

03. The Motivation Gift of Prophecy

Spiritual Gifts—God's Way

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Bible Text: Romans 12: 1 Corinthians 12

Preached on: Sunday, March 6, 2011

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All right. We are going to continue our study in the spiritual gifts and so we have had two weeks of introduction to talk about the different kind of gifts there are. And what we want to look at today is the first of the seven motivation gifts that is listed in Romans chapter 12.

And let's just go ahead and open your Bibles to Romans 12 and let's read that passage of Scripture again, Romans 12 beginning at verse six.

It says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith."¹

So this is the first gift. It is the gift of prophecy. It is... these are the motivation gifts. The word here is *χαρισμοῦ* (khar-is'-mah-tah). It is a grace gift that is given to you at the moment of salvation. So let's look at why this study is so important.

One of the reasons it is really great to figure out what your spiritual gifts are is it will help you avoid marital conflicts, because different gifts see the same situation or the same problem in a different way and different gifts respond to things differently.

For example, one of the funny things that I have noticed is that prophets which we are going to talk about today tend to marry people that have the gift of mercy. Now those are two gifts that are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. So if you, you know, a prophet is someone who is often very quick to judge. They are quick to... you know, they can be quick to condemn. They see hypocrisy and they have no soft spot in their heart for it. Meanwhile the person when you get to mercy always wants to believe the best about people and they always feel, you know, sorry for someone and so it is helpful if you are married to someone or you are about to marry someone. You need to know what your spiritual gift is. You need to know what their spiritual gift is so that you see ahead of time what the potential pitfalls and problems are going to be in your marriage.

¹ Romans 12:6.

So that is important. Another thing is you are going to have children and when they get to be Christians, now if they come to Christ at an early age it may be a while before you see their spiritual gifts surface. But God gave them a gift when they were saved. And you will start understanding your children better once you understand what their gift is.

I have some children that their gifts are plainly apparent and others I am still trying to figure out. But it helps me to understand that child when I understand what their spiritual gift is. And it is great, too, because I know if I need a certain thing done, I think, "Now which spiritual gift would be best for this task?" and I can ask that child to do it because they are more naturally gifted.

The other things is we often expect other Christians to behave a certain way, but they don't have the same gift we do then our expectations may not be valid.

The other thing, you know, we may think that somebody else ought to see the problem the same way we see it, but we have maybe in my case I have the spiritual gift of teaching, but somebody else in an administrator or a giver and they see the same situation in a whole different way.

So we have to be careful about the expectations we put on other Christians. I don't now how many of you have ever done this, but there is sometimes I expect other Christians to be perfect even though I know I am not. You know? And so we have to be really careful about that.

And then it just helps you know where you fit in God's Church. There is a mistaken idea in most churches that the pastor or the people who are the staff are supposed to do the work and everybody else is just supposed to put some money in the offering plate and that is how a church functions.

That is not the way church functions. First of all, the church isn't just the building. It is all of us. Every one of us have our parts of the body of Christ and every one of us has a gift God has given us and we are all supposed to function. Imagine what would happen if you went into the surgeon and said, "Doctor, I think I have got some extra parts in my body I am not using and I have been trying to lose weight. It is not working. So could you take out my colon and my stomach and my pancreas and, you know, all that stuff there. I am sure it is adding to the bulge here. And if we just got rid of it, I still have my arms and my legs and, you know, everything else. I would be fine without that stuff."

Well, that would be ridiculous, because you need every one of those things. We... everyone of us is needed. And churches do not function properly when they put the whole burden for ministry on the pastor. That is not a functional church. That is not the body of Christ as it should be.

And then it is helpful to know why you see the world the way you see it. You see the world in a certain way because of the gift that you have. And then it is also helpful to

find the right persons to serve in the church, in the right positions. There are some people that just have the gifts that are better suited to certain tasks in church.

All right. So let's look at each motivation gift then has a spiritual caution. And this chart is a good little chart for you to know. These are the seven motivation gifts and each gift has a caution for that gift and we are going to be looking in a few minutes at the caution for the gift of prophecy which is in Romans 12:9. And I will just go ahead and read that verse.

It says, "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."²

Now you will notice, if you look at this chart, the server has a caution in verse 10, the teacher in verse 11, the exhorter in verse 12, the giver in verse 13, the organizer in verse 14 and the mercy has a caution in verse 15.

So each week as we look at one of these seven motivation gifts, we are going to go over the caution that God gives to the person with that gift, so we are focused today on the person with the gift of prophecy.

So let's look at the motivation gift of prophecy and the apostle that seems to have this gift or the most...let's just say the person in the Bible that has this gift most evidently is the apostle Peter. And each week we will try to pick someone from Scripture that exemplifies that gift.

