

LXXX. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY: 1 Corinthians 12:10

INTRODUCTION. Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and visitors. Christ commands this through Paul in **1 Thessalonians 5:19-21**: "19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good."

Q. How do we obey that today? Well it really depends on what the spiritual gift of prophecy is. Some say it is New Revelation immediately given from God to one person that they are to share with another person. Some say it is akin to preaching. Which is it? Let's see.

CON(TEXT). **1 Corinthians 12:10b** "to another prophecy"

Prophecy (Gk. προφητεία - *prophēteia*): "A discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God."

I) Prophecy can be simply telling others the gospel so that they may be saved (Acts 2:14-20).

– **Acts 2:14-20**

"14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17 "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

18 even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophecy.

19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

20 the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be

saved."

- **Q. What did the 120 Christians do right before this, which Peter is responding to in his sermon? A.** They proclaimed the gospel to all those who were gathered in Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost.
 - **BOYS AND GIRLS**

II) Prophecy can be *foretelling* future events (Acts 11:27-28).

- **Acts 11:27-28** "27 Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius)."
 - **BOYS AND GIRLS**

III) Prophecy can be *forthtelling* new revelation, such as speaking directly from God to people (Isaiah 48:17).

- **Isaiah 48:17** "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.'"
 - **BOYS AND GIRLS**

IV) Prophecy can be *forthtelling* old revelation, such as explaining and applying what God has already said in the Scriptures (Romans 12:6).

- **Romans 12:6** "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to [the] faith."
 - **BOYS AND GIRLS**

QUESTION. Which of these is Paul referencing when he mentions the spiritual gift of prophecy?

ANSWER 1. He could be referencing simply telling other people the gospel. This would not make much sense, given that is the duty of every Christian, in taking part to fulfill the great commission, rather than it being an edifying spiritual gift. ***Remember all the gifts exist for the common good, for building up the body of Christ.

Matthew 28:19-20 "18 And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

ANSWER 2. Paul could be referencing foretelling of future events. If this is the case, we would need to test the words of anyone who alleges to have this

gift. If what he foretells does not come true, he reveals himself to be a false prophet that should, at the very least, be excommunicated by the church, and possibly executed by the magistrate.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 "20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'— 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him."

ANSWER 3. Paul could be referencing forthtelling new revelation. If this is the case, we should expect that gift to have been a gift that ceased after the age of the apostles, since it would have served as a foundation-laying gift. Once the foundation is laid, there is not need to lay another. Once the Scriptures are complete, there is no need for new revelation.

Ephesians 2:20-22 "20 [Christians are] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 "16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

ANSWER 4. Paul could be referencing forthtelling old revelation, such as explaining and applying what God has already said in the Scriptures. If this is the case, would could just as easily say this is *the spiritual gift of preaching*.

I do think this is what Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 12:10. I think this is what Paul is referring to, because this gift is also mentioned in Romans 12:6, and it is clearly both an abiding and edifying spiritual gift.

Romans 12:6 "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to [the] faith."

Additionally, when you see the way Paul explains the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, it makes the most sense that he is referring to preaching, so that the saints would be built up.

1 Corinthians 14:3-5 "3 the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up."

1 Corinthians 14:19 "Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five

words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue."

CONCLUSION OF LENGTHY INTRODUCTION AND TRANSITION TO THE GIFT OF PREACHING.

If the spiritual gift of prophecy is personal evangelism, great. We should all be evangelizing anyways.

If the spiritual gift of prophecy is foretelling the future, OK. Let us examine the prophecy and at the very least excommunicate, and maybe have the magistrate execute, those who are false prophets.

If the spiritual gift of prophecy is forthtelling new revelation, then it surely ceased after the age of the apostles seeing that the foundation has been laid and we have the perfect and completed Scriptures.

If the spiritual gift of prophecy is what we ordinarily call preaching, then let us continue to be edified by this gift as we all have been through the explaining and applying of the written Word of God to our lives.

For the remaining time we have together, we are going to assume that the spiritual gift of prophecy is synonymous with what we would in our day call the spiritual gift of preaching.

DOCTRINE. Some Christians are given the spiritual gift of prophesy and they should use it to build up the Church.

– **BOYS AND GIRLS (repeat doctrine)**

OUTLINE. Let me point out to you SIX WAYS the spiritual gift of prophesy should be used so that it builds up the church.

I. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY SHOULD BE USED FOR *INSTRUCTION* or *DOCTRINE* (1 Corinthians 14:19; 2 Timothy 4:2).

1 Corinthians 14:19 "Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue."

2 Timothy 4:2 "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (doctrine)."

Instruction or Doctrine would include what the Scriptures teach concerning,

I) God's Essence and Attributes (Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology).

II) God's Promises (the gospel and covenant theology).

III) God's Commands (the moral law, and how to properly understand the ceremonial and judicial as well).

IV) God's works of Creation (not only creator but designer).

V) God's works of Providence (He upholds the universe by the word of His power).

Creation and Providence would include all knowledge in God's world—science, history, philosophy, economics, physical health, farming, political theory, or any other thing that exists to be used for God's glory and our good.

VI) God's works of Restoration (ecclesiology, discipleship, missions, evangelism, eschatology, etc.).

– **BOYS AND GIRLS**

II. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY SHOULD BE USED FOR *EXAMINATION* or *TRIAL* (Matthew 5:46, Matthew 7:3, Mark 8:36, Luke 12:20, Galatians 3:1, James 2:14).

Matthew 5:46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

Matthew 7:3 "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

Mark 8:36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"

Luke 12:20 (Parable of the Rich Fool) "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'"

Galatians 3:1 "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?"

James 2:14 "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"

Examination or trial makes the listener audit their own soul. It forces the listener or reader to face that truth and its application.

– **BOYS AND GIRLS**

III. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY SHOULD BE USED FOR *WARNING* or *AWAKENING* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 1:6-9, Ephesians 5:11-17).

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NASB) "9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Galatians 1:6-9 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort

the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."

Ephesians 5:11-17

"11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

*"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."*

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Warning and Awakening says, "If you do not repent, there is judgement and fire and wrath that awaits you for your sin. Therefore turn to Christ in faith and live!

– **BOYS AND GIRLS**

IV. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY SHOULD BE USED FOR *REPROOF* or *REBUKE* (2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Timothy 5:20, Titus 1:9, Titus 1:12-14, Titus 2:15).

2 Timothy 4:2 "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

1 Timothy 5:20 "As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear."

Titus 1:9 "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

Titus 1:12-14 "12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth."

Titus 2:15 "Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

Reproof says, "You are *thinking* wrongly about Christ's person or providence or precepts and you need to repent."

Rebuke says, "You are *acting* wrongly concerning Christ's person or providence or precepts and you need to repent."

– **BOYS AND GIRLS**

V. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY SHOULD BE USED

FOR ENCOURAGEMENT or COMFORT (1 Corinthians 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Isaiah 40:1-2).

