

(Prophecy) Clarifications About Prophecy

by Zac Poonen

The speaker clarifies the definition of New Testament prophecy, emphasizing its purpose of building up, challenging, and encouraging, and the importance of judging prophecy by scripture.

Duration: 57:29

Scripture: Isaiah 8:20, 1 Corinthians 14:29, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Church Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of prophecy in warning God's people ahead of time. He encourages the audience to seek the gift of prophecy from God, so they can meet the needs of others. The speaker also addresses the issue of falling down and showing feet to God, stating that it is an insult and not the correct way to approach God. He emphasizes the need for pastors and elders in the church, but also highlights the importance of the entire body fulfilling their functions. The speaker also mentions that those who preach the gospel can receive financial support, as ordained by the Lord. Lastly, he emphasizes the need for discernment and judgment when it comes to prophecy, using the example of the Bereans in Acts 17. He compares the exercise of spiritual gifts to electricity, stating that while it is useful, it must be used according to the laws and principles set by God.

Transcript

So, I read through all the questions I received up until now and since there were lot of similarity and we want to save on time, I have consolidated them and will try and answer them in partly teaching and partly answering the questions, which I trust will cover everything that was asked. I find there is still a lot of confusion concerning the definition of New Testament prophecy. Like I said the very first meeting, it is very difficult for us, all of us human beings, to get rid of traditional concepts that we have had, which have zero foundation in scripture.

There are multitudes of people who call themselves Christians, who believe in celebrating the Sabbath. There are multitudes of Christians who teach tithing, which is never taught after Acts chapter 2. It is giving that is taught, not tithing, which is actually more difficult than tithing and many things like this. And when you talk about prophets, I find the vast majority of people whom I have met, who believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, only think of predictive prophecy and Old Testament prophecy.

And it is almost as though they have never in their life read 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Their mind has not been renewed to think along New Testament lines. They think along Old Testament lines because that is

what they have seen in their particular church or denomination.

So I want to encourage you to recognize that the old covenant has passed away and the new covenant has been established and all people are to know the Lord directly. Many of our doubts and questions, particularly concerning directive prophecy, that means telling a person what to do, will be eliminated if we realize that in the New Testament, God wants to speak to a person directly and not through you to tell him what to do. You can teach, you can share God's word, but you have no business coming between Jesus Christ and that man to tell him what he should do.

That is an insult to Christ, as though Christ himself cannot speak to that man. And also, it is coming between a person and his Savior or his bridegroom. It's coming between a husband and wife.

Christ is directly related to every person in his bride. And when it says in James chapter 4 that God's Spirit jealously desires us, that jealousy is that he doesn't want anybody else to come between him and you, like a prophet or a pastor or an apostle or anybody. He wants to have a direct connection with you.

And that is where a lot of today's prophets and preachers and pastors come in the way. And I think of that verse in John chapter 10, where Jesus said, all who come before me are thieves and robbers. We could apply it, you know, before has got two senses, one in terms of time and one in terms of location.

Someone who comes before me means someone who comes in front of me is a thief and a robber. So if you come in front of Jesus and come between him and another believer, you're a thief and a robber. And I have no hesitation in saying that I want to get out of the way.

My duty is to point a person to Christ and to get that person directly connected to his bridegroom, not to come between him or make him dependent on me in any way. A lot of preachers, it's not just prophets, preachers, pastors, many people make believers dependent on them because they get power over that. It's not just greed for money.

A lot of preachers have greed for power, greed for honor. Greed has many, many forms. So if we keep these things in mind, we will not be deceived.

Now, many people have also the idea from tradition, I just want to clarify this, that prophecy means somebody closes his eyes, lifts his hand and in a squeaky voice or some voice with a tremor or something like that, all that acting, says something for a few minutes that's prophecy. They cannot understand that a prophet can speak a lengthy message. It says in Acts chapter 15 and verse 32, that there were prophets, Judas and Silas were prophets.

This is a New Testament prophet, the type of prophet described in Ephesians 4.11. Judas and Silas were prophets and they encouraged and strengthened the brothers with brethren with a lengthy message. Have you ever heard a prophet encourage and strengthen you with a lengthy message or does that type of prophet does not figure in your thinking? This is just one example of how our concept of prophet has to be radically altered. Jesus told the people in his day, you people follow your traditions, you have negated the word of God, you have cancelled the word of God just because you want to keep your traditions.

I want to say to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, in Christendom today we have two extremes. We have some people who don't believe in prophecy at all and then we have other people who have got this Old Testament type of prophecy. Both of them haven't studied the New Testament carefully.

So I want to encourage you, go to the New Testament with an open mind. All you need is a concordance and look up the word prophet, prophesy, prophecy and go into the New Testament and see what the New Testament teaches on this. That's been the way I have prepared for this message.

So here are people who strengthen with a long message. Then I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 which is the major chapter in the New Testament on prophecy and it begins with pursue after love. You know in the previous way chapter he had said, I will show you chapter 12 verse 31, he says desire the greater gifts and he is speaking especially about prophecy and I will show you a more excellent way.

