

What Charismatics and Cessationists Need to Know About 'Prophecy in Part'

We seek to have a biblical balance on the issues concerning apostolic and prophetic gifts today. One of the keys to find such a balance is the phrase, "we prophecy in part."

First Corinthians 13:8 says, "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part."

Love is the greatest commandment. As we continue to love, our love grows more mature. In that experience of maturity, we have more patience and humility. The more we know, the more we realize how much we don't know. We give place to the fact that others will know and see things that we do not. This attitude preserves unity and prevents divisiveness.

The phrase, "we prophecy in part" can be looked at in two ways. For those who do not believe in the continuing gift of prophecy at all, or who say that prophecy must be perfect or else it is totally false, we can see that New Covenant prophecy involves a level of interpretation and understanding that is only partial in nature. We "see as through a glass, dimly" (1 Cor. 13:12).

Yet we do indeed prophecy. Anyone who is born again and filled with the Holy Spirit can potentially share prophetic revelation (1 Cor. 14:5, 6, 24, 31, 32, 39). Just because prophecy is only partial does not mean that it is not true prophecy. This is why we are instructed to "examine" prophecies and "hold onto what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). If everything prophetic was perfect and complete, there would be no need to "hold on" to what is good and reject what is not.

In the New Covenant, after a person repents and believes in

Yeshua, his spirit can be born again. The Spirit of God can bear witness with the human spirit (Rom. 8:16) through the human conscience (Rom. 9:1). Through the human spirit and conscience, thoughts come to the human mind whose origins are from God (Rom. 8:6, Is. 55:8-9).

That is the experience of normative New Covenant prophecy: God's thoughts through God's Spirit to our spirit through our conscience, bringing God's thoughts into our thoughts. When we convey those "God thoughts" to others, it is considered prophecy or divine wisdom.

On the other hand, those of us who believe in prophecy often need to "tone down" our language. We should not speak in absolute terms, because, after all, we only prophesy in part and we only know in part. New Covenant prophecy is not so much a direct and external command from God, but an internal understanding of the will of God through words and pictures, inspired by God in our hearts.

Therefore we should speak with more humble language, posture, tone of voice, volume and "body language." Is the way we prophesy indicating the fact that we know that the very prophecy we are giving is by definition only partial?

Here is the balance: "Non-charismatics" need to recognize that New Covenant believers can indeed prophesy, and that the Scriptures nowhere teach that this gift would cease before Yeshua's return. We "charismatics" need to recognize that what we are prophesying is only partial. And finally, to all of us in any kind of theological argument: whatever it is that we do know, we only know it partially. Let's give some room for humbling ourselves and learning from others. {eo}

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