

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: August 8, 2010

## A Prophetic-Utterance

by Dan Trygg

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of servings, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of in-workings, but the same God, the One in-working all things in all persons. But to each one is given the disclosure of the Spirit for the common good ("carrying together"). For, on the one hand, to one is given a word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to a different person a faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings by the one Spirit, and to another in-workings of powerful-acts, and to another a prophetic-utterance, and to another distinguishings of spirits, to a different person kinds of tongues, and to another an interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit in-works all these things, distributing to each one individually according as He intends."

I Cor. 12:4-11

"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet.'"

John 4:19

"The Spirit do not y'all quench, prophetic-utterances do not y'all despise, but all-things y'all test-out-by-trial, the good-thing y'all hold-fast, from every visible-form of unsoundness y'all hold (yourselves) away from."

I Thess. 5:19-22

"Knowing this, that every prophecy of Scripture has not come to be of one's own interpretation, for a prophecy was not formerly brought by the desire of a human being, rather people being carried-along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

II Pet. 1:20,21

The context Paul is describing in I Cor. 12 is that when the Body gathers, and is open for God to use them to minister to one another, the manifestation (disclosure, revelation, making known) of the Spirit is given for the common good, or for them to "carry together" things that are too big for people to deal with by themselves (cf. Gal. 6:1,2). [By the way, the text says that, in such a setting, "to each one is given the disclosure of the Spirit..." We *all* have a part to play. *None* is left out.] In this kind of ministry-ready setting, one person is given a word of wisdom, one person is given a word of knowledge, ...another gets this, another gets that, ...etc. The point is that **we each receive a disclosure of the Holy Spirit to help in serving one another.** The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts among us as He intends. **Any one of us may receive any of these gifts in a particular situation.** They are not the property of a particular person or group. There is some disagreement whether spiritual gifts are given permanently, or temporally to meet a specific need. There seems to be evidence for both. Certain gifts must be evidenced repeatedly over time in order to become recognized and to be effective. Others could be either a dominant regular expression of the Spirit, or a one-time manifestation. **The particular gifts in this context seem to be distributed by the Holy Spirit as He wills on a particular occasion.** The gifts listed here all have a revelatory element, which especially fits this temporary usage. The question we all must ask is, "What is the Lord disclosing to me? What is it He wants to do, *here*?" Among the temporary gifts listed is "a prophetic-utterance".

What is meant by this "label"? As I have mentioned before, there is often much variation between books or teachers who are trying to explain these gifts. The truth is that we have little more to go on than the names of the gifts themselves, and possibly examples where they are used in the lives of Bible characters. **There is no systematic definition given for most of the gifts listed in the NT passages dealing with spiritual gifts.** Often the elaborate descriptions given by some are nothing more than personal opinion, some of it very imaginative and misguided. **With regard to the gift of prophecy, there is a wide expanse of opinion,** ranging from those who emphasize that the gift is nothing more than preaching, to those who insist it is only a predictive foretelling of future events. As I researched the meaning of the term in the Greek language, and in the background of OT usage, it is clear that both elements can be evident at times. **A prophetic utterance can embody either a forthtelling** of God's word revealed to the prophet-mouthpiece for the recipient-hearers, **or it can include a foretelling** of something yet to come, which the recipients are to prepare for or be warned of. Generally, the predictive element of prophetic utterances are unconditional, i.e., they invariably will come to pass. That is one of the ways to test a prophet. If his or her predictions do not come to fulfillment, then they are not speaking from God (Deut. 18:21,22). Sometimes, however, the message may be conditional in nature, meaning that if the recipient takes heed to the warning, the catastrophe can be prepared for or avoided altogether. **The most significant quality of a prophetic utterance is that it is not the prophet-speaker's own invention. It is a revelation given to the person from God,** which he or she is to faithfully pass along to the intended recipient. In this way, a prophet is described as a spokesperson, or a "mouth", for God (Jer. 15:19; cf. Ex. 4:15-17; 7:1,2). **The other significant aspect of prophecy is that it is spoken.** The word "prophecy" is from two Greek words which literally mean "to speak before". The word "before" could refer to either "in front of" someone, or it

could be taken as something spoken "ahead of time". Until it is *spoken*, it is only *revelation*. Only when it is *expressed* is it truly prophetic. This is why I chose to translate the word as "prophetic-utterance".