Not as an alternative to gifts but the way to exercise the gifts. That means if I exercise the gift without love, that means without love for God and love for man, I will not exercise it the right way. The whole problem with a lot of exercise of so called gifts of the spirit and the counterfeit and the true all mixed up today is because it has not been exercised by people whose hearts are filled with love for God, they have a love for money, they have a love for honor, they have a love for publicity and many things like that.

Their heart is not filled with love for God and their heart is not filled with love and compassion for the people. Then they are not doing it the more excellent way. Then it is dangerous to exercise the gifts of the spirit.

Let me say to you in Jesus name, it is dangerous to exercise any gift of the spirit. If you don't do it the more excellent way which is with a heart filled with love for God where you love only Jesus God Almighty and nothing else on this earth and where you don't have tremendous love in your heart for people, I would encourage you not to exercise any gift of the Holy Spirit because you can kill people. It is much better not to exercise the gifts of the spirit.

I can use the illustration of electricity. Do you know that in villages where there is no electricity nobody gets electrocuted? Are you surprised? Why is nobody electrocuted where there is no electricity? Because there is no electricity. How can you be electrocuted? There are churches that don't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, they don't go into all these wild extremes because they don't have the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Where do we find all these wild extremes in Christendom today? Wherever people exercise the gifts of the spirit, that's like having electricity in your house but the wires are all uninsulated, there is no covering for the wires, people go touch it and get killed and if you are going to play the fool with electricity, it is better not to have electricity in your house. But electricity is extremely useful as you can see right now in this meeting. But then we must follow the laws of electricity, every little detail.

You can have a short circuit, if you put one wire from a plug point from one to the other, you put a wire, you get a short circuit, the whole thing gets fused. That's what's happening in church after church after church. If you want to have electricity in your house, follow the laws of electricity.

Get an electrician to explain the laws of electricity to you. The same thing, if we want the power of the Holy Spirit so useful just like electricity, we must follow the laws, we must study the scriptures, we must study the New Testament especially. And the greatest thing is that our heart must be filled with love.

Love is like the insulation that goes over the electric wire so that people can touch it and not get killed. If you don't have that love as an insulation, people will touch you and they'll get killed. They won't get life.

This is very important to understand. And it says this is not something we can have automatically. Pursue after love.

The Holy Spirit has come to fill our hearts with God's love and then we can exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And then it says we must earnestly desire the spiritual gifts especially that you may prophesy. Every believer can prophesy.

Every believer won't be a prophet. That we read in 1 Corinthians 12, not all are prophets but all can prophesy. And what is the difference? It's like saying all are to be witnesses but all are not evangelists.

Can you tell another person about Christ even if you're not an evangelist? Sure. But some are called to be evangelists. But all are called to be witnesses.

Some are called to be prophets. All are called to prophesy. Some are called to be teachers.

But all can share something from God's word with somebody else that they have learned and teach them even though they may not be teachers. So whether it's teacher or evangelist or prophet, we can do it in a small measure. That is the difference between prophesying and being a prophet.

So when we read of Ephesians 4.11 about the fivefold gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, they're all there in the world today in the church, all five of them. God hasn't changed. It's not just for the first century or something like that.

But who is a real prophet? Well, let's understand who is a real New Testament prophet. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 14 verse 3. I mentioned that yesterday but I found with a number of questions people haven't understood it clearly. The one who prophesies is one who speaks to men for edification, building them up, exaltation, challenge and consolation, comfort, encouragement.

Encouragement, comfort, challenge, building them up, not tearing them down. Removing from their lives the things that are destructive, the cancers, like a doctor exposing the disease and prescribing the cure. That's what a prophet is.

And one who can do that consistently, consistently every single time, whether it's from a pulpit or in personal conversation, that is a prophet. And one who does it occasionally is one who is prophesying, who may not be able to do it consistently. It's like what is the difference between a witness and an evangelist? You may not be an evangelist and you may have brought people to Christ.

I brought numerous people to Christ, but I'm not an evangelist. I'm a teacher. An evangelist will be able to do that consistently, much more than I can do it, even though I may be much older than him in the Lord, because that's not my gifting.

So there's the difference between a prophet and one who prophesies. A prophet is one, as you listen to him in personal conversation, you listen to him in the pulpit, every single time he consistently edifies, encourages, exhorts. That is the New Testament teaching of one who is prophesied.

So to me, it's very clear, if I get rid of all these concepts that I've got, particularly from churches that preach the baptism in the Holy Spirit and come to scripture, I believe many, many traditions will get out of my head and I won't harm the church of God by my ignorance. There's a verse in the Old Testament which says my people perish because of lack of knowledge. So we need to know God's word, otherwise you can

do a lot of harm to God's church.

I want to tell you something else in 1 Corinthians 14. It speaks here about prophecy and speaking in tongues. Tongues is not prophecy.

Paul said I thank God I speak in tongues more than all of you, verse 18, and I can say that too. I thank God I speak in tongues more than a lot of people who make a lot of babbling noises in public. Yet, Paul said in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, verse 19, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

Sometimes people speaking in tongues can be like an exhibitionism to show people that I'm in the spirit. It's a lot of rubbish. I believe in speaking in tongues, but Paul exercised it in private.

He spoke ten thousand words in private and five words in a known tongue in public. How do we know that he exercised tongues in public? Because he who speaks in a tongue builds himself up, edifies himself. And when a person is edified, he's got the ability to edify others.

