

3/30/08

Prophetic Ministry in the Local Church

Next Sunday morning we launch our Prophetic Conference, so I wanted to spend just a little time this morning laying some foundation concerning prophetic ministry in the local church, more specifically City View.

After the death and resurrection of Christ, the Church in Jerusalem experienced explosive growth and this was effected greatly because of persecution. Some say "Christianity is like a tea-bag. You're not much good if you haven't been through some hot water."

Acts 11:19-30

¹⁹Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. ²⁰Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²²News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God; he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

²⁷During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul."

So through a word of prophecy from a man named Agabus the disciples at Antioch evidently began making preparation to give financial assistance to the believers in Jerusalem. Now let's jump about fifteen years ahead to Acts 21.

Acts 21:7-14

⁷We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day. ⁸Leaving the next day,

we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. [This is not Philip the Apostle but one of the seven selected in Acts 6] ⁹**He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.**

¹⁰**After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus** [evidently he held the office of prophet just as Philip held the office of evangelist and this is probably the same prophet who had been in Antioch prophesying the coming famine in Jerusalem 15 years earlier.] **came down from Judea.**

¹¹**Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "**

¹²**When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.** ¹³**Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."** ¹⁴**When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."** (details in brackets mine)

It's interesting that the prophet just spoke the word of the Lord—that Paul was going to be bound and turned over to the Gentiles. Some had their personal interpretation—"Don't go." But Paul knew in his spirit that he was to go regardless. So this was not a prophetic warning as such but more of a preparation for Paul to set his face to do what he knew he must do and that was to deliver the offering to the church at Jerusalem. So, is this one of those churches that really believes God talks to people? Yep, I'm afraid so. Actually I'm not *afraid* of it; I'm excited about it.

In the protestant denomination that I was part of for many years almost everyone in that denomination equated prophecy with preaching, a forth-telling or a declaration of the word of God. Prophecy certainly has a forth-telling dimension to it, but I've come to believe that prophecy is one of the ways that God guides His Church and His people, and when we move without the ministry of prophecy operating in the life of the church we lose our supernatural edge. For example, prophetic input is absolutely essential for guiding church government. Without it, church government has little recourse but to become a human-led, administrative driven organization. The prophetic brings life to stimulate the church to become a living organism operating on the cutting edge of God's direction.

We were starting a new church in 1991, and I worked and prayed for sometime to determine who would be a good group of leaders to assist me in leading the church. I knew these decisions were critical because as your leadership goes so your church goes. Prophetically God spoke and led us in this decision. It was quite affirming. I can give several examples of the prophetic having the same decision making input.

Prophecy is simply God communicating His thoughts and intentions through His appointed messenger. And when a true prophecy is given, the

Holy Spirit inspires someone to communicate God's word to an individual or a group for whom the prophecy is intended. So prophecy is one of the ways that God speaks to us.

Now one of the primary ways that God speaks to us is through the Scriptures, so the Bible is prophetic. The biggest prophetic target in the Bible is the Old Testament prophesying about the Messiah Jesus Christ.

Personal prophecy generally comes to us through one of the following ways:

- **The office of prophet**

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

We are part of network of churches called Fellowship of Connected Churches and Ministries (FCCM) and a central core value of FCCM is that the five-fold ministry that Jesus has given to the church has to be restored to the church.

- **Prophetic preaching**

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

- **Prophetic presbytery**

1 Timothy 4:14

¹⁴Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders [presbytery-KJV] laid their hands on you.

Acts 13:1-3

¹In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and

Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

- The gift of prophecy

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.

- Prophetic dreams, visions, and songs

Examples: Joseph, Paul and the man from Macedonia, and Peter on the housetop

Ephesians 5:18-20

¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The spirit of prophecy

We see in Numbers 11 that the people of God are complaining about the manna. Initially it was like angel food cake but now they want meat to eat. Moses is weighted down with complaints of the people. "Did I conceive all these people?" he asks God.

Numbers 11:24-25

²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. ²⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied....

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1 Samuel 10:1-10

¹ Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance? ² When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?" '

³ "Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. ⁴ They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them.

⁵ "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. ⁶ The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. ⁷ Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

⁸ "Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, [b] but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do."

⁹ As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day. ¹⁰ When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.

I've noticed that when I'm around the prophetic I tend to get more prophetic. There's an anointing from the Lord that falls and "spills over" to those around. It can make for an exciting time. Do you remember a Sunday morning a few months ago when that happened?