 14:3 so we clearly understand this.

PROPHECY SPEAKS . . .

1. EDIFICATION (It is the Greek Word "oikodome" [oy-kod-om-ay'])

This word, "**edification**" speaks "of building" or "building as a process." In other words, as the gift is being exercised we see believers built up, strengthened in their faith, their relationship with God. It should cause believers to hold on to God's promises even during difficult times.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 14:19? He wrote, **“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”**

The focus is to build people up, not to tear them down. We are to strengthen them in the faith. You see, God is not in the business of destruction but restoration and we need to remember that as we speak to people.

Again, in Romans 15:2 Paul makes that same point when he said, **“Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.”** And in I Thessalonians 5:11 Paul admonishes us to continue on in these things, as he said, **“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”**

Let me share with you this poem and you will see what I mean regarding the difference between destruction and restoration or tearing down and building up. We are told,

As I watched them tear a building down
A gang of men in a busy town
With a ho-heave-ho, and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell

I asked the foreman, “Are these men skilled,
And the men you’d hire if you wanted to build?”
He gave a laugh and said, “No, indeed,
Just common labor is all I need.”

“I can easily wreck in a day or two,
What builders have taken years to do.”
And I thought to myself, as I went my way
Which of these roles have I tried to play’

Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by rule and square’
Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan
Patiently doing the best I can?

Or am I a wrecker who walks to town
 Content with the labor of tearing down'
 "O Lord let my life and my labors be
 That which will build for eternity!"

- Author Unknown

And so, as this gift of the Holy Spirit is in operation you will see people grow and blossom in their faith. And that should be desire of all of us, not just the pastor or the elders building people up, but all of us participating in this great work of God and using the gift as the Holy Spirit gives it to us.

2. **EXHORTATION** (It is the Greek word "paraklesis" [par-ak'-lay-sis])

The next word that Paul uses is "**exhortation**" and the idea here is to come alongside and help, to spur someone into action. And when you think about it, the Scriptures are a PARAKLESIS to us; they help us in our walk and spur us into action. In II Timothy 3:16-17 Paul tells Timothy that, "**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.**"

The Scriptures tell us what is right, doctrine. They also tell us what is not right or reprove us. The Scriptures tell us how to get back on track when we have gone astray, they correct us so that we may walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called. And they tell us how to stay on track or give us instructions on how to live. All of these are important as God is strengthening us and spurring us into action. The Scriptures are living and powerful and because of that, if they don't spur us into action it is because we have become dead to them!

Now in regards to correction, think about that for a minute. None of us like to be corrected, but if God ignored what we were doing, allowing us to travel down a path of death and destruction with no real concern, it would show us that He doesn't care for us. But He does care for us, He does love us and He will correct His children, sometimes using the gift of prophecy to cut through the hardness of our hearts and get us back on track. It is as pastor Chuck has said, "Don't just mouth it - do it! Don't just hear it - practice it!" May that be the desire of our hearts, to live what we believe.

William Barclay wrote this in regards to exhortation or encouragement.

One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement. . . . It is easy to laugh at men's ideals; it is easy to pour cold water on their enthusiasm; it is easy to discourage others. The world is full of discouragers. We have a Christian duty to encourage one another. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word.

- William Barclay, The Letter to the Hebrews

Yes, that should be the duty of us as Christians, to encourage people, but here, in this gift of prophecy, as the gift of prophecy is in operation the words that are spoken will point us in the right direction, they will spur us into action, they will lead us to Jesus.

3. **COMFORT** (It is the Greek word “**paramuthia**” [par-am-oo-thee’ah])

Paul then speaks of “**comfort.**” Now we may not admit it, but all of us love to be comforted. I don’t care how big or strong or macho you think you are, we all like to feel that comfort that another can bring into our lives. Now let’s take this a step up and ask the question, “How important is it to have the comfort of God in our lives?” It is extremely important for in that comfort we see the peace of God in our lives, we can rest in Him!