But he doesn't have to demonstrate his tongues in public. There is a place for tongues in public too. And I know times in our own church where we've seen tongues every single time with interpretation.

We never believe that a tongue should be used in public without interpretation. And when a tongue is used with interpretation, then it can be prophetic. It can be, like it says here, it can be revelation, verse 6, or teaching, or knowledge, or prophecy.

It could be anything when tongues are used in public according to 1 Corinthians 14, verse 6. It could be a prayer. Because it says when a man prays in a tongue, it says here he's praying to God. So it could be an interpretation.

It could be a prayer to God as well. It could be a number of things. But I know times in my life where I've come to a meeting, and it's been, say, a Wednesday evening meeting, and everybody's tired and heavy, and we're trying to pray, and it's all so dull and heavy.

And then suddenly somebody speaks in a tongue in the church, and somebody interprets, and all of a sudden I've got my lead. I've got the Lord has spoken to me that that is what I should speak on that evening. And that's turned out to be prophetic.

So there is a place for tongues with interpretation. But not this meaningless babbling that goes on. When meaningless babbling, he says here, people will listen to it and say you're mad.

There's a purpose in everything that is done. And we must seek to do it in the same way that scripture defines it in 1 Corinthians 14. So I want to say further concerning speaking in tongues and prophesying.

It says here that even lifeless things, verse 7, like a flute or a harp, give a distinct sound. And that's very important that when we prophesy, we give a distinct sound that people must understand clearly. Where it says in verse 9, you can apply this verse to prophecy, if you utter with the tongue speech that is not clear, how will it be known what is spoken? You will be speaking into the air.

I want to say to all of you who preach God's word prophetically, which means not predicting the future, but according to verse 3, seeking to build up people, challenge them, encourage them. You're speaking prophetically. I want to encourage all of you to develop the habit, and you've got to take pains with it, to

Speak clearly.

I have sought for years to work on my ability to speak, to speak clearly. It doesn't come like that. To speak clearly, to make sure that people understand what you're saying.

Otherwise you'll be speaking into the air. If we work on it, I believe you can fulfill that scripture, so that people understand clearly what God is saying. And for that, you need to study the scriptures, and understand it clearly in your mind as well.

So if we're not willing to labor, we can't get bread. God told Adam, by the sweat of your brow, you will earn your bread. I find that principle in Bible study also.

By the sweat of my brow, I get my bread from scripture. And you can get yours that way too. Okay, the next thing I want to say is concerning judging prophecy.

It says in verse 29, when two or three prophets speak, the other people who are sitting there who are not prophets must pass judgment. Now many people ignore this verse, like hundreds of other New Testament verses which Christians ignore. Here is another verse which is totally ignored.

If you ever hear a prophet in a church meeting, in a private meeting, anywhere, including me, you must pass judgment. What are you to judge? You don't have to judge my life, because you don't even know 10% of my life. You can see a little bit.

But what you can judge is what the Bereans judged. You read in Acts 17, that when Paul the Apostle got into the pulpit and preached, is that Bereans were noble people. They went up to Paul and they said, praise the Lord, Paul, it's great to hear you.

Glad you came here, but we're not going to believe everything you say until we go home and check the scriptures. And they searched the scriptures every day to see whether what the Apostle Paul said was according to scripture. And that's why they never got deceived.

And that's why in the New Testament you never read Paul's letter to the Bereans. Why is that? Because they had no problem with false teachers or false doctrines, because they checked everything with scripture. Paul had to write to the Galatians because they didn't have that habit.

He wrote to the Corinthians because they didn't have that habit, but not to the Bereans. So that's wonderful to be like a Berean who searches the scriptures to judge whether what this fellow is saying is according to scripture. I don't care whether he's 90 years old.

I don't care with what tone of voice he speaks. I don't care if he's my relative, my uncle, my cousin or anybody. It makes no difference.

I want to see whether it's according to scripture. I don't care if it's the Apostle Paul himself or like Paul says, an angel from heaven. If it's not according to God's word, let him be accursed, Paul says.

If anybody preaches any other gospel according to God's word, that's the test. So we need to see whether we're judging that person according to God's word. We need to do it.

If somebody comes into your home, don't swallow what he says. It says, judge. The same thing is repeated in 1 Thessalonians in chapter 5 and verse 19.

Don't quench the Holy Spirit. Don't despise prophetic utterances. Now, as soon as you hear prophetic, you know what you're thinking of? Old Testament.

It's so difficult to get the idea of 1 Corinthians 14:3 into our head. Charles Finney used to say, you got to say something to a person 10 times before he really understands it. And if he's already been brainwashed by some other people in another way for 25 years, then you probably got to say to him 100 times before he realizes that New Testament prophecy is according to 1 Corinthians 14 verse 3. Predictive prophecy like Agabus did was rare.

It was there, but it was rare in the first century, and it is rare today. Every Tom, Dick and Harry who goes around claiming to predict, I believe a lot of them are influenced by the devil himself. That's why they speak about earthly things, because that's what the devil wants you to be interested in.

He doesn't want you to be interested in heaven. He wants you to be interested in earth. And if he can make you as earthly as possible, interested in material things, interested just in physical healing, rather than victory over sin, he's got you.

