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The Spirit Of Prophecy

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When God is present in our midst, we will hear Him speaking to us powerfully in the meetings. That is the meaning of prophecy. In old covenant times, prophecy was meant for foretelling the future and for guiding people as to what they should do. But now, in the new covenant, prophecy is for exhortation (challenging, rebuking and correcting people), consolation (comforting and encouraging people) and edification (building up the church) (1 Cor.14:3). Prophecy is the main gift of the Spirit by which the church is built. The prophetic word is "a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Pet.1:19). Without this light constantly burning in the church, it will be impossible to escape the wiles of the prince of darkness. The church itself will sink into darkness. The main reason why many Christian groups that started out well degenerated over a period of time was because the gift of prophecy gradually disappeared. Whenever God's presence departed from Israel in Old Testament times, one mark of His forsaking them was that "there was no longer any prophet" among them (Psa.74:1,9).

Israel always degenerated whenever they did not have a prophet, as in the days of Eli (See 1 Sam.3:1). But Israel rose into a place of eminence when they had a prophet, as in the days of Samuel (1 Sam.3:20). It was through Samuel that David was anointed as the king of Israel. And that began a glorious new era in Israel's history. When Samuel prophesied, "the Lord did not allow any of his words to fall to the ground" (1 Sam.3:19 - KJV). We too must pray earnestly for such a powerful ministry of prophecy in the church that every word we speak goes straight home to people's hearts like an arrow to its mark. Through the gift of prophecy, "the secrets of people's hearts are disclosed" (1 Cor.14:25). Thus everyone in the church will get light on the deceitfulness of sin.

We are commanded to "exhort one another daily (in the church), lest we be hardened through the DECEITFULNESS of sin" (Heb.3:13). There are sins that are obvious and there are sins that are subtle and hidden. But the spirit of prophecy will expose both the deceitfulness of sin as well as the schemes of Satan, so that we are protected. We see an illustration of this in the Old Testament. When the king of Aram was warring against Israel, every time he and his generals planned in secret to attack Israel at a certain point, his plans were revealed to the king of Israel by Elisha, through prophecy (2 Kings 6:8-12). Thus the king of Israel knew exactly where to place his army to defend the country, and saved his nation again and again. That is how the Lord, through prophecy in the church-meetings, warns us in advance of the areas where Satan is going to attack us in the coming days. So we can be on our guard in those areas.

Paul exhorted Timothy to fight the good fight (against Satan) by paying attention to the prophecies made concerning him (1 Tim.1:18). Proverbs 24:3,4 says, "By WISDOM a house is built, and by KNOWLEDGE the rooms are filled with pleasant and precious riches". There is a place for knowledge in the church - God's Word taught by anointed teachers. But knowledge is like the furniture, with which a house is furnished after it has been built by WISDOM. So if we only have Bible-knowledge in our churches, we will be like a family living on an empty plot of ground with a lot of expensive furniture around us, but with no house - no walls, no roof and not even a floor!! That's why we are exhorted in the New Testament to pursue after WISDOM first of all. "If anyone lacks wisdom let him ask God who gives liberally to all" (Jas.1:4). It is through wisdom that the church is built. And God's wisdom comes to the church through the gift of prophecy. That is why we must "earnestly seek to prophesy" (1 Cor.14:1,5), in every meeting of the church. Meetings for Bible-study and evangelism are good. But if we are to build the church as a pure testimony for Christ, then the gift of prophecy must be given the FIRST place.