1 Corinthians 14:3 "The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Isaiah 40:1-2

"1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that her warfare is ended,

that her iniquity is pardoned,

that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins."

Encouragement says, "Because Christ died and was raised, let's go storm the gates of hell."

Comfort says, "Because Christ died and was raised, the gates of hell shall not prevail."

– **BOYS AND GIRLS**

VI. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PROPHECY SHOULD BE USED FOR EXHORTATION or DIRECTION (Acts 2:40, Acts 11:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 1 Timothy 4:13, Titus 2:15).

Acts 2:40 "And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'"

Acts 11:23 "When [Barnabas] came and saw the grace of God (in Antioch), he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose..."

1 Thessalonians 2:12 "We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory."

1 Timothy 4:13 "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching."

Titus 2:15 "Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

All of our exhortations should be something like, "Because Christ bought you on the cross and is both your Savior and King, do this for His glory in obedience to His commands!"

– **BOYS AND GIRLS**

CONCLUSION.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

"19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good."



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HELPS

1 Corinthians 12:5-11

Extraordinary Spiritual Gifts / John Owen

The Works of John Owen. 453-474. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965.

[BX9315.O94 W67 1965](#)

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1 Corinthians 12:11

Ministerial Endowments the Work of the Spirit / John Owen

The Works of John Owen. 441-451. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965.

[BX9315.O94 W67 1965](#)

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Spiritual Gifts Essential to a Visible Church-State / John Owen

The Gospel Standard 123, no.1464 (Dec 1957): 353-361.

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- **12:1-11** Wickliff, John, "Of Spiritual Gifts," *Writings of the Reverend and Learned John Wickliff*, vol. 1 in the set, *The British Reformers*, pp. 215-218.
- **12:5-11** John Owen Vol. 4 pg. 453
- **12:6** Nettleton, Asahel, notes for a sermon, *Sermons*, pp. 466-467.

- **12:13** Boston, Thomas, "Of Union with Christ," *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*, i.544-556.
 - Boston, Thomas, "How the Sacraments Become Effectual Means of Salvation," *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism*, ii.460-465.
 - **12:27-28** Baxter, Richard, "Christ, & Not the Pope, Universal Head of the Church," *The Morning Exercises*, v.672-689.
 - **12:28** Spurgeon, C.H., "Helps," #777, *MTP* 13.589-600.
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COMMENTARY

- **HENRY:** "'To another prophecy,' that is, ability to foretell future events, which is the more usual sense of prophecy; or to explain scripture by a peculiar gift of the Spirit. See ch. 14:24." — **Henry, Matthew. Unabridged Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (best navigation) . OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.**
- **POOLE:** "'To another prophecy,' which in the general signifieth the revelation of the will of God, whether by the foretelling future contingencies, or opening the Scriptures by preaching or teaching." — **Poole, Matthew. English Annotations on the Holy Bible . E4 Group. Kindle Edition.**
- **CALVIN:** "By 'prophecy,' I understand the singular and choice endowment of unfolding the secret will of God, so that a Prophet is a messenger, as it were, between God and man. (742) My reason for taking this view will be explained more fully afterwards." — **Calvin, John. Calvin On The Bible: John Calvin's Bible Commentary (p. 13062). Kindle Edition.**
- **GILL:** "'To another prophecy:' either foretelling of future events, as was given to Agabus, and the four daughters of Philip, and others, Acts 11:27 or a gift of understanding the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of preaching the Gospel, which is in this epistle frequently called "prophesying", particularly in the two following chapters; and those endowed with it are called prophets, Acts 13:1." — **Gill, John. Gill's Bible Commentary . OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.**
- **MACARTHUR:** "To some Christians God has given the gift of 'prophecy.' There has long been a difference of interpretation among evangelicals as to whether or not prophecy is a continuing, permanent gift or, like healings and miracles, passed away with the apostolic age. The primary argument for those who maintain it was a temporary sign gift—that it was a revelatory gift only, and therefore ceased when revelation ceased—is based on 1 Corinthians 13:8, where the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and

knowledge all are referred to together as ceasing. As will be discussed when treating that passage, though they all appear in that verse, prophecy and knowledge are not in the same category as tongues, and the mention of them together in 13:8 does not prove they are of the same type—any more than the mention of the various gifts in 12:8-10 proves they are all of the same type. We will assume here that prophecy is a permanent edifying gift.

Like its Hebrew equivalent (*nābā*), the Greek verb (*prophēteuō*) behind prophecy simply means “to speak forth, to proclaim.” It assumes the speaker is before an audience, and could mean “to speak publicly.” The connotation of prediction was added sometime in the Middle Ages. Although many of the prophets made predictions, that was not their basic ministry and the idea is not involved in the original terms used to describe them and their work. The original terms, in fact, did not necessarily carry the idea of revelation. God revealed a great deal of His Word through the prophets, but much of their ministry was simply proclaiming, expounding, and exhorting with revelation already given. The biblical prophets sometimes revealed (see 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Pet. 1:21) and sometimes only reiterated what had already been revealed. A prophet of God, therefore, is simply one who speaks forth God’s Word, and prophecy is the proclaiming of that Word. The gift of prophecy is the Spirit-given and Spirit-empowered ability to proclaim the Word effectively. Since the completion of Scripture, prophecy has no longer been the means of new revelation, but has only proclaimed what has already been revealed in Scripture.

The simplest and clearest definition of this function is given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:3, “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

I do not believe there has been a time in the history of God’s dealing with men that He has not endowed some of His people with gifts of this kind. During the Old and New Testament periods and throughout history between and since, the Lord always has equipped some of His saints to speak for Him with special power and effectiveness. In 1 Corinthians 14:1 Paul urges believers in general to “pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” He makes the same plea again in verse 39. The apostle is not suggesting that every Christian should seek personally to have a gift of proclamation, but that all Christians collectively should want that gift to be ministered among them. Throughout chapter 14 Paul contrasts the gift of tongues, a sign gift needing interpretation before either believers or unbelievers ever can understand it, with the gift of prophecy, which has the specific purpose

of edifying all those who hear.

In speaking of spiritual gifts in Romans 12, Paul says, "let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith" (v. 6). The term *analogia* ("proportion") refers to a right relationship to or agreement with, and the Greek of this verse reads literally, "of the faith." A better rendering therefore would be, "according to the measured-out faith." "The faith" is used several times in the New Testament as a synonym of the gospel, the God-given body of Christian belief (Acts 6:7; Jude 3, 20). Believers today with the gift of prophecy are empowered to speak forth not according to their personal subjective faith but according to God's already-revealed objective faith, His Word. That primary purpose of prophecy is given in the book of Revelation: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (19:10). And the Bible is the testimony of Jesus (cf. John 5:39). Prophecy can never deviate from the Word of God written, as Paul makes plain when he says, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor. 14:37). The gift of prophecy is the Spirit's special enablement of a Christian to testify of Jesus. No one is to "despise prophetic utterances" (1 Thess. 5:20), but the Corinthians apparently did look down on it, and even replaced it with ecstatic utterances, as chapter 14 reveals." — **MacArthur, John. 1 Corinthians MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series Book 17) . Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.**

PURITAN QUOTES

William Perkins (1558–1602) — *The Art of Prophecy* (Latin 1592; English 1606)

- "Prophecy is a solemn public utterance by the prophet, related to the worship of God and the salvation of our neighbours: 'But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men' (1 Cor. 14:3)... 'But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all' (1 Cor. 14:24)."
- "Preaching the Word is prophesying in the name and on behalf of Christ, through which those who hear are called into the state of grace and preserved in it."
- "If anyone asks which spiritual gift is the 'most excellent', undoubtedly the prize must be given to prophesying."