**There are "prophets" and there are "prophetic-utterances"** (prophecies). A prophecy is a revelation given by God to be spoken or communicated to another. It may be that you will experience this one or more times, but this may not be a regular, consistent way in which God works through you. Prophetic utterances are to be a somewhat widely distributed experience under the new covenant (Acts 2:17). **A prophet, or prophetess, is someone who regularly or repeatedly receives and communicates such revelations from God. They become noticeable because they are consistently used by God in this way, and the things they say are borne out in experience.** They are identifiable because of both the *source* of their revelations, and by virtue of the *outworking* of what they say. God can reveal His message to us in many different ways, but **typically a prophetic revelation is *not* an insight into, or an application of, a passage of the Bible.** Prophetic revelation comes through visions (the "opened eye" -- Num. 24:3) and dreams, an inner voice, or even through inspired music (Num. 12:6-8; 24:4; Acts 2:17; 10:9-16; Mic. 3:8; Ezk. 38:1; I Chr. 25:1-6). Often the communication from God can have elements that are obscure, and must be interpreted (Num. 12:6-8; Acts 21:10,11).

**What about the function of this gift in the Body?** Again, **both the foretelling and forthtelling aspects can play a part.** In I Cor. 14:3, Paul says that **a prophetic utterance in the Body is addressed to people for their edification, exhortation and consolation.** He also alludes to the fact that **often a prophetic-utterance will disclose the secrets of the heart, will convict people of their sin, and will call them to account.** The amazing revelatory aspect of the gift cuts through all defenses, and the person knows that God has done this (I Cor. 14:24,25; cf. Jn. 4:16-19,28-30). In the two places in the book of Acts where a noted prophet, Agabus, appears, his messages were clearly about future events (Acts 11:27-30; 21:10,11). The prophetic communication was given to prepare for a physical or emotional trial. (Note that Paul did not change his course because of this revelation. He said that he was "bound in the Spirit" to go to Jerusalem, yet the Holy Spirit was repeatedly warning him that bonds and affliction was awaiting him [20:22,23]. He must have been quite confident that he was on the right course. In this case, others felt that this was a warning not to go, but Paul knew otherwise.)

**How is it to be used?** In I Cor. 14:26-33, prophecy is one of the gifts to be exercised when the church gathers. It is not to dominate the entire time. **There are to be only two or three speaking in the meeting, each in turn. If one receives a revelation while another is speaking, the one talking is to be quiet and give place to the other person.** The apostle specifically states that "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets", so there is to be no excuse for inappropriate over-zealousness in insisting on sharing "my revelation". It is a matter of maturity and self-control. This also implies that often **everything was *not* shared with the entire group**, and the group was OK with that. In spite of the claim to have heard from God, **all prophetic-utterances are to be evaluated**, both for consistency with known revealed truth, and for the discernment as to how to understand what is being shared.

**Finally, it is possible to hinder the expression of the Holy Spirit by making no room for the use of this valuable gift.** Paul specifically warns against despising, or devaluing, this gift. On the other extreme, an indiscriminating over-zealousness for this gift can lead a group into danger, as well. That is why **all utterances are to be tested, by Scripture and/or experience.** Without discernment, it would be too easy for the enemy to lead a group into error, foolishness, or moral compromise. For this reason, **Paul exhorts the Body to test things out, hold fast to what is good, but to steer away from anything that is visibly unsound.** As we have mentioned in the past, one of the goals of maturity is discernment (Heb. 5:14; Eph. 4:13,14). Therefore, we must have the leeway to sort things out for ourselves, or we will never develop that quality. Instead of inventing all kinds of protective "control measures", Paul was comfortable entrusting believers to God and His word to build up the disciples and to give them the parameters they needed to find their way, in conjunction with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Body (Acts 20:32; Jn. 14:26).

**What does this mean in practical experience?** Again, there will be a disclosure of the Holy Spirit to someone in the group. This revelation, if it is prophetic, is *meant to be shared* with the person, or the entire group. *If we withhold the expression of this revelation, we quench or hinder the Holy Spirit's desire to work in that situation.* We must be faithful to take the risk to step out and share what we may be hearing or "seeing". Only by *doing* so can we determine if it is from God, or not. Only by *doing* so can the person it is meant for have "the secrets of his heart disclosed" and "fall on his/her face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you". **We need to discover how to use our gifts as individuals, and to understand how to facilitate the ministry of the Spirit as a group.** It starts with the inner disclosures of the Spirit, ...then it is up to you to respond to what He is doing inside.