And that comfort is seen, it is realized when we recognize that God is still in control, He is still on the throne. And as bad as things might seem, He will work it out for His glory. It is as Romans 8:28 says, “**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**”

You see, it is when we understand our God and know that He is for us that we can rest in Him. He, in a sense, is the captain of our lives as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

Robert Louis Stevenson tells of a storm that caught a vessel off a rocky coast and threatened to drive it and its passengers to destruction. In the midst of the terror, one daring man, contrary to orders, went to the deck, made a dangerous passage to the pilot house and saw the steerman, at his post holding the wheel unwaveringly, and inch by inch, turning the ship out, once more, to sea. The pilot saw the watcher and smiled. Then, the daring passenger went below and gave out a note of cheer: "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

I think that is important for us to understand, for when we take our eyes off the Lord the storms of life seem overwhelming and we feel that we are going under. Get your eyes back on the Lord! And here is the beautiful thing. What God has given to us, His great comfort, we can turn and give that comfort to others. Paul, in II Corinthians 1:3-5 says, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."**

When the gift of prophecy is in operation we see that the words that are being spoken will comfort us and give us a proper perspective of who God is, that He is still in control and He is still upon the throne. And that comfort that God has given to us, we can turn around and give it to others!

And so we see Paul's point regarding the gift of prophecy here. When the gift is in operation it will edify the people, it will exhort them to move forward in the Lord and it will comfort them during difficult times!

As you can see, this gift is very important in the church today and that is one of the reasons the enemy causes people to dismiss this gift and say that there is no Scriptural support for it being in operation today, and again, I disagree. I do feel the Scriptures support the operation of not only the gift of prophecy, but the other spiritual gifts that the Scriptures speak of. On the other end of the spectrum are those that abuse this gift and they are not bringing edification, exhortation or comfort to the people, but confusion and the feeding of the flesh! We need to look at the Scriptures and see how this gift was used and we will spend a few minutes looking at that.

Remember as the disciples had gathered together in Jerusalem, after the death and resurrection of Jesus and as the day of Pentecost came they were filled with the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit came upon them, empowering them for service. And they began to speak with other tongues. They began to speak in a language they didn't understand. Also in Jerusalem were Jews from other nations, and they heard these men speak in their own language, their own native tongue. And as these disciples spoke in these tongues they were praising God and the wonderful works that God had done. And they recognized that those who were speaking in these tongues could in no way have known the language they were speaking.

Now some were honestly unsure what this all meant. They were perplexed by what they heard and what they saw. Also in the crowd were those who really didn't care. And they began to mock this work of God blaming the action of these men on alcohol, they were drunk they thought.

And we read beginning in verse 14 of Acts chapter 2, **“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.’”** Acts 2:14-18.

First of all Peter takes this experience that happened on the day of Pentecost and points to the Scriptures, telling the Jews who were there that this is the fulfillment of what the prophet Joel spoke about. How important that is for us to understand. If you can't go to the Word of God to show that a spiritual experience you have seen or been part of is found in the Scriptures, then you better stay away from it, you better leave it alone. Many today are practicing things that are not found in the Scriptures or they twist the Scriptures to make them fit their experience. We need to let the Scriptures just speak for themselves; let them mean what they say, for that truly is the only safe way to look at them.

Secondly, Peter tells us that Joel's prophecy is for, "**the last days.**" When are the last days? When did the last days start or did they start yet? I believe that the last days started when God became flesh and dwelt among us, which means we are living in the last days! It is as Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "**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, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.**"

What does that mean? It means that those things that Joel spoke of are for today, and prophecy is one of them, and thus prophecy is for today. In saying that we must also understand that God is not giving us any new doctrine but He still is very much speaking to His church, both forth-telling and foretelling. And understand this is not just an intelligent person speaking the things of God, but a man or woman of God is supernaturally speaking forth the Words of God. It is kind of an "inspired utterance."

