

Five Benefits of Receiving Biblical Prophecy in the Church
1 Corinthians 14
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24 January 2004

Reports from China indicate that the house church is meeting regularly, even though the authorities have not been making it easy. Sometimes house churches are closed by government edict, sometimes they are threatened with arrest and or prosecution. Pastors are dragged away to incarceration without warning, and yet the church presses on. The meetings continue, sometimes without any formal organization whatever.

What I mean by that is this: The churches meet at places and times given to the members by the Holy Spirit himself. No human network communicates with the believers. They simply pray and wait for the Holy Spirit to communicate with them. Now there's a totally "encrypted" system!

Though we in the United States have difficulty making it to meetings that are completely scheduled in advance, are well-publicized, and whose times and days rarely change, our brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of the world make it on time with nothing but the Holy Spirit to guide them.

However, we here in the United States have the same need as Christians everywhere: namely, a deep need to hear what the Lord is speaking to us. In general, there are four ways in which the Lord speaks to us:

1. The Bible (or the written word). The Bible is our instruction manual for living. It is the *logos*, the precepts necessary for living in right relationship to God and to our neighbors. In it we have God's salvation plan as well as much practical counsel for daily living. It is a "lamp" unto our feet, and a "light" unto our path (**Psalm 119:105**). The Word is eternal. **Isaiah 40:8** "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."¹

2. The personal revealed word of the Lord to us or *rhema*. We should pray for a *rhema* from God when we read the Bible or listen to sermons. In so doing, we are asking God to reveal to us how the *logos* specifically applies to us.

Logos and *rhema* are well-illustrated in **Luke 5:1-5** in the following way:

1 Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word [*logos*] of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, " Master, we

¹ NASB Updated. Used with permission.

worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do **as You say** [reémati] and let down the nets."²

The New King James Version renders “as you say” as “at your word.” This is more to the point insofar as illustrating the relationship between *logos* and *rhema*.

We are not given here the details of Jesus’ sermon. But once the Word is preached, (even if the saints cannot remember what is preached), the Word is in them, and God’s Word never returns void. Consider Isaiah 55:10-11:

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. ³

3. The third means by which the Lord speaks to us today is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. This can be a cautionary or confirming word. It is the voice of the Lord calling to us and speaking to us in the innermost man or the spirit of man. I believe this is what the psalmist is alluding to in **Psalms 42: 7-8**.

Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.
The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
And His song will be with me in the night,
A prayer to the God of my life. ⁴

4. Finally, the fourth means, that of the prophetic gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. These include the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom and prophecy. These gifts are the specific and direct way that the Holy Spirit communicates with the church. **Revelation 2:7** “*Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the spirit is saying to the churches . . .*”

This message then focuses on the last of these four ways the Lord speaks to us, namely prophecy. There are **Five Benefits of Receiving Prophecy in the Church**.

My text for this message is as follows: **1 Corinthians 14: 1-4, 18-19, 22-26, 29-33, 39-40**. I will illustrate from scripture, but it is crucial that the reader recognize that no word of prophecy coming through a fallible individual in the church today should be considered equal to the written Word of God, the Bible. Prophecies given today are to be

² NASB Updated. Emphasis mine. Used with permission.

³ NASB Updated. Used with permission.

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judged. We do not read a scripture from the Bible and then judge as to its accuracy or whether or not it was really from the Lord. But not so with prophecy spoken in the church. Such words are subject to error on the part of the one used in the prophetic gift. Therefore prophecy must be judged by the hearers and is not equivalent to the Scriptures.

Here, then are the five benefits for the church in receiving prophecy:

1. **Edification:** To build up. Verse 3.

God spoke to Abraham when Abraham was wondering if he would ever have an heir: He had neither son nor daughter. Would his heir be Eliezer of Damascus, his servant? No, God had other plans:

Genesis 15:4-5

Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."⁵

2. **Exhortation:** To encourage strongly. Verse 3.

Zech 4:6

6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."⁶

3. **Comfort:**

Isaiah 40:1-2 Isaiah was instructed to speak comforting words to Jerusalem:

**"Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.
2 " Speak kindly to Jerusalem;
And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,
That her iniquity has been removed."⁷**

4. **To learn** Verses 19 and 31.

Agabus to the church: **Acts 11:27**

Agabus to Paul: **Acts 21:10**

5. **Conviction** (called to account) Verse 24.

Nathan to David: "You are the man"

Samuel to Saul: "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord . . ."

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Conclusion

We should have a great desire to hear what the spirit is saying to the churches. Such a desire must be accompanied by the love mentioned in **1 Cor 14:1** “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”