You remember last week we had this picture of the prophet at dinner. That was kind of a humorous picture, but the idea was, you know, somebody dropped dessert. The prophet, you know, on the floor as they were serving it. The prophet might be the person, it doesn't mean that a prophet would say this every time, but a prophet might be the person that says, "That is what happens when you are not being careful."

In other words, they want to correct the future problem. They want to point out your fault so that you don't do it again.

And then also we looked at what the prophet might say if he came at the hospital. So in this slide we have where it says, "What is God trying to say to you through this illness? Is there some sin you haven't confessed yet?" They want to find out, you know, are you sick because there is a sin in your life?

And I have had people in churches that I have pastored that have actually... I remember one time I had dear, dear saint of God, a wonderful sweet lady, Miss Virginia. And Miss Virginia was... she had, I think the gift of service. She was always trying to find practical things to do for people. And one day I had gone over to the church and I was in my office and I needed to borrow a table for something I was working on and there was a table out in the vestibule. So I walked out to the vestibule to move this table so I could use it

² Romans 12:9.

somewhere, but there was a flower arrangement on top of this table in the vestibule. So to get it out of the way I went and I set this flower arrangement on top of the desk in my office.

Well, then I used the table. I put it back later, but I neglected to put the flower arrangement back on the table in the vestibule.

Well, Miss Virginia happened to come in the church and see this assumed that her pastor liked flowers in his office. And so she made a point of getting a special flower arrangement just for my office to put on my desk and she put the other one back and gave me this just because she thought if I liked... if her pastor liked flowers, she was going to put flowers on the pastor's desk.

Now that was so sweet and she just had that gift where she noticed little things. She took notice of people. She was loving. She was giving. She just had a servant's heart, but she got cancer and it was a female cancer and one of the other members of my church who was a deacon's wife basically went to her and told her, if you would confess your sins, God would get rid of your cancer.

Now, that broke my heart when I heard it because obviously this woman didn't understand the different kinds of sickness. The Bible says there is a sickness unto death. Sometimes God allows sickness to come into our life because he wants to take us home, but he wants to do it in a way that gives us time to talk to our families and minister to our families and share the gospel with those in our lives who are lost. And cancer sometimes, you know, the bad news about cancer is it is a horrible, awful, ugly word and none of us want to hear the big C. The good news about it is if you know you have got it and you know it is terminal, you have got time to share Christ with others.

Now Judy's uncle Paul had colon cancer and he had an operation. He had about two years after that. It resurfaced. But it gave him time to share Christ with the lost people in his family.

That was the good news out of that. If there is a good side to cancer, then that would be it.

But there is a sickness unto... You know and we think it is horrible, but the Bible says, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."³

They have a party in heaven when a saint goes home and we mourn down here, but we are not mourning for the one who is saved in Christ. We mourn for ourselves the loss of that relationship, the loss of being able to talk to him and hug him and call him on the phone and write him letters and, you know, but in ... boy, they are with Jesus. How much better off are they than we are? You know, that is an awesome thing to know.

And then there is the sickness unto God's glory. You remember one time Jesus is out

³ Psalm 116:15.

with his disciples and they point at a man who has been blind all of his life. And they basically said, “You know, why is this man blind? Was he that way for his parents’ sin or his own sin?” Because they knew he had been blind from birth and that was a theological problem for them, because they normally thought—and this is accepted theology by a lot of people—that if you are sick, it is due to a sin in you life.

And they said, “Wait a minute, if he is blind from birth, how does that work? Is he sick because of his own sin or is he sick because of his parents’ sin?”

And Jesus’ reply was, “Neither, but this was done for the glory of God.”

And then Jesus heals him and who gets the glory? God does.

And then there is another sickness. There is, indeed, a sickness unto chastisement. Paul said to the Corinthians that they had taken of the Lord’s supper unworthily and he says, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”⁴

In other words, he said, “Some of you are sick because you haven’t treated the Lord’s supper with proper regard. You haven’t confessed your sins. You haven’t gone and made things right with your brother or sister in Christ and you are eating the Lord’s supper with the wrong heart and for this reason some of you are sick. In fact there are some of you that have done it so much and so often and with such total disregard for a holy thing like the Lord’s supper, you are dead.”

Boy, that is serious stuff.

But we make a mistake when we assume that every time somebody sick, “Aha, there is sin in their life.”

And there is charismatics and this lady who was in my church who went and told Miss Virginia that she had a problem that if she would confess her sins that God would get rid of her cancer....

And I am not saying that we don’t do things to bring about cancer in other ways. You... if you eat unhealthfully your whole life and you have an acid diet instead of an alkaline diet, you are more likely to get cancer. Absolutely. So you need to understand the difference between the difference between an acid diet and an alkaline diet, between God’s way of eating prior to the flood and the way most men eat today. And if we would eat God’s way, we probably wouldn’t have nearly the diseases we have.

