

Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 February 2022

Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 00] Could I just ask you to stand, if you're able? That's great. And then could you sit down? Thank you.

Because that's about as far away from the early church that the church in Corinth was speaking to, because this was written at a time of the early church when, frankly, it was total, total power, chaos, excitement, enthusiasm, energy.

Two thousand years later, why did we become so compliant? Would you stand? Would you sit? Thank you so much. We wouldn't have recognized the early Corinthian church. It was totally opposite, vibrant and dynamic.

No wonder Paul writes to them and others in the early church and actually starts giving them advice about prophecy and speaking in tongues, because these gifts were to be shared. It wasn't to be held back.

It was a gift that was given from God for the church to build it up. And actually, so that people, not that it would be mayhem and loss, but so the richness could actually be heard, like we heard from Margaret this morning.

[1 : 24] Everybody came with a story. Everybody came with something that God was doing in them and through them to encourage and build up the local church, the people of God.

You know, the church in Corinth was no exception. And hence, Paul writes, what happens when people experience the Holy Spirit? What happens when we receive the gifts?

Well, sometimes it can seem a little un-British and a little undignified. And that's the way it was. And perhaps that's why a significant number, in my opinion, of leaders in churches have tried to dampen the gifts of prophecy and of the Spirit, because actually it keeps a nicely ordered, well-tidy church. Prophecy isn't dead. It's alive and it's thriving. And in a recent New York Times article speaking into the issues in America at the moment, Dennis Edwards commenting on the wild and bizarre so-called prophecies that are around.

He says, I affirm that God still speaks prophetically. We witness the beauty and power of timely pronouncements that zero in on particular wrongs to be righted.

[2 : 46] At times, prophetic words come from unlikely sources, as well as from faithful pastors and also Christian leaders. As Jesus made clear, you can tell a tree by its fruit, and likewise a true prophet.

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. He ends, God still speaks, and we can hear if our spiritual ears attune and our hearts soften to respond.

We can hear that of God. When I came in, Thomas had a little thing on his machine here that goes, yes.

Can you give us a yes? Yeah! Thank you for your response. Nice, tidy, well-behaved church.

It's an observation, but on the whole, we seem to have ignored this gift too much. You know, moving in the prophetic, and the freedom that it brings in worship, and somewhere along the line, it dampened not only our gatherings, but turned some church meetings to reflect more of a public library than it did of a church that was alive.

[4 : 14] You know, and as we seek more and more the gifts of the Spirit, and maybe reverse this trend, we see the church moving in the prophetic. Why? Because it seizes people's attention.

You know, I saw a vicar once eat a daffodil from the pulpit. I can't even remember what the sermon was about, but what I do remember is this amazing technicolor bath that went, bleh, right over the front.

I mean, as a young person, it made my day. It seized my attention. What does it take to seize our attention?

What is God doing innocent through us? As he builds up our church, and in our teaching series, in our home groups, you will see that the spontaneity of prophecy and tongues is evidence as the Holy Spirit came for all people.

In Acts 2, the good news was conveyed in everybody's own language. You see, what happened is God has a great way of creating a receptive audience by grabbing people's attention.

[5 : 28] Here are fishermen. They're not linguists. Tax collectors came out empowered by the Holy Spirit, spoke into people's lives, who went out to their communities and shared the good news.

That is seizing attention. These people, again, that we saw in Acts 2, they had this experience, this idea corporately of sharing the power of God because they were seized in order to do that.

a few moments beforehand, before they had seen and experienced the resurrected Jesus, they were timid, afraid, locked away.

the Holy Spirit comes and suddenly, they don't care who they tell. They break out in words that people can understand and share.

You know, these gifts are called to build up the church. the Holy Spirit sees their attention. Are we open to respond? When it comes to prophecy and gift of times, can I suggest that in some areas we have become a little bit flabby?

[6 : 41] It's a balloon for those on the podcast. We have in many areas and yet we sit back and we don't expect the Lord to use the gifts or to receive them.