- "The dignity of the gift of preaching is like that of a lady helped into and carried along in a chariot, while other gifts of speech and learning stand by like maidservants, conscious of her superiority."
- "Preaching has twofold value: (1) It is instrumental in gathering the church and bringing together all of the elect; (2) It drives away the wolves from the folds of the Lord."
- "Preaching is the flexanima [allurer of the soul], the allurer of the soul, by which our self-willed minds are subdued and changed from an ungodly and pagan life-style to a life of Christian faith and repentance. It is also the weapon which has shaken the foundations of ancient heresies, and also, more recently cut to pieces the sinews of the Antichrist."
- "The prophet's task is to speak partly as the voice of God (in preaching) and partly as the voice of the people (in praying)."
- "Prophecy has two parts: preaching the Word and public prayer."

John Owen (1616–1683) — *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit (including Discourse of Spiritual Gifts)*

- "The names of prophet and prophecy are used variously in the New Testament: for, 1. Sometimes an extraordinary office and extraordinary gifts are signified by them; and, 2.... Hence also those who are not called unto office, who have yet received a gift enabling them to declare the mind of God in the Scripture unto the edification of others, may be said to 'prophesy'."
- "When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. Their prophesying, which was their speaking... in strange tongues... or in the interpretation of Scripture."
- On the cessation of extraordinary gifts (including tongues, prophetic disclosure, and healing): "That dispensation of the Spirit is long since ceased, and where it is now pretended unto by any, it may justly be suspected as an enthusiastical delusion."
- On private revelations: "If private revelations agree with Scripture, they are needless, and if they disagree, they are false." (A widely attributed summary of Owen's position on post-canonical claims.)
- "Since the finishing of the canon of the Scripture, the church is not under that conduct as to stand in need of such new extraordinary revelations. It doth, indeed, live upon the internal gracious operations of the Spirit, enabling us to understand, believe, and obey the perfect, complete revelation of the will of God already made; but new revelations it hath neither need nor use of."

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Comprehension Questions

1. What is the main command from 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21, and how are the three parts ("Do not quench the Spirit," "Do not despise prophecies," and "Test everything; hold fast what is good") connected?
2. In this context, how do we "not quench the Spirit"?
3. How should we test any prophecy or supposed word from God?
4. What are the four different ways the word "prophecy" is used in Scripture? Briefly describe each one.
5. Why is the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12:10 not simply personal evangelism or sharing the gospel?
6. What are the two main reasons given for rejecting the idea that the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12:10 involves foretelling future events or giving new revelation today?
7. Which form of prophecy does the message conclude Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 12:10? Which two passages are used to support this view (Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 14)?
8. What is the key doctrinal statement we are to take from the message?

2. Biblical and Theological Questions

9. In Romans 12:6, what does "in proportion to our faith" (or "according to the faith") mean? Why is this important for the gift of prophecy?
10. How do 1 Corinthians 14:3-5 and verse 19 help us understand the purpose of the gift of prophecy? What contrast is made with the gift of tongues?
11. How does Ephesians 2:20-22 support the idea that certain revelatory gifts were foundational and are no longer given today?
12. How does Deuteronomy 18:20-22 apply to anyone who claims to foretell the future today?
13. What is the difference between "teaching" and "preaching"? Why is preaching described as more than simply instructing the mind?

3. The Six Uses of the Gift of Prophecy

The sermon listed six ways the spiritual gift of prophecy (understood as preaching) should be used to build up the church. Discuss each one:

14. Instruction / Doctrine

Why is clear, doctrinal preaching important? What specific truths do

Christians (including children) need to learn?

15. Examination / Trial

What does it mean to use truth for self-examination? Share one biblical example from the message (such as the Sermon on the Mount, Galatians 3:1, or James 2:14) and explain how it works.

16. Warning / Awakening

Why are strong warnings necessary in the Christian life? Which warning passage stood out to you most, and why?

17. Reproof / Rebuke

What is the difference between reproof and rebuke? Why do many today avoid direct rebuke, and how should we respond when it is needed?

18. Encouragement / Comfort

According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, what three things should the gift of prophecy provide? When do believers especially need encouragement and comfort?

19. Exhortation / Direction

What is the difference between saying "we should" and true biblical exhortation? How can practical directions (like those in Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*) help us live for God's glory?

4. Personal Reflection and Application

20. Have you ever heard someone say, "The Lord told me..." or "I feel like God laid this on my heart..." to justify a decision? How does the message challenge that language, and how should we respond when we hear it?

21. In what ways might we be "despising prophecies" or lightly regarding the preached word? How could this quench the Spirit?

22. Even if someone disagrees about the exact nature of the gift in 1 Corinthians 12:10, why can we still benefit from the teaching on preaching?

23. Which of the six uses of the gift of prophecy do you personally need most right now? Why?

24. How can parents use the gift of prophecy (preaching and teaching) effectively in the home with their children?

25. What makes preaching clear and helpful? How can we pray for and encourage those who preach?

26. Practically, how can we "test everything" and "hold fast what is good" when we hear preaching?

5. Group Discussion Starters

27. Share a time when preaching powerfully examined your heart, warned you, rebuked you, comforted you, or gave you clear direction. What made

it effective?

28. What can all Christians agree on about how we should treat the preached word, even if we differ on miraculous gifts?
29. As a group, how can we better “hold fast what is good” in relation to the preaching we receive?
30. Close in prayer: Ask God to help us not quench the Spirit by despising the preached word, and to bless those who exercise the gift of prophecy faithfully in all six ways.

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Listen carefully. “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good.” Listen to it again. That is 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21.