But if we would just point to people and say, “Aha, you are sick. You have got sin in your life,” then the charismatics have a lot of problem with that. That is the way they teach this kind of, their doctrine.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:30.

So it is interesting. Peter illustrates this gift and let's just talk for a minute about these seven sense receptors. We mentioned this last week that there are seven different kinds of senses in the Bible and prophecy is the heat receptor.

And so let's look at that for a minute prophecy as the sense receptor number one and the heat receptor.

These are the receptors that send warning message when you are getting too close to the fire.

You know, I remember when I was a student a student at Texas A&M University back in, I guess it was 1980 was my first bon fire and 79 or 80. I guess it was 79. 1979 we had the first bonfire. This was back when A&M still had the big bonfires. And they brought in dead timber that had been dead. They cut it down dead in the forest. And the first level was probably about this high and then there was another level of even taller timber that high and basically what it was, it was like telephone poles because they had been... this wood had had all the branches stripped off of it and you got this timber. And they would stack it kind of in a cylinder and the outer... the bottom layer, did you ever seen a wedding cake with the three tiers, you know how the top tier is smaller than the bigger tier and the biggest tier is on the bottom. Well, that is what this bonfire looked like.

You know, they had these really tall trees in the middle and they had, you know, slightly shorter trees in the second layer and then the shorter trees on the third layer. But still the bottom layer is taller than a man. And then they pour 10,000 gallons of jet fuel on this fire, because Aggies don't do anything in a small way. And then they light it.

Now, of course, Texas A&M is famous for its core of cadets. These are the people in the reserve officers training corps. They are going to go into the army or to the air force and what not. And the tradition was, you know, if you were a tough guy and you were in the reserve officers training core, especially if you were a freshman and you had to prove yourself to the upper classmen, you were supposed to go up and try to light cigar off of this fire.

Think about this. You have got an entire forest worth of trees with 10,000 gallons of jet fuel that has been lit on fire and you are going to run up and light a cigar. And a lot of them did. None of them came back with their eyebrows. There were no eyebrows when they came back from the fire.

Now the thing was I could be standing 25 feet away, even 50 feet away with the fire that big and the heat receptors in my brain are saying, "You don't want to go up there and light a cigar. You don't want to get any closer to that fire than you are."

See, God gave us heat receptors so we wouldn't put our hand and hold it over the stove when the flame is on. We don't want to do that and so prophets are often used because they sense that judgment is coming unless someone changes and if they don't change,

there is going to be problems. So prophets are the one to sound the alarm. You need to repent or judgment is coming.

Let's look, now, at the motivation gift of prophecy in detail. Who is it that best illustrates the gift? And this would be, I think, the apostle Peter. And there are the guidelines, there are three in Romans 12:9.

It says love without hypocrisy, abhor evil, cling to what is good. And we are going to come back to those three.

What is it that a prophet needs the most? They need a clear conscience. We need prophets in church. We need prophets who point out when things are not being done God's way. We need prophets to point out sin. We need prophets who will come to you and learn how to love you, but share with you. You are going astray.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you have ever backslidden for any length of time? Ok. You know, you needed somebody to come to you and say, "You are not living for the Lord. Why not?"

You know, you can't keep this up. You will suffer chastisement if you are not living for the Lord.

You need prophets like that, but guess what? A person that with a gift of prophecy can't go to someone else and says, "You know, it doesn't look to me like you are living for the Lord," if they have got sin in their life, because two things will happen. One is Jesus told us not to get the splinter out of somebody else's eye until we have gotten the beam out of our own, right? So you take care of your own problems first. But also other people will then turn around and look at you and see the sin in you life and think, "Who are you to tell me when you are being hypocritical?"

There is a story in the Bible of a man. I was thinking this when I think about this problem. There is a story in the book of Acts about a man who basically went to cast out demons and he says, "In the name of Jesus, in the name of Paul I adjure you to come out."

And the demons replied. The guy said, "Well, we know who Jesus is. We know who Paul is, but who in the world are you?"

And then the demons set on him. Why is that? He had no credibility, ok?

So the motivation gift of prophecy requires a clear conscience.

Another thing this... let's talk about some characteristics. The first characteristic is a prophet needs to express themselves verbally. When they feel something in their heart eventually it has got to come out their mouth or, these days, it has got to come on their

blog. They have got to say something. They can't just stand still. They can't just ignore something. But especially when there are matters of right and wrong involved.