I'll tell you honestly, I'm a million times more interested in getting total victory over all sin in my life than in any physical healing. I hope you can say that because no physical sickness can send me to hell. But Jesus said, if you lust with your eyes and you don't pull it out, you can go to hell.

To overcome sin is a million times more important than physical healing. To be spiritually rich so that I can enrich other people is a million times more important than having a better vehicle or a better house. And the devil can't fool me because Jesus has shown me what is important.

And the devil is gripping people, not only with sex, with religion, with false prophecies, making them interested in earthly things, getting them, predicting various things of earthly blessings for them. Be careful about these things, I would say to you. Now, don't despise prophetic utterances, a word spoken from the word, from God, but examine everything carefully, it says, 1 Thessalonians 5, 21, and hold fast to what is good.

What about the rest? Throw it away. Now, one of the best illustrations I can use of prophecy is like a banana. Now, what do you do when you get a banana? You don't eat it straight away.

You can eat an apple straight away, but not a banana. Even a monkey knows how to peel a banana before it eats it. So, what should you do when you get a prophecy? Peel out the human part, and take the what is divine.

In an immature prophet, the skin is pretty thick. You got to peel off a lot. There's a wee bit of stuff inside.

In a more mature prophet, the skin will be very thin. There's very little of the human element, and there's a lot of the divine. But we have to get rid of the human, and keep the divine.

Hold fast to what is good, and throw away the rest. And don't be afraid of that. When a person comes to you claiming to give you a prophetic utterance, do what it says in 1 Thessalonians 5, and you won't get deceived.

I want to show you a verse in Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 20. Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 20 says, it's a very important verse concerning, you know, a lot of people say we shouldn't be criticizing the prophets. The

great word of all false prophets, all false healers, false speakers in tongues, their favorite verse is Matthew 7.1, judge not.

Don't be deceived by them. Another favorite verse of theirs is, don't speak against the Holy Spirit. Well, I'm not scared with all those verses they quoted me.

I quote 1 John 4.1 to them, believe not every spirit, my beloved, but test the spirits, whether they are of God. And that's how I've protected myself from deception for 45 years as a believer. I can give you a little bit of advice if you want to hear it.

Here it is, Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 20. First of all, verse 19, when they say to you, consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter, shouldn't the people consult God? We can apply that today. When you say go to a prophet, can't you consult God? Has God stopped speaking? How many mediators do you need between you and God? Can't you go to Jesus? Can't you speak to him directly? And to the law and to the testimony, if they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no light.

I want to read that to you in the living Bible. Check their words against the word of God. The Lord says, if their messages are different from mine, it is because I have not sent them.

They have no light and no truth in them. Check everything you hear, whether it's in a pulpit or privately with God's word, especially the New Testament. Prosperity is an Old Testament teaching.

I know it's there. It's in the Old Testament. You won't find a single verse in the New Testament that teaches that.

I know people quote that verse in 3 John, I wish that your soul will prosper, that you prosper like your soul prospers. To me, that is just like any you would write to anybody in a letter to make a doctrine out of that. You got to be off your head.

Jesus never taught that. He said, seek God's kingdom first. He said, don't lay up treasures for yourself on earth.

This goes contrary to everything that Jesus said. And that is why I say the doctrine of teaching people to be prosperous is a doctrine of the Antichrist. Because Jesus said, don't lay up treasures for yourself on earth.

Give to the poor, he said. Seek the kingdom of God first. All of this is negated by this other spirit, which quotes Old Testament verses.

It's true, there are verses in the Old Testament, which not only said you'll have plenty of money, it also said you'll have plenty of children. I'm surprised a lot of people don't preach that one. It's there in the same verse.

You read Deuteronomy 28, it's full of earthly blessings. There is not one heavenly blessing in Deuteronomy 28. But Ephesians 1.3 says, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Israel was blessed with every earthly blessing in Moses, every material blessing in earthly places in Cain and in Moses and in Joshua. But not us. Our Joshua is Jesus, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

How many prophets do you find encouraging you to seek victory over sin? How many prophets do you find today teaching you that you must get victory over anger? How many prophets do you find teaching you to overcome the lust of the eyes? How many prophets do you find standing against dowry, this wretched, evil, demonic system, which even Christians don't stand against? I've conducted numerous marriages in my life, in my church. Every single marriage, I get a certificate from the bride and the bridegroom that no money has been exchanged between their parents. Even the country has passed a law on it.

But there are so many so-called evangelical, spirit-filled churches that don't preach against dowry, that don't stand against dowry, because they get a 10% commission from that themselves. That's the type of prophet we need in this country, who's leading people to holiness, like the Old Testament prophets. I want to tell you, I believe God wants to raise up many of you to prophesy in the church, to preserve the church in purity, to prepare it for the coming of Christ.

What is the primary ministry of the church today? I would say it's the ministry of John the Baptist. The Elijah who will come before the great day of the Lord. He was Elijah before the first great day of the Lord, before Jesus came, but they didn't accept him.

So God has got another Elijah to come before the great day of the Lord. You know who that is? That's the church. It's not one person now.

