

# “Especially Prophecy”

## *Part 2: Testing & Vetting Prophecy (1 of 2)*

(preached 1/31/21)

Please turn to *1 Corinthians 14*.

### **Sermon #1: Let's Report What God is Saying.**

- Prophecy is a Gift that every Christian can ask for.
- Amos 3:7-8 showed us that no major events happen without God telling His prophets first.
- The Church and especially the Prophetic Ministry are meant to be God's media.
- Media reporting done right is that “reporters” share what they see, hear, and discover and the “hearers”—who are you and I—decide upon the information.
- Dishonest/biased media decides first, then reports to the hearers in an effort at manipulation, deception, and controlling/creating the narrative.
- Prophetic people sometimes prophesy according to desires, biases, and limited perceptions which means that they're deciding first what God said, then reporting.
- Some modern days prophets take 1 Corinthians 14:3 and build an entire doctrine around it, believing all prophesy should be positive & blessing.
- Yet the same chapter, as we'll see today, show that the prophetic gifts sometimes convicts people of sin, inspiring repentance (verses 24-25).
- ***The point of sermon #1 is to crucify all desires, biases, and limited perceptions and merely report what God is saying and doing: good, bad, or a mixture of both.***
- We report what God is saying and allow the hearer to decide what do with it.

TODAY we're getting into the nuts and bolts about 2 things:

- Discerning how the Lord in Scripture defines a false prophet.
- Discerning & vetting anything WE receive, should we pursue the prophetic gifts.
- Discerning & vetting anything we HEAR from someone else claiming to give a prophetic word.

FALSE PROPHET DEFINITION. Let's start with defining a false prophet and our goal in this will be to avoid throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

### **Matthew 7:15-20 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

<sup>16</sup> You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

<sup>17</sup> So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

<sup>18</sup> A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

WOLF? Is every modern day prophet who gets it wrong a wolf in sheep's clothing? No, which includes the well known person I alluded to in sermon #1. When Jesus told His people to beware of FP, He wasn't defining said FP's as authentic born-again, God-fearing, Bible-based believers who made an inaccurate prediction. ***He's talking about people who are complete fakes and desire to “devour” people like a predator.***

FALLIBLE BELIEVER. A true believer is a fallible sheep who—despite being authentically Saved—sometimes give in to their own desires, bow to their biases, or get a little too comfortable throwing God's name around.

HUNGRY WOLF. A hungry wolf has a different spirit inside of him/her that isn't the Holy Spirit. It's one that will suck the money out of followers, fornicate and commit adultery among the same, and lead their people away from Christ and the truth within the Scriptures. Jesus actually compared them not just to hungry wolves, but also to thorn and pricker bushes.

JOHN OF GOD. From the 1970's – early 2000's there was a “prophet” in Brazil calling himself “John of God” who grew to celebrity status down there, and even here in the US to some degree when Oprah Winfrey publicly supported him as being authentic. Not only did this man prophesy, but claimed to lay hands on people and heal them both in the physical and spiritual. Tens of thousands of people flocked there and stood in line, waiting days for this man to speak over them and free them from their shackles. Some people labeled him as the best faith healer since Jesus and claimed that several million people were healed during his tenure.

HERESY. In his 4 decades of “ministry” however, he was known to do & say things which were blatantly against what the Lord spoke in Scripture, fulfilling the FP label through Peter who revealed FP's bring in heresy.

- He claimed to “channel” major Biblical figures such as King Solomon. Channeling is a demonic pagan practice where you allow a spirit to possess you and use you—think of the scene in *Ghost* with Whoopi Goldberg where she allows dead people to use her body.
- His “healing” technique involved convincing the person being healed to allow said spirit to possess them—he called it “psychic surgery.” I taught you a few years back that this is the Mystery Babylon religion! Remember that Jesus only cast demons **out** to heal, He never said “allow them in and you'll be healed.”
- He convinced hundreds of women to have sex with him as part of their therapy.

HE WAS AN FP. This man was a false prophet.

- He was not born again,
- Led people to submit themselves to demonic spirits instead of the Holy Spirit
- Led people away from God to “other gods” (the demonic spirits), then took full advantage of their desperation like a hungry wolf.

- Fortunately, his sins were finally revealed by hundreds of witnesses and he's in jail.

## **A born-again believer flowing in the spiritual gift of prophecy who messes it up is NOT a wolf in sheep's clothing.**

INSTRUCTION & VETTING. With that being said, however, if we're going to flow in this wonderful gift then we need to do so properly. God spoke to the prophets of the OT and the apostles of the NT to give good instruction on this subject. The instruction I'm going to give you today and next Sunday will certainly identify the most common pitfalls to be sure. It will be very important to use these guidelines as we move forward, but I cannot promise there won't be some choppy skies on this flight.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY OURSELVES. The first aspect to vetting any prophetic word we received ourselves or hear from another is this: we must take personal responsibility for discernment first. Let's receive instruction and training as we're doing today and next week, let's seek it on our own, and let's apply it.

