

ROMANS (12:6)

The Practice of Prophecy

PART 63 – FEBRUARY 26, 2006

DIFFERENT GIFTS

Last time, we read that each believer is a vital part of the body of Christ, independent *and* interdependent. And we talked about what it means to “belong to one another”.



Our face is as far from our big toe as two body parts get. So, how come when we stub our toe, our face does THIS? The face is so deeply connected to the toe that it responds as if it was feeling the pain itself.

Paul now continues to build from this analogy:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. – *Romans 12:6 NIV*

We don't all have the same gifts, but each of us *is* gifted.

We have *different* gifts

Your mother was right ... you are a gifted child! If we each had all the same gifts, we wouldn't need each other. And God intends for us to need each other for unity.

- This means that my gifts are for you, your gifts are for me.

If I was a gifted singer, it wouldn't do me any good in the shower; I am blessed only as I bless others with my gift.

Q: Have you ever heard someone described as having *hidden talents*?

That's a person whose gifts and abilities are kept more-or-less to themselves. And others are surprised when they learn of them.

Q: Remember Jesus parable about the hidden talents (*Mat. 25:14-28*)

A man gives three servants different talents (money) to invest for him while he's gone ... but only two of them invest it.

But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. – *Mat. 25:18 NIV*

The man returns, and he says the same thing to the first two:

Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!
- Mat. 25:21, 23 NIV

But then the third servant approaches him and said:

"I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground." ... His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant!" - Matthew 25:25-26 NIV



The moral is clear: Don't bury your talents! God doesn't expect us to have as many talents as the next guy, but He does expect us to use what we have. We must invest the gifts we've been given.

Maybe you don't approve of the gifts (or lack thereof) that God gave you. Maybe you feel overlooked, left out, or incomplete.

But our gifts are: "according to the grace given us"



Your individuality *is* a work of grace. And *you* are a gift of grace to this church and to the body of Christ. If you got grace - you got gifts. We each have a distinct expression of God's grace to offer:

- As a gift to the folks *inside* the church.
- As a witness to those *outside* the church.
- As a unique tribute to our Creator.

Dissatisfaction can be more about God-esteem than self-esteem.

PROPORTIONAL PROPHETS

Q: Do you think of yourself as a prophet?

Don't underestimate what God has given you. Most of you have this gift, just in different proportions.

If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith

I want to do a quick, intense, scripture study on prophecy, because it is such a misunderstood New Testament gift.

First, we have to stop thinking in terms of "OT" prophets.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... - *Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV*

So, there's something different since Christ came. Let's try to define it. At Pentecost, Peter quoted the prophet Joel on exactly what was supposed to change when the Christ came.

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy ... - *Acts 2:17 NIV*

Prophecy goes, from *priestly office* to *widespread experience* for both men and women. And when Paul addresses the church he says:

Eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy ... everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort ... he who prophesies edifies the church. - *1 Corinthians 14:1,3 NIV*

Keep this in mind, it: "strengthens", "encourages", and "comforts".

Now, look what Paul says a few verses later, while instructing the Corinthians on how to better organize their church service.

Two or three prophets should speak, and **the others should weigh carefully what is said**. And if a **revelation** comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be **instructed and encouraged**. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. - *1 Corinthians 14:29-32 NIV*

This tells us so much! First, Prophecy is based on "revelation".

In other words it's an illumination, a *human report* of something that God has brought to mind to "instruct and encourage" others.

On an average Sunday here, you're likely to hear prophecies from the greeters, Ken Beane, Pastor John, and myself. And after church, while we're enjoying coffee and cookies, the Spirit gives us incredibly normal insights for and from others.

- Prophecy is simply when God imparts to you, a truth for me.

But New Testament prophecy isn't foolproof. That's why Paul tells us to view these insights with healthy skepticism: "the others should weigh carefully what is said"

It's our job to check them out, assess them, and test them.

Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. - *1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 NIV*

The gift of prophecy doesn't have final authority, the Gospel does. And that's how we test our personal revelations.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part ... - *1 Cor. 13:9 NIV*

That's why it's okay to check it out, and maybe throw it out.

- We must be prayerful and careful when we offer insights

The way Paul encouraged prophecy, it wasn't spooky or weird, it was simply men and women of God sharing timely, Spirit-inspired insights to strengthen, encourage, and comfort one another.

And when it comes to prophecy, we must always:

"Use it in proportion to [our] faith"

This simply means that we should always share our Spiritual insights in a manner that agrees and aligns with the Gospel.

A. We will speak humbly

- We will not alter our voice, or claim a divine authority.
- We will graciously leave room for our words to be tested.

As faith increases, so does meekness; as we see the mercy of God more clearly, we sense our own fallibility more keenly.

B. We will speak boldly

We will not be silent; we will speak the tough or tender timely word, to protect and hold accountable those we love.

As faith increases, so does confidence in the promises and truths of God's Word, and the courage to share them with others.

C. [And most of all] We will speak lovingly

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge ... but have not love, I am nothing. - *1 Corinthians 13:2 NIV*