It's the body of Christ that is to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord, just like John the Baptist. And if there is one message that the church of Jesus Christ needs to do today, to prepare people for the coming of the Lord, it's the same message that John the Baptist had. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Repent, for Christ is coming. Be ready for his coming. We need John the Baptist who will not be fooled by the Pharisees who speak religious language, who will turn to them and say, you vipers, who asked you to flee from the wrath to come? And who won't be disturbed by somebody quoting Matthew 7.1 saying, don't judge the Pharisees.

Oh, I feel so concerned because God's church is being affected. And I believe many of you need to have a burden for God's church. Prosperity, health, and Canaan, praise God for God providing us these things, but these are all earthly blessings.

Prosperity, health, Canaan, blood sacrifices, Sabbaths, peace. They're all Old Testament stuff. Don't pick out one or two things from there, which is not found in the New Testament.

I believe what many of you who have been in these type of churches that have preached all this, I will give you a little bit of homework. Spend the next six months reading only the New Testament. Only the New Testament.

Watchman Nee had the habit of reading the New Testament once every month. He had a tremendous responsibility to make sure that all the churches he had responsibility for didn't go astray and he used to read 10 chapters a day and finish the New Testament every month so that he could get an understanding of what God was really trying to teach. I find a tremendous ignorance among even senior pastors concerning what the New Covenant is all about.

So that's very very important. Another thing it says in 1 Corinthians 14 is that the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets. That's a very important verse.

1 Corinthians in chapter 14 it says there in verse 32, that means the fruit of the spirit is self-control. When a man says I cannot control myself, that's a mark of demon possession. I've seen demon possessed people.

They cannot control themselves. They tear their hair, they take off their clothes, they speak, they scream. They cannot control themselves.

You cast out the demon from that person and suddenly he stops. That's why you never read in the Bible about the Holy Spirit possessing people. Only demons possess.

The Holy Spirit fills. What is the difference between spirit filling and demon possession? The difference is you lose self-control when you're demon possessed. When you're filled with the spirit you have more self-control because the fruit of the spirit, Galatians 5.23, is self-control.

So when a man says God filled me with the spirit and I couldn't stop speaking in tongues, brother that was not the Holy Spirit. I've spoken in tongues for more than 25 years and I can always start and stop when I like. Nearly 30 years now.

It's like the gift of prophecy or the gift of teaching. I mean what would you do if I said brother I'm filled with the spirit, I can't stop teaching, I've got to keep going on. No, you'd think I'm off my head.

The fruit of the spirit is self-control. Please remember this. I hear people say a spirit came upon me and threw me from here to there.

Don't believe all this rubbish. I know the devil can do many things but don't think everything supernatural is from God. When the spirit of God fills you, I remember when when I got baptized in the Holy Spirit and I began to speak in tongues that Jesus said to me, the Lord said to me, this is to produce Christ in your life and that showed me why God filled me with the Holy Spirit.

Another thing I want to say is that we must prophesy according to the proportion of our faith. It says in Romans 12 and verse 6, prophesy according to the proportion of your faith. That's like saying if you write a check, write a check according to the amount in your bank.

Is that common sense? Just because somebody else can write a check for 10,000 rupees, you've got 100 rupees in your bank, please don't write a check for 10,000 rupees. People won't get anything from it, it'll get bounced. And so when you see another man who's a mature prophet who can speak about a lot of things because he's got 10,000 rupees in his account, you prophesy according to the proportion of your faith.

Humble yourself and say, well, I'll get there one day, but right now I got only 100 rupees in my account, so I write a check for 100 rupees. Prophesy according to the proportion of your faith. That means the measure of your life which God has given you.

Can women prophesy? It says in 1 Corinthians 11 that a woman can cover her head and prophesy. What's that? Predict the future? I hope we get that out of our head at least now. Can encourage, challenge, build up by what she shares? Sure.

What is it a woman cannot have? Paul says a woman cannot have authority or teach. That's why a woman cannot be a prophet. A prophet has got authority.

The only prophetess you read in the New Testament after the day of Pentecost is the false prophetess Jezebel. You never read of another prophetess. You do read of women who prophesied like Philip's daughters, but not prophetesses.

If you read there in Acts 21, it's very interesting to see there in Acts 21 that Paul was in the house of this Philip who had four daughters who prophesied. Listen to this. But when God wanted to give a message to Paul, he brought a prophet all the way from Jerusalem, from another place.

Why couldn't he give a prophecy to Paul through these women who were here? Because they were women. He had to get Agabus all the way from there because that man was a prophet. These women were prophesying in the same house.

And that teaches us that a woman can prophesy, but she can't have authority. For that matter, even prophets need to be under authority. And this is where a lot of prophets today have gone wrong.

1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 28 says, God has appointed in the church first, not prophets. Prophets are second. They are not president, they are vice president in a church.

Under the headship of Christ, under the headship of Christ, God has appointed in the church first apostles, those who plant churches, those who are elders to the elders of churches, under them prophets. And if these prophets who wander around would only submit to the authority of an apostle, I believe they'd be protected. But just like women who wander around without being submitted to any man, prophets who wander around without being submitted to any apostle, apostolic authorities suffer in the same way.

They bring a lot of confusion. Something about laying on of hands. 1 Timothy 1.18 we read, Paul says, think of the prophecies that were previously made concerning you, by them you may fight the good fight.