- We shouldn't blatantly believe every prophecy we hear, even when its from someone we trust. As Ronald Reagan once said: "trust, but verify."
- If we've been burned before, we cannot only demand a prophetic person be more responsible in vetting what they receive.
- EVERYONE receiving something should vet, but we cannot control how diligent another person is being when hearing and giving a word.
- Not everyone will prophesy, but everyone is a hearer...so let all us hearers be the first line of discernment and test prophecies using the teaching we're being given.

### **1 John 4:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

### **1 Corinthians 14:1-5 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

<sup>2</sup> For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

<sup>4</sup> The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

NOT TALKING ABOUT TONGUES. We're NOT talking about speaking in tongues during this sermon series, only prophesying. The context of *1 Corinthians 14* is:

- The gift of prophecy, which is available to everyone. The office of the Prophet laid out in *Ephesians 4:11* would include all of this, but go beyond it.
- Everyone may pursue the gift of prophecy, but not everyone is called to the office of the Prophet which takes a higher level of faith and a direct commission from God.
- Taking place within the church, when believers meet.
- Purpose to “build” the church meaning 1) to ADD to it (making converts and disciples) and 2) patch up spiritual holes, cracks, and weak points.

### 1 Corinthians 14:6-19 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

<sup>7</sup> If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?

<sup>8</sup> And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?

<sup>9</sup> So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

<sup>10</sup> There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning,

<sup>11</sup> but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

<sup>12</sup> So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.

<sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.

<sup>15</sup> What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

<sup>17</sup> For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.

<sup>18</sup> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.

<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY. If we receive a prophetic word, we must make every effort to communicate in a way that the rest of the church understands. Sometimes prophetically gifted people have their minds in the heavens and have a difficult time bringing what they’ve seen and heard from there to here...*yet this is absolutely necessary and requires the help of the Holy Spirit and perhaps an “Aaron.”* Please remember that Moses had some difficulties with communication, so his brother Aaron sometimes served to assist Moses in sharing so that the Hebrew people would get it.

### 1 Corinthians 14:20-25 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be

mature.

<sup>21</sup> In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.”

<sup>22</sup> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

<sup>23</sup> If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?

<sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all,

<sup>25</sup> the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

**SORT OUT.** These verses are confusing for some so let’s sort out the ancient wording and phraseology.

- Speaking in tongues is meant to be heard by believers only, for the possibility that one will hear and interpret. An unbeliever cannot interpret tongues and will only think people doing so are loony.
- The unbeliever who comes to church is meant to hear prophesying, however, and verses 24-25 categorically disproves the “only prophesy positive” doctrine. Let me read those two verses from the AMP version:

### **1 Corinthians 14:24-25 (AMP)**

<sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy [giving inspired testimony and interpreting the divine will and purpose] and an unbeliever or untaught outsider comes in, he is told of his sin *and* reproved *and* convicted *and* convinced by all, and his defects *and* needs are examined (estimated, determined) *and* he is called to account by all,

<sup>25</sup> The secrets of his heart are laid bare; and so, falling on [his] face, he will worship God, declaring that God is among you in very truth.

**READING MAIL.** Clearly, it’s possible that God gives a prophetic word that “reads someone’s mail” as we like to say in the church. Maybe we need to update the old saying to “read someone’s private messages or texts”! In other words, the secret sins & issues we’ve hidden that we think no one knows about...when God speaks it through someone, we’re convicted because we realize 1) God exists, 2) He knows about that secret sin and 3) Is offering us forgiveness and sonship. Verse 25 is the sinner’s response when someone “reads his mail” he’s convicted, humbles himself, repents, and worships God! Then he goes and tells others! It’s very much like the Samaritan woman at the well in John’s Gospel when Jesus called out her secrets.

### **1 Corinthians 14:26-33 (AMP)**

<sup>26</sup> What then, brethren, is [the right course]? When you meet together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a disclosure of special knowledge *or* information, an utterance in a [strange] tongue, or an interpretation of it. [But] let everything be constructive *and* edifying *and* for the good of all.

<sup>27</sup> If some speak in a [strange] tongue, let the number be limited to two or at the most three, and each one [taking his] turn, and let one interpret *and* explain [what is said].

<sup>28</sup> But if there is no one to do the interpreting, let each of them keep still in church and talk to himself and to God.

<sup>29</sup> So let two or three prophets speak [those inspired to preach or teach], while the rest pay attention *and* weigh *and* discern what is said.

<sup>30</sup> But if an inspired revelation comes to another who is sitting by, then let the first one be silent.