This is what God commands of you and me. “Do not quench the Spirit.” It means what the Holy Spirit is doing. Do not stifle that. Do not quench that. “Do not despise prophecies.” Okay? “But test everything. Hold fast what is good.” What I am concerned with is especially that middle part, and really verse 19. “Do not quench the Spirit” is connected to “do not despise prophecies,” and the last part is connected to it as well, because it is saying whatever prophecy you receive, test it. Test it and “hold fast what is good.” Test it against what? How do you test a prophecy? You test it by the perfect word of God pinned down in the Scriptures. How do you not quench the Spirit in this context? You do not despise prophecies. Someone gives you a prophecy; you do not despise it. That is the whole context. If you despise prophecies, you are quenching; you are trying to stop the work that the Spirit—God, the Holy Spirit—is doing. So the important question is how do we obey those verses today? How do we obey those verses? You and I have to obey those verses because God commands us. So how do we do that? And the answer to that is really dependent on what the spiritual gift of prophecy is. What is it? And that is what we are dealing with today in 1 Corinthians 12:10, where he just mentions—look in your own Bible in the middle part of verse 10—where he says ‘to another prophecy.’ And the whole point is spiritual gifts. He is listing spiritual gifts. And so we would say what he is saying is: to another, God the Holy Spirit sovereignly decides. To some he will give them the spiritual gift of prophecy. So, obeying the commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21—do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test everything; hold fast what is good. How we obey that depends on how we interpret what the spiritual gift of prophecy is. Because what does Paul mean in 1 Thessalonians 5:20 when he says, ‘Do not despise

prophecies'? What does he mean by that? You need to know there are some people in our day that are called continuationists who believe the miraculous and revelatory spiritual gifts have continued beyond the age of the apostles to today. They think—wrongly—that the spiritual gift of prophecy and 'do not despise prophecies' means God will immediately give a word to a Christian. God will give new revelation to a Christian. And the prophecy then is that when I give it to you. And so what is crazy about this is typically—I think a lot of us grew up Baptists, Southern Baptists, something like that. And Southern Baptists and general Baptists are typically Cessationists, which means they do not believe that the revelatory or miraculous spiritual gifts have continued past the age of the apostles. They do not believe that typically on paper. And some of us grew up charismatic, Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, Church of God, things like that, and they do believe those revelatory gifts have continued, such as tongues and the gift of prophecy the way they interpret it. But the crazy thing is the majority of Christians you will run into around here act like the spiritual gift of prophecy does mean that even if they do not name it as such. Here is what I mean. 'I just really feel like the Lord is telling me to tell you this. I really feel like the Lord has laid upon my heart to say this to you.' It is like anytime you say that to me, I am like, 'Not listening.' No, it is the same thing. 'God is—I just feel like God told me to do this. I feel like God told me.' It is all the same at the end of the day. It is the same thing. God gave me some new revelation that only I have got. And I might say to you, 'I do not think that is right or wise.' You are like, 'I feel like God is telling me I got to do this.' Like, yeah, but I think that is a foolish decision you are making or what you are saying is just flat out wrong. And someone can play the card: 'I feel like God is telling me to do this. The Lord has placed this on my heart.' Those kinds of things. No, you are functioning just like the continuationists even if you call yourself a cessationist when you say or act in those kinds of ways. So the question we have got to get back to is: Is that what he means? Does he mean it is a new revelation given to the person and then they are going to communicate it to someone else? Some think it means that. A lot of people think it means that. Even those who on paper would not say it means that still kind of act like that. Even if they would not call it the spiritual gift of prophecy, they still act like it. 'God has given me some word and I am going to act based on what I feel like God is telling me to do subjectively.' Or 'I am going to speak based on what God is telling me to do, what I feel like he is telling me to do.' Does he mean that? Some people think he means this gift still operates today and there are people who are able to predict the future, and these are typically not normal everyday Christians. These are the big—like uh mostly prosperity or word of faith charlatans who are on TV, have big ministries. So guys like Kenneth Copeland, guys like Todd White, uh different people like that, Joyce Meyer, Paula White, those kinds of people—they will predict the future and then it does not come true, but then they just backtrack it in some way and say, 'Actually, I just kind of got the word wrong a little bit and it is actually this.' So you have had people doing that for a long time—uh people making predictions about the future and then they do not come true. And so that one is

pretty easy to say, 'I do not think that is what it is.' And some people think it is simply just uh the ability to share the gospel with other people. That is what the spiritual gift of prophecy is—just sharing the gospel. But what really is it? We need to know that because we need to obey 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21. So what we are going to do is spend what you could consider a rather lengthy introduction understanding the different forms of prophecy in the Scripture and then examining and asking which one Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:10. And then I am going to give you what I think is the correct answer. And then we are going to assume that I am correct for the rest of the sermon so that I can apply it to you. Even if you disagree with me, you say, 'I do not necessarily think that is the spiritual gift he is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:10.' That does not matter because you could still agree with me that maybe he does not mean that in verse 10, but what you are saying is true. And that deals with preaching the word of God. And we need to learn that too. So even if you get to the point you do not agree with me, it is fine if you are wrong. You can just continue on with me and we will just assume that my position is right and you can still benefit even if you are like, 'I do not think that is the gift he is talking about in verse 10.' And you will understand what I mean here in a little bit by—even if we disagree about what he means in verse 10 of chapter 12—it will still be beneficial to you. So the word that is translated 'prophecy' just simply means a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God. Simply it means declaring God's word to others. And so at times it was a direct revelation through a prophet that they were speaking—new revelation. And then at other times this word is used for what we call preaching, like what I am doing now. God says this and I am explaining it and applying it to you. So the word itself—prophecy—does not help us a whole lot. Does he mean new revelation or does he mean old revelation or does he just mean sharing the gospel? Does he mean foretelling future events? Well, the word is used in all those cases throughout the Bible. So the word and the definition of the Greek word does not really help us narrow down what the spiritual gift is. But let me give you a four-point overview of what prophecy is in the Scriptures. First of all, prophecy can be simply telling others the gospel so that they may be saved. The word 'prophecy' and 'prophecy' is used for just simply sharing the gospel with other people. Listen to this. In Acts 2:14-20, it says—right after the Holy Spirit falls in the new covenant way on the early church, there are 120 Christians in the upper room. The Spirit comes and they all go out and they start sharing the gospel with all the Jews that had gathered together for the day of Pentecost. You know the scene in Acts 2—they are speaking in different languages as the Spirit empowers them so that the people that are there from all over the world, they can all hear the gospel in their own language. But everyone is sharing the gospel. It is not just the apostles. It is men. It is women. It is leaders. It is lay people. Listen. Peter, standing with the eleven—this is after they are sharing the gospel. And people say, 'These people are drunk.' Uh, Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, the crowd. And he says, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give ear to my

words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. It is 9:00 a.m. They are not drunk. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.'

