

R.C. Sproul, False Prophecies and the Word of God

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Dr. R.C. Sproul is one of the most respected theologians in the body today, and while I do not share his Calvinist views, I recognize his deep love for the Word and his ability to interest other believers in the pursuit of divine truth.

Interestingly, Dr. Sproul says he was “deeply immersed” in **charismatic** circles in the 1960s and that after receiving about 40 to 50 **false prophecies**—according to his report, they were specific **prophecies** with specific dates and details that never came to pass—he said to himself, “You know, I’m going to live my life by what it says in the Word, because I know the Spirit has superintended that. And somebody else can have their dream, and let them tell their dream, but I’m going to stick with the Word.”

Of course, I totally agree with Dr. Sproul that we should live our lives by what’s written in the Word, and I can certainly understand why he concluded the **gift of prophecy** was not for today. After all, 40 to 50 **false prophecies** in a row would seem to be conclusive evidence.

Still, there are two questions that need to be asked.

First, what about those of us who can attest to giving or receiving amazingly accurate **prophetic words** over the years—words that glorified God, that exalted Jesus, that were clearly supernatural in origin, that proved stunningly true, that produced a holy reverence for the Lord and lasting fruit for His kingdom?

If the **false prophecies** Dr. Sproul received prove that the gift of prophecy is not for today, don't the true **prophecies** others have received prove it is for today?

In fact, it's easy to explain away failed prophecies, since anyone can speak empty words in the name of the Lord; it's another thing to explain away accurate **prophetic words**.

Second, and more importantly, since we agree the Scriptures are our ultimate authority and that everything must be tested by the Word, then don't we need to investigate what those Scriptures say about the gift of prophecy?

According to Dr. Sproul's website, the principle of *sola Scriptura* means that "all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture."

Well, it is because I affirm *sola Scriptura* that I affirm **prophecy** (and tongues), since Paul wrote, "Earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues" (1 Cor. 14:39, ESV; please don't raise 1 Cor. 13:8-10 as an argument against this, as almost all top commentators today recognize Paul was not saying that prophecy and tongues would cease when the New Testament canon was completed).

And it is because I take the Scriptures seriously that I believe it is right to dance in celebration in God's presence (Ps. 150:4); to clap my hands to the Lord and shout to Him with joy (Ps. 47:1); to raise my hands in **prayer** (1 Tim. 2:8; Ps. 141:2); to have meetings where there are tongues with interpretation, along with teaching, singing, and prophecy (1 Cor. 14:26-32; this is what Paul defines as an orderly meeting!); and to pray for the sick and expect supernatural healings (James 5:14-15).

Yet in many "Bible churches" in America (not to mention some Bible colleges and seminaries), tongues are forbidden, prophecy is banned, worshipping with hands raised or with

dancing or with shouting or with clapping is frowned upon, and ongoing miraculous healing is denied.

Based on what authority?

If you say, "Well, I prayed for the sick for years and no one was healed," I will certainly agree that your experience was terribly painful and discouraging. But we don't base our theology on experience; we base it on the Word.

And since, as believers in *sola Scriptura*, we do not follow external, heretical books like the Book of Mormon and we do not believe that church tradition can supersede the Word, then we have no reason for denying the ongoing **supernatural** ministry of the **Holy Spirit** today—including **signs and wonders** and **miracles** in the name of Jesus for the glory of God.

I can give you many verses from the New Testament that indicate clearly that the **gifts of the Spirit** are to continue in operation until Jesus comes. In contrast, there is not one single clear verse in the New Testament saying the gifts would cease. Why, then, do we waver on this point?

Years ago, at an airport in Rome, I met a pastor from a non-charismatic denomination who said to me, "If it's not in the Bible, we don't believe it."

But there's an even better approach to the Word: If it *is* in the Bible, we *do* believe it! And that's why I believe in the gifts and power of the Spirit for today. The Word of God calls me to.

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