

Prophecy, the Ordinary Gift
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The understanding of the scriptures is a goal sought by every individual who wishes to be close to God. The understanding of man is unremarkable when compared to the wisdom of the Almighty as it is written in 1 Cor. 1: 25 “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” Man’s misinterpretation of the word “prophecy” in the scriptures has engendered strife in the church to a point that the context of 1 Cor. 11: 1-16 has been relegated by members of the Church of Christ as a matter of opinion and not a matter of faith. The controversy over the word “prophecy” has lead church leaders to neglect the subject matter of the passage and a failure to fulfil the commandment for women to use an artificial covering during the worship service.

In Acts 8: 14-17, we find an example of the apostles transmitting the gift of the Holy Ghost. This passage demonstrates that even though the deacon Phillip was himself able to perform many marvelous signs and miracles, he could not give them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Only the apostles were able to transmit the gift of the Holy Ghost. It wasn’t until the apostles Peter and John laid hands on the believers of Samaria that they were able to receive the Holy Ghost. We can see in verses 18-19, Simon the sorcerer wanted this ability to transmit the gift of the Holy Ghost, insomuch that he tried to purchase this ability from the apostles. Not only did the Peter deny his request, but rebuked him for his presumptuous attitude. What does this mean? Simply put, after the death of the last apostle, no one was able to transmit the gift of the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands. In short, after the last remaining believer on whom the apostles laid hands, died, the miraculous dispensation ended and there were no more miracles.

The use of the term prophecy or prophesy in the scriptures is not always foretelling the future. In fact, the primary definition of the word prophesy is to tell or to declare. This is not a manmade definition of the word, but this can be found by examining all the scripture. In Ex. 7: 1-2, God declares that Aaron would be Moses’ prophet to Pharaoh. Not because he was doing anything miraculous on Moses’ behalf, but because he would speak to Pharaoh on behalf of Moses. In Ex. 4:16, God does not use the word prophet to describe Aaron but instead he uses the word “mouth.” A prophet can simply be someone who is a mouthpiece for God. In other words, to prophesy, can be to tell the future, or it can simply mean to tell. Whether miraculously hearing the voice of the Lord and the prophet repeating those words to his target audience, or reading the scripture and voicing the Lord’s salvation, his judgment, or the history of his people, the mouthpiece for the Lord is his prophet. There was nothing miraculous about Moses speaking to Aaron as you or I speak to each other, esteemed reader. To try to force the word prophecy, prophesy or prophet to be miraculous in *every* instance is contrary to what the scripture teaches.

In order to understand how prophecy can be an “ordinary” gift, we can examine two passages in the epistle of Romans. First, let us examine Rom. 1: 9-11. Paul confirms here that no one in Rome had any spiritual gift, that is to say the ability to perform any miracles, also known as the gift of the Holy Ghost. This means that no apostle had laid hands on them to transmit this gift. No amount of supposition, inferences or uninspired writings can contend with the written Word that clearly indicates Paul’s desire to journey to Rome to impart some spiritual gift to them. Be it far from anyone to claim Paul isn’t saying that they didn’t have any gifts, he just wanted to go so that he could *also* impart to them a gift. We know that this is not Paul’s nature, to boast or to desire some glory for himself, (1Cor. 9: 16-17, 1 Cor. 3: 5-6). This was because he wanted them *established*, meaning they did not have the gift of the Holy Ghost. Bill Reeves, in his commentary over Rom. 1: 11-12, claims that there had to be some Christians there that had