So all the Christians start sharing the gospel in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They think they are drunk. Peter says, 'No, this is what Joel promised. All of God's people in the new covenant will be given the Spirit and any one of God's people can share the gospel with others.' That is what they were just doing in the immediate context. They are just telling other people the gospel. And Peter calls it prophesying. So prophecy can be simply telling others the gospel so that they may be saved. Boys and girls, when God poured out his Spirit on those first Christians after Jesus ascended back to heaven, they all went out and started telling other people what Jesus has done to save us from our sins. They all went out and started saying, 'Jesus lived so that you would be counted righteous before God. Jesus died in place of sinners so that if you believe in him, you will be forgiven of all your sins. Jesus arose from the dead. He is the Savior. He is the King. And if you believe in him, if you trust in him, you will be saved. You will be given eternal life.' That is what the Christians went out and did. And it was not just the apostles or pastors like me, like a pastor, a teacher. It was men. It was women, boys, girls. Everyone can tell others about Jesus Christ and what he has done to save us. You need to know that from a very young age. And adults, you need to know that and act like that too. If you have God the Holy Spirit, if you are a Christian, you can share the gospel with other people. You do not have to have a special gift. You do not have to be an excellent formal teacher. Just tell people what they need and that Christ can meet all those needs. They need righteousness. Christ has secured righteousness through his perfect life. They need forgiveness of sins. Christ died in our place for our sins. They need a Savior and King who can protect them, preserve them all the way to glory. Jesus arose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and gives everyone salvation who clings to him through faith. That is it. You can tell that to everyone, boys and girls. You can tell that to other people too. Jesus lived, died, and arose to save sinners like us. But that is what prophecy can be. Prophecy can be as simple as that—telling other people the gospel. But prophecy can also secondly be foretelling future events. And this is what a lot of people I think immediately jump to when we talk about prophecy—like they can give a prophecy predicting the future. And this is what many of the self-help prosperity charlatans do today and they are constantly proved wrong. Just have a good time this afternoon for a little bit and Google or YouTube 'word of faith false prophecies' and just see—there are guys who have done a great service to the church trying to expose these false teachers and so they will just show a clip of—I cannot remember exactly who it was—but they said, 'I declare—I am declaring

in faith that COVID-19 will not take another life.' And it was like 2021 and it is like—whoops—millions of people died after that. Like 'COVID-19 will be totally eradicated.' Kenneth Copeland—it is not quite the same thing as predicting the future but he foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world. This took place in the days of Claudius. So Luke is writing the book of Acts and Luke is a medical professional. He is very detailed with everything. It is an eyewitness account and he makes sure that we understand this guy named Agabus is a prophet and he foretold by God the Holy Spirit that a famine would happen. And everyone who read Acts, the first readers of Acts goes, 'Oh, I know exactly what famine he is talking about.' And he even includes 'this took place in the days of Claudius' to affirm—oh, it was that famine. Everybody knows it. If you have read 2 Corinthians, you know what the famine was too? Because Paul actually on his missionary journeys raises money for the saints in Jerusalem who were experiencing hardship during that famine. You remember that—he is saying the Macedonian Christians are poor, but they gave beyond their means. Look at the work of God's grace in their life. All that was him raising money to take to the church in Jerusalem because of that famine and Agabus the prophet predicted that was going to happen by the Holy Spirit before it happened. So prophecy can be foretelling future events. Prophecy thirdly can also be simply forthtelling. Foretelling is future events. Forthtelling is simply God says this. Prophecy can be forthtelling new revelation—new revelation immediately from God spoken to the people. This is what some of the prophets in the New Testament in the age of the apostles did. This is what the apostles themselves did when they spoke. This is what the Old Testament prophets did when they spoke. So if you read through the Old Testament, you will frequently see the prophets saying, 'Thus says the Lord.' Right? Usually when they are saying that, it is not them quoting some previously written part of Scripture. It is them quoting God. And God is speaking to and through them directly to the people. So it is new revelation speaking directly from God to the people, like Isaiah 48:17 for one example: 'Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.' So sometimes it is new revelation that is directly from God through a prophet to the people. And some people think the spiritual gift of prophecy is that today. Some people think it is foretelling future events. And some—but probably less—think it is just uh sharing the gospel with other people. And fourthly, some people think prophecy—or one option of prophecy that is a legitimate form of prophecy—is just forthtelling old revelation, meaning God has already said it in his Scriptures and you are explaining and applying what God has already said. That is a legitimate form of prophecy as well. It is not always new revelation. It is not always foretelling future events. It is not always simply sharing the gospel with someone else. Sometimes it is akin to what we would call preaching. Romans 12:6. Listen to this. This is another passage in our New Testament dealing with spiritual gifts. And none of these spiritual gifts in Romans are the miraculous sign gifts. None of them are the ones that ceased in the first century. And Paul even wrote Romans a bit after he wrote First

Corinthians. And so even some think those miraculous sign gifts had already ceased by the time he writes Romans. That is why he does not mention any of them. He does mention them in First Corinthians because it was written earlier when those were still operating in the early church. But he does not mention any of them in Romans. I think they are right. But he says this: 'Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.' If you have the spiritual gift of prophecy, Paul is saying in Romans 12:6, use it in proportion to the faith. It is a definite article. It is translated in the English Standard Version 'our faith.' And it—but that is confusing because people think it means like the measure of faith that you personally have. If you have the gift of prophecy, use it according to how much faith you have. No, it is a definite article. The faith is synonymous with the body of Christian doctrine revealed in the Scriptures. That is what 'the faith' means—Christianity and the doctrines contained in the Scriptures. That is why Jude says, 'I was eager to write to you about other things, but I have to write to you to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.' The faith. So in Romans 12:6, the spiritual gift of prophecy is what we would call preaching. That is what we would call it in our day. If you have that gift, use it. And it must be used in proportion to the faith. You do not get to use the gift of preaching, the gift of prophecy in that sense, to do whatever you want. It has to be within the confines of 'this is what God says in his word.' Explain it and apply it. So those are the four different types of prophecy in Scripture. Simply sharing the gospel, foretelling future events is one of them. Another is forthtelling new revelation, speaking directly from God to people. And then the fourth way is just forthtelling old revelation, explaining and applying what God has already said in the Scriptures. All right. Which one does Paul mean in First Corinthians 12:10?

Which one does he mean? He could mean any of those four. At face value, you just look at verse 10 and if you understand the different forms of prophecy in Scripture, you go, 'I do not know. He could mean any of those.' But let us see if we can try to nail down which one he actually does mean. Which one is he referencing? He could be referencing simply telling other people the gospel like they did in Acts 2. This would not make much sense though if that is simply what the gift of prophecy means—is that you are sharing the gospel with other people. Because the gift of prophecy is a spiritual gift given to only some Christians and it is for the building up of the saints in their particular body and in the body at large. So an evangelistic gift like that does not make a whole lot of sense and it is the duty of every Christian who has the Holy Spirit to share the gospel with other people. So that one does not make a ton of sense. All the gifts exist for the common good, for building up the body of Christ. So I do not think it is that one that he is referring to—simply sharing the gospel. Paul could be referencing foretelling future events. That could be what he means in 1 Corinthians 12:10. And if that is the case, we would need to test the words of anyone who alleges to have this gift. If they think the spiritual gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12:10 continues and it means 'I can