How does this gift work? Some get some pretty weird ideas, like the Holy Spirit taking control of the person and they begin to speak in the King James English with a really deep voice, and if they could, they would have smoke rising from around them. Understand this, the Holy Spirit does not take control of us like that, in fact that is possession and it is demonic. God doesn't possess us in that sense, but He fills us with His presence. And what takes place as God is working in you with this gift is that He strongly impresses upon your heart and then you must take that step of faith to act upon what He is showing you. His Word is so strong in you that you just speak it forth!

The key is that you are in control. No one should just lose control, interrupt a teaching and blame the Holy Spirit for overtaking them. In fact, Paul clearly says in I Corinthians 14:32-33, “**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.**” You are not going to be in Wal-Mart and start shaking and all of a sudden blurt something out; at least God is not going to make you do that!

Now why in the world did Paul have to say that to the Corinthian church? Because everything was a chaotic free-for-all during their church service, it was a mess! Everyone wanted to speak and give what God had shown them, and it was a mess. And Paul is saying that the prophet or the person who is speaking for God is in total control of their actions. If not you end up with confusion as we are seeing in many churches today. In some services the pastor doesn't even get to teach because of all the activity that is going on, and in the end no one is built up, encouraged by God. And keep in mind that the gift of prophecy is exercised many times in the teaching of God's Word, and we need to remember that, not lose sight of that.

To often people look to this section in Corinthians and try to say this is the way the church is to operate. No way. This was written early on, and at that time they didn't have many who could be leaders in a church, so the prophets would speak, there would be a Psalm read and-so-on. But latter on, as the church was established, Paul wrote how we are to conduct ourselves in the church of God, and thus we look to the pastoral epistles: I Timothy, Titus and II Timothy for direction. And in those epistles the primary focus is the teaching of the Word of God for God had now raised up pastor-teachers to oversee the church.

Also, we need to be careful because there are many people out there that are saying they are speaking for God. How do we know if what they say is of God, or is it from the imagination of their own hearts or from a lying spirit or maybe born out of a pizza they had before they went to sleep that night? I think that is an important question and one we need to explore more closely. How do we know if this gift is being used by someone today?

HOW DO WE KNOW IF THIS IS OF GOD?

1. THE WORD OF GOD

The first thing you need to do is bring what has been said into the light of God's Word. If it contradicts what God has said in His Word, then you can toss it aside, it is not of God! You see, God does not contradict Himself. Some, in trying to get around this, say that "God is bigger than His Word", or that "God is giving to us new doctrine", or "You are quenching the Spirit by your judgmental and restrictive attitude" or even "You can't put God in a box!"

Let me say this because this is important. If we get this wrong we are going to be in serious trouble, we will open ourselves up to all kinds of false doctrine, false teaching!

Paul in I Thessalonians 5:19-22 said, “**Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.**”

We can test all things by bringing them into the light of God’s Word, and what doesn’t stand the test of God’s Word is tossed aside and that which is found in God’s Word is held onto, it is good. Thus, quenching the Spirit is not speaking against or coming against these prophecy’s but doing that which is not found in God’s Word does quench what the Spirit is trying to do! I think we all understand that but many times we let others confuse us by what they say and we don’t want to quench the Spirit, so we believe what they are saying even though it is contrary to the Word of God. Test all things and if it is not found in God’s Word, get rid of it, abstain from that evil!

Also, we are told in Jeremiah 14:13-16, **“Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, the prophets say to them, “You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.”’ And the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, “Sword and famine shall not be in this land” — “By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them — them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters — for I will pour their wickedness on them.”’”**

In other words the false prophets were saying that judgment was not coming but they will dwell in peace and prosperity! Sound familiar? But God is saying they are not speaking for Him, He has not sent them and what they are saying to the people will not edify, exhort or comfort them but in the end it will destroy them!

And God has these condemning words for those who say, **“Thus says the Lord . . .”** when God has not spoken to them. In Jeremiah 23:30-32 we read, **“Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,’ says the LORD, ‘who steal My words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets,’ says the LORD, ‘who use their tongues and say, He says. ‘Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,’ says the LORD, ‘and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,’ says the LORD.”** That is a pretty strong rebuke from the Lord and thus, as we speak for the Lord, may we represent Him correctly, may we speak forth His Words and not our own!