Now one of the fascinating things about the apostle Peter is that he spoke first more than any other disciple. So any time you had a group of disciples together and there is three or four of them talking in Scripture, Peter is usually the first one to open his mouth. I think that is why a lot of us identify with Peter because, you know, he lived by the philosophy open your mouth and let it fly, you know. And he often said things that he had to regret later, but he spoke more often first than any other one. And he was the primary spokesman for the early church.

So you look in Acts chapter two, for example, where you have got that... the day of Pentecost and you see the cloven tongues of fire coming down on people's head. And everybody is speaking in known languages over the world of that time and the Old Testament teaches that when you hear people talking in these other languages it was a sign of judgment upon the Jewish nation and so God was basically saying to the Jews, "You have rejected and crucified the Messiah. Your judgment is nigh. Now I am going to give my grace to the Gentiles." This is all part of what is happening on... in Acts chapter two on the day of Pentecost.

But did you notice that got all 11 of these guys there and you notice who it is that preaches the sermon, who is warning people of the judgment to come? It is Peter. And this happens a number of different time throughout Scripture.

Here is another characteristic of people with the gift of prophecy. That is they form quick impressions about people.

Sometimes people with a gift of prophecy they size people up very quickly. You know, they spend a few minutes with you and they can kind of sense whether you are genuine or not. And this happened in Acts chapter five where Peter sees Ananias and Ananias is saying, "Here, I brought the gift of my whole price of the land," and instantly Peter senses there is something wrong here. And he says, "Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit?" And basically Ananias drops dead. And then in comes Sapphira. And Sapphira basically says the same thing and he once again, Peter senses the insincerity in her and he sees it and he is kind of like, you know, the people who just carried your husband out are about to carry you out, too. And then Sapphira drops dead on the spot.

They sensed... they formed very quick impressions of people and then they tend to express their views more quickly than do others.

Another characteristic is, and, again with reference to Ananias and Sapphira, prophets are alert to dishonesty. They have an amazing ability to sense when something is not as it pretends to be. They have an amazing sensitivity to hypocrisy that goes on and then they react rather harshly. They are very harsh in fact in their response.

Another characteristic is that prophets not only do they sense the hypocrisy, but they want justice. They desire justice. And they tend to cut off the others. In other words, if they see someone that is in sin, their natural reaction is to want to cut off a relationship with them. It is kind of like that person needs to be put out of the church. They need to be excommunicated. There needs to be church discipline on them. That way everybody else can see not to do this sin.

Now sometimes that is a valid thing to do. I have only been in a church one time in my lifetime where someone was excommunicated and it was a Sunday school teacher that had left his wife, gone off to live with another woman. And because that is a very visible responsibility, it had an effect of all in the class. Everybody in the church was aware of it. It was one of those things you couldn't leave alone. He was committing open adultery. And because of that it was... and because he had the position of a teacher it was even more damaging than if it had just been somebody that was warming the pew in the background and nobody really knew much about him. This was a public leader, a public teacher, someone who was supposed to be a spiritual leader and he runs off with another woman. That needed to be taken care of. That is a valid time when a prophet needs to say, "We need to excommunicate that person. We need to put him out of the church. We need to deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," which is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians.

He says, "We need to deliver them over to Satan of the destruction of their flesh so that they will repent." But Paul also tells us later when that man in Corinth came back to the Lord he tells the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians they need to receive him back because that man did repent.

But prophets are very quick to want to say, "Whoa. Let's cut that off. We need to make an example of this person." And that is kind of how they are is that they desire justice.

And this is why Peter came to Christ one time. He knew he was supposed to forgive, but he was pretty doggone sure there was a limit to it somewhere. He wanted to know where to stop. And since seven was the magical number of Scripture, you know, everything is complete at the seven and he thought he was being really spiritual. He came up to Jesus and said, "How many times do I have to forgive somebody? Many times."

I can see him buttoning his jacket a little bit, feeling pretty good about himself. And he says, "What do you think about seven times, pastor? I think seven is probably a good number."

And Jesus really throws him on his heels because Jesus says, "I say to you not until seven times, but until 70 times seven."

What is really saying to Peter?

"Peter, you are looking for a limit so that you can cut that dude off. I am telling you, you need to keep forgiving."

Aren't you glad God doesn't have a limit on how many times he forgives you? Because I am pretty sure I have exceeded it already if he has got one. You know? I am so glad his mercy is without bounds. His forgiveness is without bounds that it is limitless.

So, but prophets often desire justice and they know why because a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. You let a little bit of sin go very long and it is like yeast. It grows up. It puffs up the whole batch of dough. And if we don't deal with this sin now, soon it is going to be everywhere. And do you know what? That can very well be true. Jesus himself said, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Sometimes you need to deal with sin before it just spreads and spreads and spreads.