foretell future events,' then you and I have to test everything that they say on whether or not what they say actually comes true. And you know what the standard is? If you actually are a prophet and have that gift, you are right 100 percent of the time. If you are wrong once, you are what we call a false prophet. So if that is the case—that he means foretelling future events—we have to test him and what he foretells. If it does not come true, he reveals himself to be a false prophet that should at the very least be excommunicated from the church and potentially executed by the magistrate. You know that is the penalty for someone professing to speak a direct word from God. And if it is not, it is the death penalty in Deuteronomy. That is how seriously God takes someone saying, 'I am speaking direct new revelation from God and foretelling something.' God says, 'If they do that, it does not come true. Kill them.' Whoa. Now, the New Testament application for us in the church is not that we pull out guns. We are like, 'Did not come true, man.' We do not have that jurisdiction. We have the sword of the Spirit. We are not given the sword of vengeance, but the magistrate is given the sword of vengeance. That is why I say they must be excommunicated from the church if they reveal themselves to be a false prophet. And potentially, if we had just laws, the magistrate would put them to death for claiming to speak from God a lie. God takes his word very seriously. And if you claim to speak directly from him and it is not true, you forfeit your life. That is how seriously God takes his glory. Listen to Deuteronomy 18:20-22. 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. If someone presumes—means professes to speak a word from the Lord but it is not actually a word from the Lord—death.' Verse 21: 'And if you say in your heart, "How may we know that the word that the Lord has not spoken?"' It is phrased strangely. How do we know if the prophet is false? How do we know that it was not what the Lord said? Verse 22: 'When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.' So the standard for if you are foretelling future events—the standard is 100 percent of the time you are right. And what people nowadays who believe uh the gift of prophecy and new revelation or foretelling future events—they believe that still continues today. The trick that they play, they say, 'Well, the New Testament gift of prophecy is different.' And it is always correct coming from God, but sometimes the prophet or the one with the spiritual gift of prophecy gets it wrong from when God gives it to them to when they get it out to others. So they somehow misinterpret it or get it a little bit wrong. And that is just kind of how it goes. So then we would go, 'So what is the point?' We still cannot trust what you are saying because we just have to ask. Someone says, 'I have a word of prophecy for you.' Just ask them, 'Might you be wrong about that?' And they have to say, 'I might be.' 'Okay. Why should I listen to you then?' Can you read anything in here—anything that you have to say—but this might be wrong? No. So we can trust every word. Every word of the Lord proves true. So he may be referencing foretelling future events. If so, got to examine it.

And those purge the evildoer from your midst. If they prove themselves to be a false prophet, at the very least they are excommunicated, cut off from the life of the local church. Maybe the magistrate should execute them as well—if we had just laws. Paul could be referencing forthtelling new revelation—not foretelling future events, but forthtelling new revelation. If that is the case, if that is what he is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:10, we should expect that gift to have been a gift that ceased after the age of the apostles since it would have served as a foundation-laying gift. Once the foundation is laid, you do not have to lay another foundation. So if the gift he is talking about in verse 10 is new, direct, immediate revelation, then it ceased. There is no new revelation today. You do not need it. I do not need it. No one needs it. We have the perfectly sufficient Scriptures that are able to equip us in every way for every good work concerning everything we should believe and everything we should do. Additionally, listen to Ephesians 2:20-22. If this is the gift he is talking about, then the foundation has been laid and it is done. Christians are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit—built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Scriptures. If this is the case, we could just as easily say this is—in our vernacular—the spiritual gift of preaching like Paul mentions in Romans 12:6. I think that is the gift that Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:10. I do not think he is talking about a sign gift that has ceased. I do not think he is talking about foretelling future events. And I do not think he is simply talking about being able to share the gospel. The one that makes the most sense—because of what Romans 12:6 says, that Paul lists it elsewhere and it is not one of the miraculous sign gifts. It is an abiding gift according to the faith. We are to use it. I think that is the gift that he is referring to here in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Additionally, when you see the way Paul explains the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, it makes the most sense that he is referring to preaching so that the saints would be built up. Go in your Bibles, go over to 1 Corinthians 14 and look at verses 3-5. If you are not as familiar with chapter 14, in a lot of the chapter he is juxtaposing prophecy with tongues—speaking in different languages—and he is contrasting them and putting them against one another and saying prophecy is way better because it—let me show you what he says it does. 1 Corinthians 14:3-5: 'The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.' That is the whole point of spiritual gifts. 'Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophecy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.' So this gift of prophecy is for the upbuilding, for the encouragement, for the consolation of the church, to edify the church, to build the church up. Now look at verse 19. Verse 19 in chapter 14. He does not use the word 'prophecy,' but he is still contrasting and juxtaposing the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues. In verse 19, he says, 'Nevertheless, in

church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.'

Because of the way he talks about the spiritual gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, and because it is an abiding, edifying gift that has not ceased—in Romans 12:6—I think it makes the most sense that Paul is actually talking about what we would just call the spiritual gift of preaching. He may mean new revelation. If so, it ceased. He may mean foretelling. If so, judge them. He may mean sharing the gospel. If so, all right, let us all just keep sharing the gospel with others and do the same thing we have been doing. But I think he actually means preaching. If the spiritual gift of prophecy is personal evangelism, great. We should all be evangelizing anyway. If the spiritual gift of prophecy is foretelling the future, okay, let us examine the prophecy and at the very least excommunicate and then maybe have the magistrate execute those who are false prophets. If the spiritual gift of prophecy is forthtelling new revelation, it surely ceased after the age of the apostles, seeing that the foundation has been laid and we have the perfect and completed Scriptures. If it is what we ordinarily call preaching, then let us continue to be edified by this gift as we have all been through the explaining and applying of the written word of God to our lives. Now, for the time remaining that we have together, we are going to assume that I am right and that he is talking about the spiritual gift of prophecy being preaching—explaining, applying God's word. So here is the doctrine that I want you to grab from this: Some Christians are given the spiritual gift of prophecy and they should use it to build up the church. Some Christians are given the spiritual gift of prophecy and they should use it to build up the church. A quick word on the distinction between teaching and preaching or instructing—just teaching and prophecy. Teaching is different than preaching. And you know it from experience. You know when you are being taught and you know when you are being preached to and someone is applying things to you, making you examine yourself, someone is exhorting you to do certain things or think certain things. Instructing is just putting things in your mind. Preaching is going through the mind to the soul to get you to respond. Preaching is far different. It includes exhortations. It includes warnings. It includes examining questions and trials. There is a difference. Teaching—or rather preaching—includes teaching, but not all teaching is actually preaching. There is a difference. Let me give you six ways rather quickly that the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used so that it builds up the church. Six ways the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used so that it builds up—it edifies—that all the Christians grow. Remember that is the whole point of a spiritual gift—is to edify the body. First of all, the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for instruction or doctrine. Synonyms: instruction or doctrine. Those who have this spiritual gift of prophecy should use it to instruct God's people concerning what is right, what is wrong, what is true. That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:19, 'In church, I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.' And his point is that no one understands because there was no one there to interpret the