In times of prayer, there were people who shared things with Timothy concerning what God wanted to do with him. Maybe words of encouragement and challenge. Paul says, remember those words, you remember that time, Timothy, when you and I and some other brothers were praying and fasting together, and there were prophetic words that came to you to encourage you to fight the battle, fight the battle with those things.

It was not directive, telling Timothy he was an evangelist or he was a prophet. No, no, no. It was to fight the good fight against sin, to fight the good fight against the devil.

Let's read scripture exactly. And the other passages, 1 Timothy 4.14 where it says, don't neglect the spiritual gift within you which is bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the elders. Now we know numerous times in the Acts of the Apostles where the Apostles had this ability to lay hands on people and they were all baptized in the Holy Spirit.

I believe they had a special authority. I have never seen anyone personally who had that, has that today where, I'm not talking about 1% success rate. You never see a single case in the Acts of the Apostles where Paul or Peter laid hands on somebody and 10% of them got baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Show me one case like that. It's always 100%. Unless somebody was a fake like Simon in Samaria.

There were 12 people in Ephesus, Paul laid hands on all 12. They all received the Holy Spirit. If you find someone like that somewhere in the world, tell me about him.

I'd like to meet him. Let's not fool ourselves. They didn't coach them.

Come on, say what I say and repeat what I say. It is not that type of psychological tricks. They were leading people into a genuine experience of the Holy Spirit.

And because we have all these psychological tricks going on in the world today, a lot of people are not experiencing the genuine power. And so what I tell people is I have laid hands on people, but what I tell people generally is you don't need anybody to lay hands on you. Nobody laid hands on people on the day of Pentecost.

Nobody laid hands on the people in the house of Cornelius, but they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And you can be, and I think of numerous people in our churches, brothers and sisters who sought God on their own in their room. God has filled them with the Holy Spirit.

They've spoken in tongues and they had an experience from God himself. It was not in an emotional meeting where somebody was trying to whip up their emotions, but God may still use the laying on of hands like this. But I would say, I'd give you one warning.

Don't allow anybody to lay hands on your head whom you don't respect as a godly man. I was in Australia a few years ago and a young sister came to me at the end of a meeting and said, can you please pray for me? Some wandering preacher from America came here and she said the other day, and we had some public meetings and he asked people to come forward for laying on of hands and I went forward and he laid hands on my head. My whole life has been confusion ever since.

I said, well, that's easily solved if it's an evil spirit that got there because this fellow laid hands on you. We can rebuke that and you can be delivered right now. We prayed for her and I believe she was free.

But I never forget that incident. I remember when I was a young man, somebody laid hands on my head whom I didn't respect. I pushed his hands away.

I said, I want you to lay my hands on my head. I don't want to receive any spirit. I don't care if he got offended.

I'd encourage you to do that. If you don't have the boldness to do it, get up and go into another room. But don't allow any Tom, Dick or Harry to lay the hands on your head.

If you respect the man as a really godly man. You see, it's a submission to somebody's authority. Don't do it.

If you're not, if you don't respect that man, he's trying to give you a spirit. What spirit is it? Is it a spirit of greed and covetousness? Just because it's supernatural, the devil can lay hands on you and give you supernatural abilities. There are many people in many religions, false prophets who got supernatural abilities.

That man Simon in Samaria read in Acts chapter 8, he had tremendous supernatural abilities. The other Bar Jesus in the island of Paphos in Acts chapter 13, he had supernatural abilities. So let's not be fooled by that.

There's a lot of sorcery mixed up with in the realm of spirits. Remember that if you don't pursue holiness, you can be deceived. Let me tell you this.

Why is the third person of the Trinity called the Holy Spirit? Now, you could even go to a child and say, if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, what should you expect in your life? He will say holiness. There are many things that that devil can give me. He can give me, he can make me speak in tongues.

I've heard demon possessed people speak in tongues. When the demon is cast out, they stop. He can give me supernatural abilities.

He can tell me all about somebody's past life because he knows it. I can be a non-Christian. He can do it for me.

There are many things the devil can give me. There's one thing the devil can never give me, divine holiness. He can't make me a heavenly person.

The devil can make me a hundred percent earthly person wishing for a better house, a better car, more money, more prosperity, but he can never make me a heavenly minded man. So if you want to make sure that the spirit you're receiving is the Holy Spirit and not some other spirit, you better find out what the devil cannot give you. Don't think you've got a supernatural experience.

That's the Holy Spirit. Need not be. Don't think that because you can predict something about somebody's life, that's the Holy Spirit.

It need not be. There are fortune tellers, people who read poems, who read the stars, who say all types of things. Don't be fooled by all that.

The spirit fights against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit. And when you're led by the spirit, you will overcome the flesh. That's how I know the spirit I receive.

I began to get victory over sin in my life when God filled me with the Holy Spirit. That's how I knew that what I had was the Holy Spirit's power. And I found also tremendous ability to minister God's word prophetically like 1 Corinthians 14 verse 3. Now occasionally, it may happen that something I say without any knowledge of mine may help some person in a personal way.