Ok, here is another characteristic of people with the gift of prophecy. That is they tend to be very open about their own faults. I think prophets are probably harder on themselves than they are anybody else, quite frankly. It is hard to be a prophet and go around with a smile all the time because you never feel like you are personally very worthwhile.

If you remember the story in Luke chapter five, the disciples had been out fishing all night long and they came in empty handed. And Jesus hollers out to them and says, "Have you caught anything?" And Peter says, "No." And Jesus says, "Well, go out and let out your nets for another draught." And Peter responds. He says, "Master, we toiled all night long and have caught nothing." He says, "Nevertheless, at thy word we will let down the nets for another draught."

They went out. They let down the nets again, caught a bunch of fish, the boat nearly sank. They come back again and when Peter sees Jesus he just says, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man."

That was his response to the magnificence of Jesus Christ.

Now, so that was kind of his own response to Christ. But they tend to be very open about their own faults.

Another thing about prophets is that they are whole heartedly involved. They really throw themselves into a cause when they are committed to it and they are quick to respond to any situations that have to do with their own commitments.

And so, interesting thing about Peter. You remember the story. Jesus is walking out to his disciples. He is walking on the water while his disciples are in the boat. And Peter instantly looks to him and he says, "You know..."

First of all, let's think about what the disciples thought was going on. They used to have these things called mist devils. Now I grew up in west Texas and we had dust devils in west Texas and what would happen is you get, you know, a little bit of cold air and a little bit of warm air and they start these little mini whirlwinds and they are everything

out in west Texas, especially in the Lubbock, Slayton areas is just dust anyway. And so you see that dust just whirling around like a little miniature tornado. There is plenty of real tornadoes out in the Lubbock, Slayton area already. But this is just, you know, you see all these little ones. Sometimes they cross the road and you hope that it finish crossing the road before the car got to it because it could whip your car around pretty good even though it was kind of a small phenomena.

But you see these things. Well, they had mist devils because at night what would happen is that the air on the top of the mountains around the sea of Galilee would cool and that cold air would rush down off the side of the mountains, but the water retained a lot of heat and so there was warm air on the surface of the water and the cold air would mix with the warm air and it would cause these basically little tornadoes and they would pull water up in the little tornadoes and they were mist devils and if you were out in a little fishing boat these things could capsize you and if you go overboard with a lot of garments on, there is a pretty good chance you could drown.

So this was a big phenomena, these mist devils. And so one night the disciple are out. It is late. They are in your boat. They see something coming across the water and they think, "We have had it."

And so they are cowering in fear and then suddenly they hear this voice. "Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid."

By the way, there is a whole little sermon in every time there is like seven times in Scripture that God says, "Be of good cheer." It is a wonderful study. We will do that another time.

But any way he looks at, you know, Peter looks at him and says, "If it is really you, then tell me to walk to you on the water."

In other words, he is instantly willing to put his whole life at risk because of his commitment to Christ. Now that shows that he had whole hearted commitment

Jesus says, "Well, come on."

And, by the way, we give Peter a hard time because he got about three steps out of the boat and all of the sudden he sees the waves swashing up and he thinks, "I am going to drown. What am I doing out here? I am going to drown."

Now we give him a hard time because he took his focus off the Savior and he put his focus on the sea. But do you know what? He was the only one that got out of the boat. Let's give him a little credit where credit is due.

So he was fully committed and fully involved.

Another characteristic is that prophets are more loyal to the truth than they are to people. They are more loyal to truth than they are to people even if it means setting off relationships.

In John six it says Jesus had given some hard words. Basically, you know, everybody thought Jesus was going to be the Messiah. And their definition of Messiah was the guy that came to deliver them from Rome. And when he started talking about how he was going to... the Son of Man was going to have to suffer and then die, that wasn't a popular message. And he had about 500 people following him at that time and most of the 500 left him right then.

And so Jesus turns to his own disciples and says, "You know, what are you going to do?"

In John six it says:

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?⁵

And guess who is the first one to answer again?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.⁶

Isn't it fascinating that what he is saying is, "You got the truth."

So Peter wasn't going to be loyal to all these guys he had probably been buddy and pals and had been talking with, eating meals with for the last several months. He was holding on to the one that had the truth.

Ok? Another principle is that prophets are willing to suffer for doing what is right.

You may remember the story in the book of Acts chapter five.

It says, "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."⁷

This is when the Pharisees brought them in basically to say, "Don't you dare preach in the name of Jesus anymore."

He says, "We have got to obey God, rather than men."

⁵ John 6:66-67.

⁶ John 6:68-69.

⁷ Acts 5:29.

And it says, “And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council...”⁸

And then look at the reaction they have. I am not sure I can have this reaction. I haven't had to be beaten for my faith, but I don't really enjoy being beaten for my faith. Evidently the power supply is not holding up the thing and we will just keep going from here. I am not sure what is going on back there.