We also see a strong rebuke in the New Testament as Paul said this to the churches in Galatia who were moving away from the solid foundation of God’s Word and listening to the false prophets. In Galatians 1:6-12 we read, **“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

God does not contradict Himself; He does not say things that are contrary to His Word. Keep that in mind as you bring prophecies in the light of God's Word. It is as John admonishes us in I John 4:1, "**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.**" Bring everything into the light of God's Word to see if this word spoken was a gift of prophecy or not!

2. IT SHOULD REVEAL JESUS OR DRAW YOU CLOSER TO HIM

When people are speaking for God they should not be exalting self or placing God in a position of dishonor. They should be exalting Jesus. As John said in I John 4:2-3, "**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.**" Sounds simple, but we must not lose sight of that. And as John tells us in Revelation 19:10, "**... For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.**" The focus should be Jesus or manifest the nature of Jesus. The words spoke should reveal Jesus or draw you closer to Him!

John also tells us that "**Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**" Thus, any teaching of prophecy that takes us away from Jesus is not right. You see, prophecy should unfold the beauty of Jesus to us! In Psalm 40:7 we are told regarding Jesus, "**Then I said, 'Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.'**"

Also, in John 5:39-40 we are told, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”** Isn't it amazing that people can read the Scriptures and still miss Jesus and the reason is simple, they are not willing to come to Him!

And in I John 5:10 we are told, **“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.”** Thus, if you believe, you have eternal life and if you reject Jesus, you make Him a liar because the Scriptures testify that He is the way, He is the truth and He is the life and without Him you will never get to heaven. Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!

3. YOU MAY HAVE TO PONDER IT IN YOUR HEART FOR A TIME

Sometimes things that are spoken are predictive in nature and thus you may have to ponder them in your heart to see if they come to pass or not. We see this at the birth of Jesus and all the things that Mary saw at His birth pointing to Him being **“A Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”** And we are told in verse 19 of Luke chapter 2, **“But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”** And what Mary pondered in her heart did come to pass! There is nothing wrong with praying about what you heard or what you believe God spoke to you regarding some situation. Ponder it in your heart, think about it, and let God show you if it is of Him or not!

4. DOES IT LINE UP WITH THE FACTS

Here is another one that is important and we must not dismiss. There are times that someone will come up to you and tell you that God spoke to them regarding you and what they are saying does not line up with the facts at all. Thus you can dismiss it.

For example, someone may come up to you and they may tell you that God spoke to their heart and you are to go to Antarctica as a missionary. I guess they really don't like you and that is the farthest place away from them they can send you and that may be the reason or it may be that this person who is telling you this did not hear from God. If God spoke to someone about you then He will also speak to you. They may conform what God has placed in your heart but don't be swayed by what they say if God hasn't spoken to you by it!

And so, as we have seen, the gift of prophecy is God speaking to His Church with words that edify, exhort and comfort them. In my life I have seen this gift exercised in a powerful way and it did edify me or build me up in the faith. It spurred me into action. And it comforted me in the actions I needed to take.

Most of you have heard this story before and probably several times, but it is one that truly drives home the point that God still speaks to us today and in a powerful way. This is a supernatural gift, not just speaking something that someone can know on their own as you will see.

Ten to twelve years before I moved here to Manitowoc Wisconsin the Lord spoke to my heart that He was going to bring me up to Wisconsin some day and make me a senior pastor. At that point I was a new Christian with very little knowledge about the Scriptures. And yet, at that point I knew what God had said to me, or at least I thought I did.

Over the years this word from God would come and go, and it seemed like what God said, what He told me that He was going to do in my life, was never going to happen. There were times I even thought that I did not hear God correctly. I knew absolutely no one in Wisconsin and I never felt God calling me to just move to Wisconsin to start up a church. Also, I never felt God wanted me to take a senior pastor position anywhere else but Wisconsin, even though a couple senior pastor positions were offered to me in Illinois. And so I waited to see what would take place.