foreign language that was being spoken. Rather have five words that everybody understands than ten thousand words that nobody understands. Why? Because we need to instruct. You need to learn the truth. You need to learn doctrine. This is in fact what God says through Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2: 'Preach the word'—meaning the written word of God—'be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.' Doctrine. It is translated 'teaching.' In the English Standard Version it is not a verb; it is a noun, which just means a body of teaching—doctrine. The doctrines of the Christian faith. The spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for instruction or doctrine. That is not the only thing it should be used for. But you have to know doctrine. You have to know very concretely: this is who God is. This is what he is like. This is who Jesus is. This is who God the Holy Spirit is. This is who the Father is. This is who the Christ is—the God-man. This is how the Spirit operates. Here are the promises of the gospel and how to understand covenant theology. Here is the moral law of God and what God demands of all his creatures. You need to understand how God created the world and designed the world. How God works providentially, upholding the universe by the word of his power. Uh, how God works to restore our fallen nature and the fallen creation. You need to understand the doctrine of the church, how to grow in grace, missions, how to evangelize, uh the doctrine of the last things—eschatology. You need to understand all those things. And so the spiritual gift of prophecy first and foremost is a gift to teach doctrine, instruction to other people. Boys and girls, look up here at me. Those who have been given the spiritual gift of prophecy need to use it to help you learn things about God and other people. You need to learn who God is, what he is like, what he does, what he promises to those who trust in Christ, what he commands you and me to do, what he is doing in the world, what he is going to do at the end. You need to know all those things. So you need to be taught the Scriptures. You need to be taught the Scriptures by your parents, but you also need to be taught the Scriptures by pastors. So the spiritual gift of prophecy has to be used for that. And if you understand these five things—or six things—that I am pointing out to you, you will understand why your pastors preach in the way that we do. It is very intentional that we explain that we do not give you vague headings, but we give you doctrinal truths that stand on their own that you can understand—this truth. And so you will not hear even the outlines of our sermon being things like 'point one, the spiritual gift of prophecy.' It is like, how is that a point? That is not a point. It is just like a book heading. And in a book that can help because you know—well that is the kind of context of what I am going to read underneath. But in a sermon that does not help because you did not learn anything. And so what is my first point as I am showing you what the spiritual gift of prophecy is? It is an instructive truth that stands on its own. And you can understand this truth. The spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for instruction. That is a sentence, a doctrinal statement that you can understand. The sad thing about modern-day preaching is that there is so little clarity from many preachers that people hear a whole sermon and nothing—nothing was wrong. Everything they said was true. Everything was right.

But many Christians leave and they think, 'What was I supposed to learn there?' Or like, 'I cannot remember really any key part of it.' It is because people do not preach simply. And sadly, it is because the seminaries that all the churches send their guys to—they are terrible at teaching people how to preach. And that has been true throughout church history as well. That is why Charles Haddon Spurgeon was such an amazingly clear preacher because he did not go to seminary and he was an average guy who just studied the word like crazy, read books like crazy and knew and thought, 'How do I very clearly communicate the truth of God's word to normal people?' Those guys are almost always the best preachers and they have not been trained to be sophists and always like floating up and making these huge arguments that only John Owen would understand. But they are just like, 'You need to know this simple truth' because the spiritual gift of prophecy is to instruct others, to teach them doctrine. That is why your pastors labor to be plain, to be very clear. And you may disagree with me, but you know what I am trying to tell you. You may disagree with me. That is fine. But you know what I am trying to say because that is how the spiritual gift of prophecy has to be used. Preach the word with complete patience and doctrine to instruct other people. But the spiritual gift of prophecy cannot only be used for instruction. It has to also be used for examination. The spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for examination. Which means the Puritans called this 'trial'—like putting you on trial, making you put yourself on trial. I call it a use for examination. So this is what I do almost every week. Use this truth to examine yourself. You hear me say that. Why? Why do we do that? Well, we do that because that is what Christ and his apostles do as they teach. You know it is true. And you know some of the most striking things you have ever read or heard is when a preacher forces you to examine yourself and he puts the truth right in front of your face and you might try to wiggle out and then he just keeps moving it and saying, 'You have to deal with this.' Lest we all sit there and think, 'This is about them. This is about them.' A use for examination makes you deal with it. So this is what Christ does when he says this in the Sermon on the Mount: 'If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? Do not even the sinners and tax collectors love those who love them?' You have read that in the Sermon on the Mount and it makes you go, 'Oh snap.' It makes you examine yourself. What benefit is it that you love those who benefit you, who are always nice to you, who are always loving to you? You think you are great. 'I am so loving.' It just sweeps the legs out from under us when we think, 'I am pretty loving. I am pretty kind.' It is like, do you love those who are nasty to you? No, you just love those who are kind to you. Okay. What reward do you think you have for that? Then Christ says also—this is the examination. It is used in rhetorical questions sometimes, but it is forcing you to think inwardly: 'Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye when you have a log in your own?' What does that do? It makes you go, 'Well, that is kind of messed up that I do that. Do I do that? Do I have a log in my eye?' And it makes you examine yourself to make sure you are facing your own sin and putting it to death so that then you can actually help take the speck out of your brother's eye. Here I think is the most

powerful one that Christ uses in his earthly ministry: 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?'

What is he doing? He is making you examine yourself, your thoughts. What does it really profit me if I make more and more money and have all the notoriety and the praise of other men? All the things that Satan promises Jesus if Jesus will worship him—if I get all those things but I forfeit my soul, what will that profit me? The parable of the rich fool. Jesus even does this when he is telling a parable. But God said to this rich fool, 'Fool, this night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

That is a use for examination. What are you going to do? Galatians 3:1, Paul also uses this. It is rhetorical, but it is an examination as well: 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?' The Galatians were turning from the one true gospel and turning to the false gospel of the Judaizers, which added on law to the gospel. And he says, 'It is like you are under a witch's spell. Who has bewitched you?' And it makes them examine themselves. Then James 2:14, another powerful one that Christ's brother according to the flesh uses: 'What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?' What does that make you do? Makes you—do I just profess faith in Christ or do I actually possess saving faith in Christ that results in wanting to do good works for God's glory? So the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for examination to make you examine yourself, to make me examine myself. Examination or trial makes the listener audit their own soul. It forces them to face the truth and its application. And we desperately need that today. They needed it in Christ's day. We need it today. Thirdly, the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for warning or awakening. Those go hand in hand. All of these are: God says this. Now use that truth for instruction. Use that truth possibly for examination. Use that truth possibly for warning and awakening. God says this—how do we use it? How do we apply it? And we have great examples in the New Testament of using the truth or the gift of prophecy even for warning or awakening. Listen to this. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: 'Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.' That is pretty sharp, is it not? That is a warning. 'Do not be deceived.' Then he says, 'Such were some of you, but you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' That is the gift of prophecy being used for warning and awakening. Here is the truth. You got to face it. You need to be terrified. If you are unrepentant in your sin and are not clinging to Christ through faith for your forgiveness, for your washing of all these things—if that is still your identity—you are dead. You will not go to heaven. That is what he is saying. As plainly as you could say it, the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. And then he lists a bunch. That is a warning to get you and me to