come in contact with some apostle and made their way to Rome, all because of the use of the word prophecy in Rom. 6. The church is so predisposed on believing that prophecy must be miraculous that they will add words to the Holy Scriptures. Reeves says "Paul wanted to impart *more* gifts, or some other gift." Why add words to Paul's epistle that aren't there? Paul clearly states in 1 Cor. 12: 1-11 that there are diversities of gifts and that "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." If the Spirit decided that the *gift* of prophecy is enough for Rome, why then would Paul disagree? He doesn't! We do not infer from uninspired men or words not mentioned that the church in Rome had spiritual gifts. We dare not speak where God has not spoken. This is confirmed in Rom. 12: 6-8 where Paul mentions 4 gifts together, all ordinary. What are these gifts that Paul speaks of? These gifts are obviously not miraculous since no apostle had laid hands on anyone in the church at Rome, included in these is prophecy. Prophecy, ministry, teaching, and exhortation are all gifts that the church continues to use to this day. Prophecy, in this context, is no different than the aforementioned "ordinary" gifts. While the leaders of the Church of Christ will agree that these gifts mentioned in verses 7-8 are not miraculous in nature, they fail to acknowledge verse 6, which is not a separate context, in fact, it is the verse that mentions the preceding 4 acts as "gifts." Bill Reeves, in his commentary over 1 Peter 4: 10 says "There are miraculous gifts (Rom. 12: 6), and there are natural or ordinary gifts (Rom. 12:8)." But as we have already proven, there were no miraculous gifts in Rome, Paul stated that himself in Chapter one. We cannot forget that! Reeves also fails to mention verse 7, which mentions ministering and teaching as part of the gifts in Rome. Were these gifts ordinary or miraculous? All the gifts mentioned in Romans 12 were ordinary. We cannot choose to ignore a verse because it does not fit our narrative. The Bible is not a book to serve our purposes, it is a compilation of the works of God and his followers that teach us what we must do in order to obtain salvation. If something doesn't fit our narrative, we should change our narrative to fit that of the Holy Scriptures. 1 Pt. 4: 10-11. The gifts that that the Spirit has divided severally among us, we use to minister to one another. We exercise this gift in the same way we are commanded in verse 11. We speak as the oracles of God. That is, we profess, we proclaim, we prophesy the Word of God, without changing one jot or tittle, as if it were straight from the mouth of God, the oracle. We do this with the ability that God has given us, as Paul says in Romans 12: 6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us..." Bill Reeves in his commentary over 1 Pt. 4:10-11 uses exegesis to claim that ministering is not preaching, that preaching is not a gift, but ministering is serving the church. This would explain why he only mentions exhortation as an ordinary gift. He claims we wouldn't call the Old Testament prophets deacons, they were prophets. He fails to acknowledge the fact that two deacons of the New Testament (Philip and Stephen) were instrumental in proclaiming and preaching the gospel, including the conversion of the eunuch in Acts chapter 8, a chapter that is a staple to the Church of Christ's plan of salvation. What Mr. Reeves fails to mention is that the proclamation of the gospel is part of serving the church and God. Acts 6: 1-6 shows that the apostles chose these men for the work in the daily ministration, and Acts 8:26 and 29 shows the Spirit commanding the deacon Philip to go preach and convert. Verse 11 of 1 Pt. 4 declares that speaking the oracles of God, and ministering, whether it be serving or preaching (prophesying according to Rom. 12:6), is indeed a non-miraculous gift from God.

Many of the former house (the apostate Church of Christ) believe that the use of the word "prophesy" in 1 Cor. 11: 1-16 excludes the commandment from this dispensation because they believe that prophecy can only be miraculous. While I hope, esteemed reader, that having illuminated your understanding of prophecy in both a miraculous *and* ordinary gift, we can now examine the context of 1 Cor. 11: 1-16 to understand that the use of the word prophesy is not miraculous. To properly interpret the scriptures, one must never forget to let the context rule. No one likes to ever have their words taken out of context,

whether intentionally or unintentionally, and have their point distorted. The subject matter of 1 Cor. 11: 1-16 can be found in verse 3, which for purposes of this article easy reference, we will call the order of authority. Throughout the context we see the comparison of what brings a man shame, and what brings a woman shame, and what brings a man glory and what brings a woman glory. The order of authority, and the distinction of the genders in the assembly is the subject matter of this context, not spiritual gifts. The former house will contend that the use of the word prophecy makes the use of the term prayer miraculous because of the proximity to the word prophecy. They claim that a woman doesn't have to cover during prayer because it only applies to miraculous prayer. How convenient it is, that in Rom. 12: 6-8, that in the same sentence, these gifts are all mentioned together, yet *they* are not all miraculous. One should always strive for consistency in reading and interpreting the scriptures! If prophecy can be ordinary in Romans, then it can be ordinary in 1 Corinthians, so long as the context dictates that it is so. Does this then mean that only the miraculous woman should have long hair and not every woman? Does this mean that only the prophetic man needs to cut his hair? Paul appeals to nature, that is, the inherent, natural law, long before the existence of the written law, to demonstrate the distinction of the genders. This natural law applies to all men and women, does it not? The natural law applies to all men and women because if it did not, then why were Sodom and Gomorrah condemned? Was everyone in those cities prophets? Rom. 1: 26 contends "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature." And what do we also find in this natural law established in Genesis? That there is preeminence and an order, Gen. 3: 16. What does nature teach us about miraculous gifts? Nothing! But nature teaches us how a man and woman should look, and there is a distinction between the two genders in not only the home, but also the house of God. Paul is commanding us to not do that which is against nature, for "...doth not even nature itself teach you..." If this applies to all men and women, for it advises us to not go against nature, then we can conclude that in this context, just as in Rom. 12: 6-8, that this prayer and prophecy is ordinary. And besides all this, in 1 Cor. 12: 1 Paul initiates a change of subject to Spiritual gifts. We all know that the chapters and verses in the Bible were added later by uninspired men to make it easier to study, however, even without the break in chapter, one can easily determine that Paul is addressing a new subject. Verse 1 in the KJV reads "Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." The Easy to Read version (ERV), as every other version break this down a little simpler for the reader to understand that Paul was not previously speaking about spiritual gifts. "Now, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand about spiritual gifts." This is a complete change of subject, he, in this chapter addresses, the "spiritual" whereas before, he was addressing the order of authority in the assembly.

In conclusion, dear reader, with regards to the use of the words prophecy and prophesy, my hope is that your understanding has been opened. Hopefully the words prophecy and prophesy will no longer dictate the context of biblical passages, but that the context will dictate to you whether or not it is miraculous or ordinary. Praying and prophesying in 1 Cor. 11: 1-16 is not attributed to the miraculous or extraordinary man or woman, but to every believing Christian in the worship service. It is not a matter of opinion but an article of faith.