But anyway they were getting beaten for their faith. And it says, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”⁹

Here is another characteristic. Prophets are persuasive in defining truth. They have everything for a prophet is black and white. There is no grey area. Now a lot of people when they look at different things and wonder if that activity is acceptable for a Christian, they say, “Well, I don't see a thou shalt not in the Bible and I don't necessarily see a thou shalt in the Bible, so this must be in the gray area.”

There are two spiritual gifts that don't know about a gray area. One is the gift of prophecy. The other is the gift of teacher, because the teacher says the Word of God has got to be the standard and it is either going to be right or wrong. The prophet says the same thing. With the prophet everything is either black or white. It is right or wrong. There is no middle gray area.

In other words, prophets and teachers don't believe that God left anything up to chance and we could just say, “Oh, well, I don't think I remember anything about that, so that is kind of up to us.”

Which interestingly enough, there is a lot of Christians that think certain things are up to us. A lot of women in today's society think it is perfectly good and ok to wear immodest dress if it is fashionable and yet God mentions in 1 Timothy the need for women to wear modest dress so that they don't defraud others. God's Word does say something about it.

But we have a lot of cafeteria Christians that say, “Well, I am going to pick this thing I like and this thing I like and I am going to assume the Bible lets me do everything else the way I want to do it.”

It doesn't work that way.

And so prophets have this ability to define truth and when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he had an amazing ability to bring conviction to the people and he says that

⁸ Acts 5:40-41.

⁹ Acts 5:41.

Christ “being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”¹⁰

Boy, that is putting it pretty plain. He was God’s Son. God allowed him to be delivered and you killed him. That is right to the point. He expresses it quite well.

So we need prophets. We need all of these things. We need people who can point out hypocrisy. We need people who can do these other things. And here is the deal. Every gift has its misuses.

Now let me tell you a little secret as we are going through this study on spiritual gifts. I have given you kind of a cutesy way the last couple... the last week of how to know your spiritual gift, given that illustration of how a spiritual gift would respond if somebody was I the hospital or how somebody would respond if the desert was dropped during dinner and how each gift would look at those situations differently. And I actually had some people come up and say, “You know, I don’t think I would act that way, you know, at dinner. I don’t think I would have said what you said.”

Well, those were just kind of general examples.

Most often if you don’t know what your spiritual gift is, you will uncover what it is by looking at the way the gift has been misused.

Now, if you have got something and you don’t know what it is and you don’t know how to use it, chances are you are misusing it.

I remember a time or two in my life that I found kind of a cool looking tool thingie and because I am a man I think that if there is a tool thingie and I don’t already have one, I am supposed to have that tool thingie. And so sometimes I think, “Man, I need this tool thingie.” And picked it up and later I thought, “I don’t know what this tool thingie is for.”

You know? And so I had this big chunk of metal one time and I thought, man, that is awesome. I could use that as ... you know, kind of a hammer when I can’t get a hammer in there at a really good space and if I need a short hammer I could use this big chunk of metal and I could bang away at whatever it is. I hammer nails in when there is not much space of real hammers. And I found out later this chunk of metal had a specific purpose. You are supposed to put it on the back side of the fender and you hit the front... the outside of the fender with this hammer and this thing bounces and pushes the dent out.

Well, you know, until I understood that, it was a pretty cool paperweight or it was a pretty cool tiny clumsy looking hammer thing.

But, you know tools have purposes. You have been given a spiritual gift. If you don’t know what it is there is a good chance you are misusing it. Ok? So what we want to do is

¹⁰ Acts 2:23.

let's look at some of the misuses of a spiritual gift. And one of is that prophets sometimes expose without restoring.

In other words, they see somebody with sin and they basically let him have it and they are not concerned about bringing him back into fellowship. They just want to make an example.

So I had an situation in a church that I pastored one time and I went to his church and they had a woman who was the youth director. There is warning sign number one. I probably should have caught on to it because I don't... well, there is two warning signs there. One is there is a problem in having youth ministry because it segregates the youth from the family. That is why we have an integrated family church here. We are all in this together. The other dilemma here, the other problem here is that, you know, a woman shouldn't have been in this place of responsibility. There was a third problem, though. She was lost, lost as a [?] in a snowstorm.

And it was... there came a situation where, you know, I went to her before I realized that she was lost and basically they were out having volleyball at Wednesday night when we are having prayer meeting inside and it was disturbing the people in prayer meeting and people in prayer meeting were saying, "Wouldn't it be good for the young people to learn how to pray?"

Duh.