<sup>31</sup> For in this way you can give testimony [prophesying and thus interpreting the divine will and purpose] one by one, so that all may be instructed and all may be stimulated *and* encouraged;

<sup>32</sup> For the spirits of the prophets (the speakers in tongues) are under the speaker's control [and subject to being silenced as may be necessary],

<sup>33</sup> For He [Who is the source of their prophesying] is not a God of confusion *and* disorder but of peace *and* order. As [is the practice] in all the churches of the saints (God's people),

**Verse 26:** it was common in the Corinthian church, when they came together, for words of knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, tongues, and interpretation to be spoken by various members of the congregation.

VERSES 27-33. An important aspect of vetting/testing is what Paul states in verses 27-33 and I believe that its neglect has gotten some prophetic people in trouble.

## **When a prophetic word is received, there must be an additional 2-3 confirming witnesses.**

TORAH. This “law” comes from the Torah and was applied to several things from making an accusation in a crime to watching for the sliver of the new moon. When Jesus came, He spoke the same and applied it to other situations the most famous one being:

### **Matthew 18:19-20 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

BODY MINISTRY. It’s not “two or more” it’s “two or three” and I’m not just being nitpicky...Jesus is referring to Body ministry. Body ministry acknowledges the truth that the same Holy Spirit lives inside of every Christian and therefore the amount of people who can \_\_\_\_\_ is now greatly increased vs. that of the OC.

NOT GATHERING, AGREEMENT. Notice the qualification Jesus gives goes beyond merely “gathering together” but the correct context is AGREEMENT. Not agreement in the sense of 3 people having the same opinion about who will win the Superbowl, ***but rather about what God is saying and doing.***

“YOU’LL DO SAME WORKS.” Jesus healed people, cast out demons, preached the good news, and raised the dead...then He told anyone willing to be His disciple “you’ll do all the works I’m doing and more.” More than one person in a church can prophesy, for example, and God will speak the same message to His Body. If a person received a word of prophesy that says \_\_\_\_\_ then at least 2 or 3 other Christian witnesses will have received the same word, and therefore we have another proof that it came from God.

NO LONE FIGUREHEADS. Error and even heresy starts to breed when there’s only one person who can \_\_\_\_\_ and everyone else just follows him or her...like John of god. There’s no evidence he was teaching anyone else how to heal people or prophesy over them. He liked being the only one that everyone needed to come to. He enjoyed everyone hanging on his every word and assuming it was coming right from God Himself.

SOME DON’T SEEK CONFIRMATION. I believe a mistake that some modern day prophetic people have made is that they prophesy and don’t seek out these confirming witnesses. Especially those who lead churches and congregations and have made a name for themselves. I don’t think they’re like John of god, no.

KK. I don’t think they’re false prophets. What I do think is that they’ve grown too comfortable with the level of their gift and their calling, so just grab the mic and let it go. I recently was listening to prophet I like and trust but I was bothered by something she said (paraphrased quote). She said something like “look, guys, I spend lots of time with Jesus in the Heavenlies and He shows me all kinds of things. All the things I’m telling you are true, right from Him.” If I’d been a member of her staff, I would have respectfully approached her afterward and reminded her that, before and after her prophecies, that she continually pray for 2 or 3 confirming witnesses AND to encourage her viewers to test whatever she says vs. just accepting it.

SERMONS. When I preach these sermons, I’ve testified to you on many occasions I’m continually astounded at God’s faithfulness in giving me these witnesses as an additional proof this is coming from Him and not just me. Sometimes it happens before the fact: when God uploads the message to my head and its there, including the title, I’ll suddenly see another church or ministry is preaching the same thing, often with almost the same title. Sometimes its after the fact: I’ll discover that \_\_\_\_\_ church or ministry is doing the same or something very similar. I love it! I seek it! I want this to happen every time I have a message to share! I want to know what God is saying to Gateway and I’m honored to be one of His chosen mouths to share it...and I want to make sure it’s coming from Him.

DESIRES, BIASES. I have desires, biases, and limited perceptions that want very much to twist any potential message from God into something else. ***I need guardrail guidance and 2-3 additional witnesses is one of several.*** If the Lord is speaking about prophecy at this time and wants His people to hear a message about it, He isn't just saying it to me...He'll be communicating the same to His body. If it's from Him and I've sought Him for additional confirming witnesses, He'll provide them.

SEEK WITNESSES. The same must apply to words of prophecy. Whether the Lord has given us something to share OR we are the hearers of what someone else is sharing, let's allow the Holy Spirit to confirm through additional witnesses.

ON THE SPOT OR LATER. It's great when it happens on the spot! Someone prophesies or shares a word of knowledge (reading the mail), and another person immediately approaches and says "hey, God has been telling me the same thing!!!" I \*\*\*love\*\*\* that and wish it would happen a lot more! Other times you might speak or hear something and the confirming witnesses don't come until later.

POWER IN AGREEMENT. There is great power in this spiritual confirmation/agreement...supernatural power that goes a lot further to convince and convict than logic, passion, and charisma combined.

Next week we'll go over some more vetting procedures.