go, 'I have to have Christ. I have to have Christ to save me.' How about this for warning? Galatians 1:6-9: 'I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.' Let him be damned by God. That is what he is saying. That is brutal. That is a warning. If anyone preaches a different gospel than grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone, let that person go to hell immediately. That is warning. Warning always should lead—we want it to lead to awakening. Warning is 'oh no'; awakening is 'I need Christ. I need to trust in him and submit to him.' Listen to this. Ephesians 5:11-17: 'Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.' We want it to lead to awakening. And God through his prophets and apostles uses really brutal warnings to sober us and reveal how badly we need the Lord Jesus Christ. Warning and awakening says, 'If you do not repent, there is judgment and fire and wrath that awaits you for your sin. Therefore, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.' The spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for warning or awakening. Fourthly, the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for reproof or rebuke. These are not popular, especially in our day. It is really actually hard to find preachers who use the truth for rebuke and reproof. It is actually hard. Many preachers in our modern day will generally vaguely put out something kind of like that, but they are too afraid to be direct. Reproof has to do with the mind. Rebuke has to do with the life, how you are living. They are almost always connected, but reproof is you are thinking wrongly about Christ, his providence, his precepts. So therefore, you need to repent and think rightly. That is reproof—thinking. Rebuke is you are acting wrongly concerning who Christ is and his providence and his precepts. Therefore, you need to repent and act rightly. But listen to these verses. Reproof and rebuke are very sharp, strong words. 'You are wrong. You need to change.' That is reproof and rebuke. There is no way to soften it. There is no way around it. That is what it is. Listen how many times it is brought up. 2 Timothy 4:2. This is the staple text on preaching—new covenant preaching: 'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.' 1 Timothy 5:20: 'As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of everyone, so that the rest may stand in fear.' Titus 1:9. This is at the end of qualifications for pastors, elders, overseers in the church: 'He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.' Titus 1:12-14—just a few verses later—one of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said,

'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 'Rebuke them sharply,' Paul tells Titus. Titus 2:15: 'Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.' The spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for reproof and or rebuke. Pastors have to do that. At the end of most sermons, this is what I realize, and this is even what I think if I am being faithful—this is what is going to happen. You are going to like me more or you are going to hate me more. But I will not throw things up in a vague way. And I will not refrain from being direct. And I will not refrain from rebuking. And I do not mean I am looking at your faces and like 'this guy needs to be rebuked.' I am just talking about a general direct rebuke. If you think like this, you need to repent and you are wrong. If you are acting like this, you need to repent and you are wrong. Turn to Christ. He will forgive you. You need to obey the Lord Jesus. Your pastors will never shy away from that. We cannot because we are under divine command from the Lord Jesus Christ. Reprove and rebuke. We will be patient. We will teach you doctrine, but we have to reprove and rebuke because Christ tells us to. So the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for that. Fifthly, the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for encouragement or comfort. For encouragement or comfort. I remind you of 1 Corinthians 14:3: 'The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.' This is what the Puritans called a use for consolation or sometimes a use for comfort. This is true. Take comfort from this, Christians. Take comfort from this, believers. Be consoled. 1 Thessalonians 5:11: 'Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you were doing.' All these things are just—by the way—why on a normal Lord's Day it could feel like I punched you one second and then like giving your shoulders a massage ten seconds later and saying, 'Just lay down and take a nap. Jesus loves you.' It is like—why one second it is like Jesus is going to cut your head off if you do not repent and then the next one is he paid for your sins in his body on the tree—rest. Why? Because we are under divine command to rebuke when necessary, to warn, to make you examine yourself, to teach you doctrine, and to comfort you with the truth of the gospel. You need all of these things. So sometimes a faithful sermon can feel like an emotional roller coaster because the application—and it will hit you differently at different times—but the warnings are there for when you are in a period of backsliding or you are just making peace with some sin that you need to be warned and awakened. And so that is why sometimes the warnings hit you hard and sometimes it does not because your conscience is clear. The comfort is there. Especially it is there for all believers, but especially for the weary, weak saint who just knows they have blown it or is just suffering, sick, whatever it may be. And they just need to be reminded the Lord Jesus bought you on the cross and he is going to come back to perfect you. And they just need to hear that. It is like—that is true. That is true. So sometimes the comfort will hit you differently than at other times. Sometimes you would be like, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I know that is true. That is great.' Then sometimes you are in a position

to where like you need some direction or exhortation in your life. You like, 'I need somebody to tell me what to do so I want to live for Christ's glory.' And that is what you are about. And so the direction or exhortation will hit you differently. But all these things are because this is what God says that we are to do. Encouragement says—Christ because Christ died and was raised—let us go storm the gates of hell. It should be used for exhortation or direction. Exhortation or direction—those can be synonymous. Exhortation is more like 'you should do this' and direction is more like 'do this'—not telling you 'you should'—just 'do this.' If you are blessed to have Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*—that I think every Christian household should have—thousand pages, double column—it is Christian casuistry which basically means cases of conscience which basically means 'how do I live my life for God's glory.' He writes a thousand-page double-column book in 18 months because he knew the Bible and he knew people so well that he is just like—and the whole thing is directions for this. The whole thing is like 'what do I do?' He has got stuff in there that will benefit you any day of the week. 'How do I prepare myself for the Lord's Day? Here are 17 directions to prepare you to help you prepare yourself to have a blessed Lord's Day. What do I do if my spouse wants to murder me? Here are directions on what to do if your spouse wants to murder.' I mean, it is just unbelievable. So you find directions and the uses of the Puritans, and that is just generally what they mean. They are actually helping you think through because God says this—'How do I live? How do I live for his glory?' Exhortation and direction. And we all need that. Acts 2:40 at the end of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost says, 'And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Be saved from this crooked generation."' Exhortation is 'do this. You got to do this. You need this desperately. Go and get it done.' It does not say—we exhortation is not 'we should all trust in Christ for salvation.' And sadly many American pulpits are filled with that effeminacy. 'We should'—like no. Exhortation is 'you got to go to Christ for your salvation.' That is exhortation. If you are making peace with sin, you need to repent today. Turn to Christ for forgiveness and walk in faithfulness to him. It is not exhortation to say, 'You know, we should all make sure that we are being faithful to Jesus.' Like, okay—you must be faithful to Jesus, believers. That is an exhortation. And so we are to do that just like Peter does. He exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.' Acts 11:23: When Barnabas came and saw the grace of God in Antioch, he was glad and he exhorted them to all remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose. Every one of you, Barnabas said, remain steadfast to the Lord. Remain faithful with steadfast purpose. 1 Thessalonians 2:12: 'We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.' 1 Timothy 4:13: 'Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.' Titus 2:15: 'Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.' All of our exhortations to Christians should be something like this: Because Christ has bought you on the cross, given you his precious promises, given you his perfect law—therefore, through faith, live for his glory. You are not your own. You

have been bought with a price. Therefore, Paul says, glorify God in your body. That is exhortation. Christ bought us. We must live for him. So the spiritual gift of prophecy should be used for exhortation, for encouragement or comfort, for reproof, rebuke, for warning and awakening, for examination and trial, and for instruction or doctrine. God has given some this spiritual gift and it is for the upbuilding of the church. Therefore, what do we do with this? This is what we do. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. But test everything. Hold fast what is good. If you will do that, you will do well.