And so I went out of the church and I said, "You know what? I appreciate the fact that you are trying to work with the young people. I appreciate the fact that you are doing something with them. I really think that we need to wait for volleyball until after prayer meeting. So I think they ought to come in and hear from God's Word and now participate in prayer."

And she lost it. She flew off the handle and said a lot of very unkind things and then later that night she came over...

By the way, let me give you a little piece of advice. This is free, not part of the lesson, but I won't charge you for it.

When you have offended somebody, don't ever say, "I am sorry." Say, "Will you forgive me?" Ask them to forgive you. That is so important.

So this lady comes in, 10:30 at night, doesn't even knock on the door, opens the door to our house and rushes in and she says, "Well, I am sorry."

My first thought, quite frankly, was, "Yeah, you kind of are." But that was the way I reacted to it. And I... but I gave a gracious reply. And then she just never came back to church again. And then I found out later she was in a relationship with someone of the

same gender. This is somebody that should have never been on anybody's church staff. She wasn't saved.

Well, I remember one of my reactions and I don't have the gift of prophecy, but one of my reactions was, as soon as I saw this, we need to cut this person off. And... but before I did that I went to get counsel and a very wise man pointed out to me that the Bible says, "Ye which are spiritual restore such a one,"¹¹ in the book of Galatians.

So prophets want to just cut people off with out restoring, but Scripture says if you are really spiritual, you don't just do church discipline for the purpose of getting rid of him, you do church discipline for the purpose of them working to restore them to the fellowship and restore them in their relationship to God.

Prophets often don't want to do this.

Here is another thing about the gift of prophecy and that is that prophets tend to jump to conclusions. They tend to jump to conclusions. They draw conclusion from only a few known facts. They kind of already think they know what is going on, so they look for the evidence that matches what they think is going on and they can take comments out of context in order to prove their points.

This is why Proverbs 18:13 warns us. It says, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."¹²

Or another way of saying that is if you make a decision before you have heard all the facts, you are being stupid, Proverbs 18:13.

Another thing about prophets is they tend to react harshly to sinners. They denounce sin so strongly that it comes across as overkill. It sounds like they not only hate the sin, but they hate the sinner. They want to throw the baby out with the bath water.

The trick is we have to learn to hate sin which Jesus hated sin, but Jesus loved the sinner. And that is what we need to do is we need to learn how to hate sin without throwing away the sinner. And they think that the more they magnify the sin, the more will provoke repentance in other people.

Another thing about prophets is they can be unforgiving. And they have trouble separating the sin from the sinner and they hear the prophet's harshness as angry tirade.

So, you know, and by the way, it is an interesting little factoid if you are ever asked this in a Bible trivia game, Jesus never called anybody a sinner. Do you know that? Not once in Scripture does Jesus ever call anybody a sinner.

¹¹ Galatians 6:1.

¹² Proverbs 18:13.

Now I will tell you, on the flip side, that there was some Pharisees one time he says, “You are blind guides that strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. You are whitewashed sepulchers that are white on the outside and have dead men’s bones within. You are vipers. You are hypocrites.”

He called them a lot of things, but he never called them a sinner. Jesus never had to call them a sinner because as soon as you were around him, you knew. You can’t be around somebody that holy and not know something is wrong with you.

So, but he never had to point out that someone was a sinner.

But Peter’s epistles, finally, if you read 1 and 2 Peter you finally get the idea that by the time Peter is toward the end of his life, he has learned this balance between the holiness of God and the mercy that is offered in Christ. But it took him a while.

Here is another thing that is... can be wrong with prophets is that they condemn themselves a lot. So they are not only harsh on others, they can be harsh on themselves. They can be very self critical. They can feel worthless when they fail. They hate failing. And then they feel worthless when they do.

It is interesting that after Jesus’ resurrection he was especially worried about Peter. Now think about this for a minute, because he knew...

What had Peter done right before Christ died? What was the big problem that Peter had in his life right before Jesus died? Does anybody remember? He did what three times? He denied Christ three times and then the rooster crowed. And the Bible actually says in the gospel of Luke that Jesus happened to be walking through the courtyard just at that moment and when Peter denied him the third time and the rooster crowed and the Bible says Jesus looked at him. And I am sure this wasn’t the angry look of Jesus. I think this is the heartbroken look of Jesus.

And Peter went outside the gates and he fell on the pavement full of sharp stones and he cried and he wailed.

And it is interesting that after the resurrection, the Bible says this. Actually the angels say this about Jesus having been resurrected. The angels say to the disciples.

“Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.”¹³

Isn’t it funny? They get him to say, “Tell your disciples.” But the angels make a specific point of saying, “And Peter.”

¹³ Mark 16:6-7.

Why? Make sure you tell Peter. Why? Peter needs some encouragement. Peter really needs it because he is really being hard on himself.

