

Just Because We Can Prophecy Doesn't Mean God Likes How We Behave

The anointing at the altar was strong. **Words of wisdom** were flowing. People were getting healed. We were seeing a genuine outpouring. The **Holy Spirit's** manifest presence was undeniable. God was using Mark (not his real name) to set the captives free.

But Mark wasn't free—and he wouldn't admit it. Mark was like one of the Sons of Thunder who wanted to call fire down from heaven to consume the people who rejected Jesus (Luke 9:54). He frequently threatened to rebuke those who didn't live up to his standards. He had dreams and visions of people dying because they wouldn't come to church. His behavior was controlling, impatient and self-righteous.

When Mark's co-laborers confronted him, he suggested they were the problem. He said they didn't have enough faith to live on the edge like he was; that they weren't sold out to God like he was; that they weren't **fasting** and **praying** enough like he was; that they just weren't holy enough like he was. So he cut off relationship with those co-laborers and took his spiritual gifts somewhere else.

And that's sad, because the gifts followed him out the door, but so did his ugly character flaws that could ultimately hold him back from his **prophetic** destiny.

Mark is not the only one I've run into who had a powerful anointing and especially poor character. And he's not the only one I've run into that justified that poor behavior with a powerful anointing.

Religion Is Ugly, But Character Matters

Some believe that just because they can **prophecy** an accurate word, God doesn't mind their angry outbursts at home. Or because people are slain in the Spirit when they lay hands on them, God is pleased with the way they treat their friends. Or because a gift of healing is present, God is giving them a pass on that drinking problem, sexual sin or whatever else is hidden behind closed doors.

That's called religion.

And it's ugly.

Character matters.

No, we don't have to be perfect to **prophecy** a perfectly accurate word. We don't have to have a flawless character to minister at the altar. We don't need to be absolutely sinless to lay hands on the sick and see them recover.

To suggest so would also be called religion.

And that would be ugly.

Nevertheless, character still matters.

So, what am I saying? We need to stop confusing gifts and callings with maturity and character. God can use a stubborn mule to **prophecy**, and he can use a stubborn believer to prophesy too. That doesn't mean God endorses stubbornness, which is like the sin of idolatry (1 Sam. 15:23). It just means that God needed a vessel to deliver the **prophetic word** to a person who desperately needed to hear it. That **prophecy**—or powerful altar call or gifts of healings or working of miracles—isn't about puffing up or glorifying the vessel. It's about edifying the church and glorifying God.

You Can't Earn Spiritual Gifts

Good character doesn't earn you **spiritual gifts** and anointings, and poor character doesn't remove them, at least

not overnight. The **Holy Spirit** distributes the nine spiritual gifts—word of wisdom, word of knowledge, gift of faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles, **prophecy**, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues—to people as He wills (1 Cor. 12:4-11). It doesn't have anything to do with our will, nor does it validate our character.

By the inspiration of the **Holy Spirit**, Paul wrote, “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). The Greek word for *gifts* in this verse is *charisma*, which means “a gift of grace, a gift involving grace” on the part of God as the donor. This verse is often applied to God's free grace to sinners, but I believe it can also apply to spiritual gifts and ministry callings.

If God called you into ministry, He isn't going to revoke that call or the gifts that go with it the first time (or even necessarily the 10th or 20th time) you act out or sin. Ultimately, it's we who turn our backs on our ministry when we repeatedly disobey God like Saul did. God is so slow to anger and abounding in mercy (Num. 14:18) that it may seem like we're getting away with our poor behavior and behind-the-scenes sin. God is just giving us space to repent.

A Space to Repent

God gave King Ahab and Jezebel space to repent. After the **prophetic showdown** on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the **false prophets**, Ahab went back and told **Jezebel** what happened (1 Kings 19:1). The wicked monarchs should have repented right then and there. They didn't repent, but they didn't lose the kingdom just then, either. Ahab went on to record two victories against the Syrians in battle (1 Kings 20). The gifts and callings were still there.

Ahab should have recognized the mercy of God in operation—and that he was merely a vessel God was using to bring His will to

Israel. But prideful Ahab missed the mark and still didn't repent. Instead, he went on to let **Jezebel** frame innocent Naboth so he could take his vineyard (1 Kings 21). Only then did Elijah deliver a word of condemnation to Ahab.

But God still gave Ahab another way out, sending Micaiah the **prophet** to warn him what would happen if he went into battle with Syria again. Prideful Ahab would not listen—and was killed in battle. Soon Jehu would rise up and destroy Jezebel and their entire family. But our long-suffering God gave them plenty of warnings before that happened.

I believe God is giving warnings to many spiritually gifted people with character issues and private sin in this hour. Sometimes he sends people to confront them in love about their behavior. Other times He shows them through His Word. Still other times the conviction of the **Holy Spirit** comes.

I pray that all of us would learn to discern God's loving correction in our lives, because when we ignore Him over and over and over and over and over again, we wind up deceiving ourselves (James 1:22)—and we think just because we are anointed and **prophesying** accurately that God is pleased with what we do when we're not on the platform. God's grace to grow up is available to us all. Our part is to meditate on His Word, set our hearts to obey and thank God for the grace to do it. Amen.

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