We've got a thing coming up on the screen, a little verse here. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all. Hold on to what is good.

It is given for us to build up the church, one another, to build each other up. Hold on to what is good. Hold on to what is good. What is good? What have we lost maybe that is good in receiving this particular gift of prophecy and speaking in tongues? Because believe it or not and this may surprise some people, we the church are still under construction.

we are not the finished article. God didn't finish with the church in 1662. Some of you got that joke.

[7 : 50] There will be people on the podcast writing to me soon. And God has got great things to do with his church. And yet somewhere and somewhere along the line we, we or individuals may have got stuck.

It has to be this way. No. For this generation God is still constructing his church. We need to listen, we need to hear and we need to share what God is saying to us.

And we need the freedom to do that. And what we're talking about this morning is tongues and prophecy is a freedom, is a new freedom that God has given us.

You know, I was worshipping along with one of my favourite worship songs from, I think it was the 70s or 80s. You know, I noticed some of those choruses are a little bit sort of swing your pants, aren't they?

They're quite nice and sing along. And there was I sort of in my early 20s as having found the Lord again. And I suddenly found that I wasn't singing the words on the screen.

[9 : 02] I wasn't singing the words anymore because I had been wrapped up in this amazing sense of worship that the words that were coming out of my mouth bore very little resemblance to the words that were in my hymn book.

Because, and I couldn't help but raise my hands and I didn't really worry who was stood around me or what people were looking at me for because this was between me and it was for worship of God. and it was a direct response to his love for me that I couldn't hold and I couldn't contain and that's the way it came out.

I hadn't been taught, I didn't do a lesson, I didn't go to classes, it happened and from that moment on I felt a new sense of freedom.

It wasn't about me, it was all for him, all for him. Has anybody else had that experience? Oh come on, to be honest, here on a Sunday as well, maybe we've got a long way to go, maybe we've got a long way to go back to experience what the Lord, that freedom that we hear about this morning in his church to worship him.

[10 : 26] The Bible urges us constantly to move consistently and seek the gifts, seek the gifts, seek the gifts. Moving in the prophetic, I've been so blessed and I hope others have too, of moving in the prophetic.

I've shared and tested words of scripture. I recall a scripture given by a lady at a church a little while ago, not here, and she gave a prophecy for the church, that the church should come back to God,

that the church should come back on its knees in humility and that the Lord wanted to break a spirit of criticism in that church.

She was sent packing by the leadership. I can tell you now after 30 years, that prophecy is as fresh for that church as it was the day it was given, if only they had listened.

I'm here this morning with a dog collar on, partly because of a nine year old that spoke prophecy into my life, who spoke out a word of God in the middle of what was a falcon camp, a venture camp, and I'm there doing the thing, you've got to give it all to the Lord, give it all to the Lord, you know, do all that, and a nine year old looks at me in the eye and he said, I sense the Lord saying to me, Clive, are you prepared to give it all?

We need to listen to what God's saying, do not quench the spirit, don't dampen it down, don't try and pour cold water on it, yes you can test the word of the God by the tree that it comes from, I'm really sad that I haven't got a film clip for you, no it's even sad than that, but I do have a sermon illustration, you see, a friend of mine gave me this arrow, and when it comes to actually moving in the power of the spirit, I think it's a really important thing, in Isaiah it says, in Isaiah 49, he has made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me, he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver, this doesn't come ready made, cut off the tree, it has to be fashioned, it has to be cut, it has to be made straight, it is a work in progress that brings it to this, this is us, people, this is us, this is our character, this is our character in God, you know, if you've come with that word already in your mind of criticism then it needs to be shaved, it needs to be cut, if you've come with a problem about your neighbour, or your brother that needs to be dealt with, and of course you add to the arrow, you add the flights, and you add the flights, it's very much like the word of God, the word of

[13 : 44] God get back into the Bible because this gives us balance, it gives us something to get back to, without the arrow, it goes, without the Bible, without the flights, it goes all over the place, it's never going to hit the mark, so we have this at the end that gives us balance, that helps to give it direction, but then if you were like me and you made bows and arrows at school, you would know that you just shave off the tip, and actually it doesn't hit anything, it just bounces off, and the gift of the Holy Spirit has to be added into us, into our character, to give it penetrating power, power, and so when we're fashioned, when we're ready, we're reading the Bible, we've added the Spirit, added what does the Lord do with us?