Over those ten to twelve years, looking back now, I can see how God was teaching me many lessons of faith, placing me in various ministries to teach me things that I needed to learn. From setting up chairs each week, to the infant and toddler ministry, to the Sunday school ministry, to being an assistant pastor and watching over the home small group ministry, God was giving me on the job training you might say. And again, looking back I can see God taking me one step at a time.

Then about 16½ years ago my wife was planning on going to a women's retreat in Indiana. Prior to her going she had some major health problems, her blood pressure was out of control and she felt terrible. Because of all these things she was going through, she wanted to stay home. But God spoke to her heart and told her she needed to go because He wanted to show her something at this retreat.

When she got there she called me in tears and feeling just awful and said that she wanted to come home. I encouraged her to stay and reminded her what God had for her at this retreat and that He would see her through. She did stay.

As the retreat ended she said it was great but God did not reveal to her specifically something, as she felt He said He would. And at the end of the retreat there was a time of fellowship and sharing. During this time one of the women from Manitowoc stood up and asked if they could pray for the church she was going to. Their pastor stepped down from his position and they were looking for a senior pastor for a Calvary Chapel in Manitowoc Wisconsin!

My wife's blood pressure was already high, but I'm sure after hearing of this "senior pastor" position in "Wisconsin" it rose a lot higher! She took a couple of deep breaths and she went over to Jenny, the woman who asked for prayer regarding this situation, and told her that someone from the Calvary Chapel in Elk Grove Illinois that she attended might be interested. She did not tell Jenny that it was her husband that was interested.

When Julie came home she was very excited and told me everything. Upon hearing it I was also excited but also nervous. What a big decision to make, and it did take me a couple of days to call Joe, one of the elders here, and to work out the details of coming up to Manitowoc to teach for 4 Sundays and then have the elders pray about it and me and my family pray about this move. And truly, after the first Sunday teaching, I knew this is where God wanted me and just waited to hear what the board of elders would say.

The amazing thing to me, and I find it interesting on how God works, is that Julie and I were just talking about how comfortable we were in Illinois. I had a great job at Alexian Brothers Medical Center working in their open heart intensive care unit. We loved the church we attended and were very involved in it. Now that I was comfortable God was going to stretch me and my family.

The elders did get back to me and said that they wanted me to come and be the pastor of this church and guess what? Now it was time to take that step of faith, believing that what God had promised me ten to twelve years earlier He was going to bring to reality. And that is exactly what He did! As I have said, the first Sunday that I came up to teach I felt at home and then it was a matter of time for God to confirm in the hearts of the elders what He had already confirmed in my heart about this move. And as God spoke to my heart and now was bringing these words to pass in my life it built me up, I was spurred into action and I was comforted knowing that what God had promised He was able to perform in my life. That is the gift of prophecy in action!

And don't get me wrong. The work is not completed yet. The work continues on. God's plan was not just to bring me up here to Wisconsin but to continue on and see this community come to know Christ more deeply and to have you the best loved and best fed sheep in town! And I look forward to see what God is going to do in me and through me here in Wisconsin! Really, what He is going to do in us and through us as a body of believers! You see, for me, as I teach God's Word I believe that this gift of prophecy is in operation. I am speaking forth the Words of God and to tell you the truth, when I listen to my studies, I am blessed. I am not boasting, not at all. What blows me away is what God has to say to me even though I knew what is in the studies, He speaks to my heart. The power of God's Word in our lives!

And thus, this gift can speak of future events, foretelling the things of God. This gift can speak of speaking forth the Words of God, forth-telling the things of God. But, as I have said, the gift of prophecy is speaking forth the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In a sense you are a channel through which the Lord may speak through. And the words will edify, exhort and comfort believers. Remember what David said in II Samuel 23:2, "**The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.**" When God places His Words upon our lips what a joy it is to speak them! The gift of prophecy is still in operation today as it brings edification, exhortation and comfort to the Church!