Isn't it cool that angels even notice who needs special help? That is awesome.

Well, here is another thing. Prophets tend to be impetuous. They tend to be impulsive and because of that they often make hasty decisions and they vacillate between extremes.

I have often called Peter the apostle of outrageous extremes. You know, boy, one minute he is at the bottom and the other minute he is at the top. One minute he is trying to build three tabernacles for Moses, Elijah and Jesus and the next minute he is denying he even knows Christ. I mean this is... he is the man of outrageous extremes.

John 13:8. Do you remember this? This is at the last supper. Jesus got that towel on and he is going around and he is washing the disciples' feet and he gets over to Peter and Peter is like, "You are not washing my feet. You know, I am not worthy."

You know, and what would you do? Peter says, "Thou shalt never..."

Now, by the way, think about this for a minute. Here is a man telling God, "Thou shalt not..."

Whoa. I thought that was God's job. I think in the 10 Commandments God was talking to us when he did all those thou shalt not. But Peter says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

And then when Jesus says, "If I don't wash you, you won't have any part of me."

And the very next verse Peter swings to the opposite extreme. He goes, "In that case, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Give me a bath."

You know, it is the other extreme. So they tend to be impetuous.

Another characteristic is they tend to cut off those who fail. They tend to cut off those who fail. They feel responsible to speak about evil and they don't always take time to ask whose responsibility really is this? Who is really an authority here. Do I have all the facts and do we really need to take action now? They don't ask those questions. Just, boom. Let's take care of this. They don't take time to get the facts.

And here is another one. This will probably not surprise you, but prophets sometimes aren't very tactful when they give a rebuke.

I tell people that prophets are like submarines with screen doors. You know, they are about as subtle as submarine with a screen door. It is not a good thing. They tend to be painfully direct when they are correcting others even if they are people in their own family. They just let them have it. And their bluntness can bring them embarrassment.

The fact is the most embarrassing examples in Mark chapter eight verses 31 through 32 where Peter hears Jesus say something and Peter doesn't like it, because Jesus is saying I am going to have to die.

Now Peter loved him so much, he didn't like that. He says, "I will never leave you." And he says, "Master, you won't die. I won't let you die."

And Jesus says, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Whoa. Whoa what a remark. He says, "For thou savorest not the things that be of men, or not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." He says, "You are thinking like a man, not like God." Get behind me. What an amazing thing. And so he got kind of embarrassed because he lacked tactfulness.

And then prophets tend to dwell on the negative. Everything is either right or wrong. It is black or white. And once they label you as being a sinner they are probably never going to let you off that label. You know, you are stuck there. You know, it is no possibility of change. You know, there is good news. People do change. We have to be careful, though, because somebody with the gift of prophecy will tend to put a label on you and once you fail, boy, you are always somebody to beware of after that.

In the fact is I will say this about a prophet. That gift in the wrong hands can lead to a church split because the label people and they will talk bad about them and that is how things happen.

The last thing is that precautions for the prophet are in verse nine. So look at verse nine again in Romans 12. You notice he tells two or three things depending on how you count it.

He first of all says, "Let love be without dissimulation."¹⁴

Now we are all to love one another, right? This is a new commandment that I give unto you except for the people with the gift of prophecy. No, he didn't say that. He says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."¹⁵

So we are all supposed to love each other. And he cautions the prophet. You need to let your love be without dissimulation. In other words, don't be a hypocrite. You are going to say you love somebody, really love him. Don't just mouth the words because you have already labeled him. You don't really like him anymore you are going to say, "Oh, I love you, brother."

That is not what they want.

¹⁴ Romans 12:9.

¹⁵ John 13:34.

But let love be without dissimulation. It should be unfeigned, undisguised, sincere and not hypocritical.

And then he says this, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”¹⁶

In other words, you are right to hate sin, but don't hate the sinner. There is a difference. The sinner is the way he is because of what sin has done for him. You know, sin will make you stay longer than you want to stay. It will cost you more than you wanted to pay. And we ought to look at sinners and rather than being angry at them, we ought to know that they just are greatly in need of the grace of God.

Do you know what? I think all of us should just learn to appreciate the fact that God doesn't give up as easily on us as we give up on others. That is the gift of prophecy.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank you for this day and fill now our pastor with your Spirit. Give him wisdom and train his words so that we can hear the message that you have for us. Father, thank you for those with the gift of prophecy. We thank you for the blessing that they are by showing us when we are going off your way, warning us about the judgment or the chastisement that is to come if we don't make correction now. Father, may you give us prophets in this church who will have the ability to learn to speak tactfully when we are wandering from your guidance. And, Lord, we love you. May you get all the glory this day? For it is in Jesus' name we pray.

¹⁶ Ibid.