He hides us in his quiver, why am I in this dark place, what am I doing here? Because I've made you ready, because at a moment's notice, I'm going to draw you out and I want you to have penetrating power and to hit the mark, our life is like this, for he has made me a polished arrow, moving in the prophetic is for now, and when the Spirit is with us, we have words for people, usually measured by encouragement, if you hear a word that's coming out for you this morning, there's about negativity and stuff, I would probably test that strongly, you know, as I've said here before, and we've said it time and time again, when people come to tell you something in love, head for a nuclear fallout shelter, because it will probably be anything but in love, test the Spirit, it often involves faith, boldness and confidence in him, it takes courage and boldness, and that too comes from the power of the Spirit, and you may hold back and you may think, oh, you know, maybe this word, it's, test it, test it and see, spring harvest many years ago, we are in the big top, I'm sat there, about 20 rows in front, somebody said to me about, what does it mean when you see the Spirit fall on people? Clive, how weird you are, I said, a set of people come into sharp focus, and everything else goes into soft focus, but also as well, I well up with tears and that's not emotion, what does the Lord do to seize your attention so we listen?

Because in those moments we listen, what have you got for me today? On this particular day, and there, worshipping away, having a great time, the Lord shows this lad who's down the bottom and tells me and says, just go and tell him to go and do what I'm asking him to do.

That's a bit thin, Lord. Could you give me some backstory? No? Just go and do that, would you?

So, as bold and courageous as I am, I go and do what we all do, sidle up beside him.

[17 : 09] Now, I don't normally do this sort of thing, and I'm probably wrong, but I sense the Lord telling you to go and do what I'm asking you to do.

He gets a tad emotional, and we go for a coffee. He's been studying medicine. His granddad was a surgeon, his dad was a GP, his mother was a practice nurse, his sister was a biochemist working in a hospital, and he was expected to become a doctor, but what had happened in a gap year, the Lord had taken him to Guatemala to work amongst the street children, and he knew that's where he

had to go.

Everything was stacked against him for going, and then he said to me, and you're the sixth person that's told me that today, and I have to go.

Don't dampen the spirit, don't dampen the gifts that have been given. It's so important that we move in the prophetic, and what you will find often is when you do, that the Lord has already gone before you.

He's already prepared that person, he's already doing it. We're just part of the story, we just get to join in. Isn't that great? We need to keep being filled with the Holy Spirit to build up his church, because we are a people under construction.

[18 : 52] And it says in Ephesians 5.18 that we should be filled. Not just filled once, but keep being filled. filled.

Filled to overflowing. Why do we have to keep being filled by the Holy Spirit? Because I leak. I leak badly.

I may have a thought or word that's not of God. I leak. I may go out of here, I may just slightly increase my speed at the wrong place.

I leak. I may go home and maybe, I don't know, maybe something upsets me, maybe I get a, you know, things like I leak.

Before we know it, we've just become that floppy, unfilled Christian being. And we need to be filled again and again.

[20 : 10] To be filled to overflowing with all that God has for us. To move in the prophetic, in our series, in our gifts, to worship, to have the freedom to worship, to make that connection, to be the people that God has called us to be in our joys, in our sorrows, in our needs, in our wants, in all our sexuality, in our disappointments, in our rebellion, to be open to what he wants to say in us and through us into every part.

Why? Because we are the church under construction and he hasn't finished with us. Amen? And the people said yes.

Yeah! Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

That's I can't perhaps it's I can't