I remember somebody came to me once in a meeting some years ago and said, Brother Zach, thank you so much for telling me not to take that house. I said, when did I say that? I never told anybody. I don't tell people such things.

Don't take this house or take this house. I'm very careful. He said, you were talking about something else in a message and I was sitting in that meeting.

The whole thing in my mind was I was considering renting a house and I was wondering, Lord, please speak to me. And something you said in the meeting in some other context said, don't take that house. And I took that was God's word for me.

Anyway, he said, because I didn't take it, I was saved because that house burnt down. I said, well, praise the Lord. Well, that's fine.

But God may use do that type of thing sometimes. But I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in leading person to Christ, to a godly life.

That's what God has called me for. And I would encourage you to seek for that type of gift of prophecy. Yesterday, I told you how certain people in Acts 21 told Paul in the spirit, don't go to Jerusalem, don't go to Jerusalem, don't go to Jerusalem when they were in tire.

But Paul said nothing doing. I'm not going to listen to you, fellas. I feel the Holy Spirit telling me to go.

And I showed you yesterday in Acts chapter 23, verse 11, that when he got to Jerusalem, he was imprisoned. People said, see, you should have listened to those prophets. You wouldn't have gotten to prison.

Do you think that going into prison is outside God's will? No, very often it is in God's will. We'd never have got Paul's letter to the Philippians if he was not in jail. The jailer in Philippi would not have been saved if he had not gone to jail.

And when Paul was in jail in Jerusalem, the Lord appeared to him and said, don't worry, Paul. It's a good thing you didn't listen to those sincere believers who thought they were speaking in the spirit, but were speaking out of their own spirit. You listen to me and you're in the right place.

As your witness for me here in Jerusalem, you will also witness for me in Rome. Paul would have completely missed the will of God if he had listened to those perhaps sincere people, but who were mistaken, who acted out of compassion and said something to him. They were not supposed to tell him what to do.

Agabus knew where to stop. So many people, when they prophesy, they don't know where to stop. They try to control people's lives.

That's not God's will for us. I want to say a few words about, you know, we have examples of numerous false prophets in the Old Testament. I don't know whether you've noticed this in John chapter 11, verse 49 to 51.

We read about a man called Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. Now, Caiaphas was one of those people about whom Jesus said, you serpents, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell? Thoroughly unconverted, a viper and one who would not escape the damnation of hell and the head of vipers. High priest.

And you know what he said? He said, don't you think, verse 50, that one man should die for the people so that the whole nation should not perish. One man, Jesus, should die for the people so that everybody does not perish. Now, this he did not say on his own initiative, verse 51.

But being the high priest that year, he prophesied. Who is this? A viper. He prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation.

There are some amazing things like this, which I don't fully understand in scripture. Saul, what did he prophesy? When the evil spirit was in him, he was prophesying. He says, the spirit of God came upon him.

There's some things I don't understand, but I tell you, I don't want to follow Saul or Caiaphas, even if they prophesy or any of their equivalents today. I would rather go to somebody like John or Isaiah, a godly man. It's because we are tremendously influenced by the supernatural that we get easily deceived.

Balaam, what he said was correct, but he's a false prophet because of what he was. He was not a godly man. The Bible calls him a sorcerer in Joshua chapter 13.

He was a sorcerer, a man in contact with evil spirits, and yet a lot of things he said in Numbers 23, 24 was correct. And it's because we are impressed by people who have a supernatural ability that you find they're able to lead girls into sexual sin, telling people to marry this person or that person, etc. People who preach scary, threatening prophecies.

I said that already. Anything that puts fear into your heart can't be from God. Should we fear when we have sinned? Sure.

We should be convicted. I believe a believer should be convicted even if he's got a small sin. It's the unbeliever to whom we have to say, flee from the wrath to come.

I don't have to tell a believer to be scared of God's wrath. No, I've got to tell a believer that you can get out of fellowship with God if you sin. Confess your sin.

The Holy Spirit convicts people. He doesn't scare people. So the Holy Spirit doesn't go around threatening people with judgment, but leads them to a godly life.

Some people have asked the question about Jonah's prophecy not being fulfilled. Well, God's intention all along was that Nineveh should repent. Jonah did not want it as we read in Jonah 4. But God's intention was not to destroy Nineveh.

He wanted them to repent. And when people repent, we can't say a prophecy is not fulfilled. They fulfilled the condition of repentance and therefore God did not destroy them.

Thank God he didn't destroy them. That's like our telling people, repent and you will not perish. That's a prophecy.

If they don't repent, they will perish. But if they don't perish because they repented, I can't say that's a false prophecy. The guy got saved.

So that's not a false prophecy at all. Okay. Somebody has asked a question, how to avoid false prophets who are relatives who come into our home.

Well, I'll tell you what you got to do. You got to be a disciple. Jesus said you got to hate father, Luke 14, 26, father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt.

You can add to that list any relative if you want to be my disciple. In other words, you got to love Jesus so supremely that you don't allow your uncle or aunt or anybody or your husband or wife or anybody to take the place that Jesus should have in your life. And you say, I'm sorry.

I mean, you may be younger. That person may be much older, very respectfully. You can say, uncle, I'm sorry.

I don't agree with this. Please excuse me. You go ahead and do what you like with the others.

But I'm going away somewhere else. I have nothing to do with these false prophets. What if your husband or wife supports the false prophet? Pray.

God is on your side and the devil is on that side. Who's going to win? I hope you know. How shall we protect the church from false prophets? Teach them God's word.

Teach them about true prophecy from 1 Corinthians 14 and also about the counterfeit. And take the tapes of these four studies, study them, translate it for the people in your church. And if someone claims to have a predictive gift of prophecy and you're a church leader, ask him to come and check with you first.

A pastor must exercise authority over his church. A pastor is like a father. I want to protect my children from kidnapers.

I remember in Bangalore when there was a scare of kidnapping, children were being kidnapped. I used to tell my little children when they go to school, don't listen to these fellows who come and offer you sweets and say, daddy's waiting around the corner. I'll take you there.

I warned my children against kidnapers. And today, as an elder in a church, I warned the people in my church against kidnapers in the church. We do it.

If you're not a father, you won't understand that. And I want to say one more thing. Holiness is the mark and the burden of the prophets, but the standard is much higher in the New Testament than in the Old Testament.

So don't compare Old Testament prophets with the standard that Jesus gave now that the Holy Spirit has come. Another question is concerning human intuition. Intuition is a human thing.

Worldly people have it. That's not prophecy. We don't know the thoughts of other people.

1 Corinthians 2 verse 11 is so clear. Who knows the thoughts of another person, of a person except the man himself? That's so clear. And if the devil puts thoughts into your mind, you be careful.

God does not allow us to know the thoughts of another person. He allows us to speak forth God's word without knowing the thoughts of people, and that may expose the secret thoughts without our knowledge. That's how I found it for 25 years in my ministry.

I don't know it, but people realize the secrets of their lives are being made manifest, and I don't even know it. Another question is concerning Christ coming in the flesh. A person confesses that Christ comes in the flesh.

What does that mean? It means the person is saying he is acknowledging that Christ lived as a man just like me, and therefore I can walk as he walked. Christ is my example. Christ in the flesh is my living example to follow.

Another question somebody asked is, didn't Jesus say greater works than I have done, you will do. I never made anybody fall down, but you will make people fall down. Is that the greater work? Jesus raised people from the dead.

Are you trying to say pushing a person down on the platform is greater than raising him from the dead? You got to be crazy to believe that. Falling down and showing your feet to God is an insult. We know in India, what do you think if I show you my feet? People in the Bible fell down with their head down.

That's not the way people are falling down now. People are falling down and showing their feet to God, and the devil is making a fool of all these people, insulting God like that. I fall down before God frequently, but with my head down always first.

Do it like that. That's the right way. Another question concerns pastors and elders.

Do we need pastors and elders? Certainly. Certainly. God has gifted them, but it must not be a one-man show.

That's what I meant. We need to get the body to fulfill their function also. What about money? Can a person who preaches the gospel live of the gospel? The Lord has ordained that those who preach the gospel can live of the gospel.

You can receive money when you preach the gospel. Jesus did it. You can't be better than him.

Peter did it. All I would say is, don't receive from unbelievers. Don't receive from people who don't receive your ministry.

Don't receive from people who are poorer than you. Be careful in that, and I believe it's right to take. I know examples in times in my life where God has told me, in some church I went to, God said, don't take money from these people.

I listened to God. Sometimes he comes and gives me money. The Lord said, don't take it.

And sometimes God said, take that money and give it to that church which is having a building fund. Thousands of rupees. Give it.

Listen to God. He'll provide all your need, but be faithful in this area. Dreams.

Can dreams be from God? Yes. Sometimes. Sometimes it's because you ate too much at night.

You get all these funny dreams, but sometimes dreams can be from God. I remember very vividly in my life many years ago in a dream, God showed me the faces of three sisters and said, these sisters admire you a lot. Be careful because they have got a flirtatious spirit.

That was a good warning for me as a young servant of the Lord. I just avoided them. Wasn't that good that God warned me in advance? He warned the wise men in advance and he warned Joseph in advance.

And so another question is concerning sons of the prophets. Who were the sons of the prophets? They were young people trained by the prophets, by the true prophets in schools to spread what the true prophets had heard from God. Those sons of the prophets didn't have a direct connection with God.

The spirit was not upon them. The spirit is upon somebody like Samuel or Elisha. And to spread that message all over the country, they trained other people, say, take this word which I heard from God and spread it around.

But today, all of you can have the spirit upon you. We are in the New Testament. We don't have to just receive a message and take it.

We can have the spirit and have a direct contact with God. Just a couple of things more. Elisha was once telling people in Israel, the enemy is coming here, the enemy is coming here because he was in touch with

God.

This is one of the major functions of prophecy, to warn God's people ahead of time. And finally, I want to encourage all of you to read Luke 11, verse 5 to 8. It refers to the time where a man went to his neighbor and asked for three loaves of bread. The three loaves are edification, exhortation, consolation.

Go to God and say, Lord, give me this threefold gift of prophecy so that somebody who has come to my house with need, I can meet his need. If you have a burden to help others, bless others, God will give you the gift of prophecy. And I pray that many of you will learn to prophesy in the days to come.

Pursue after love and covet to prophesy. God bless you all. Let's pray.

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