

A PASTOR SPEAKS OUT

-Philip Steppe

I am a non-traditional pastor of a Non-Denominational Church that is dedicated to functioning in the prophetic stream of The Spirit. I am convinced that all the gifts of The Spirit are for today, and I long to see the fruit of prophetic and apostolic restoration. The Church has attracted many of like mind who has suffered much at the various houses of God from which they came (or were chased). I am beat up, banged up, and wounded.

Over the years I have received many disciplinary stripes from God that were well deserved. My aggressive personality, coupled with lapses of stupidity or outright disobedience brought about corrective actions by My Father which in hindsight I greatly appreciate. Over the last 25 years of active ministry (I am 50); I have come to know the loving, but strict voice and hand of My Father's correction.

The wounds I refer to here are not from the Father! My most serious wounds have not been suffered directly at the hands of the enemy! The dead religious organization falsely called church has not been to blame. No, my most serious set backs have been at the hands of sincere, dedicated, zealous brothers and sisters who had heard the Lord and had to straighten out me and/or the church I pastor! An appeal to facts, Godly counsel (never sought when one has heard God), love or patience has not prevailed. We are not talking about serious accusations of immorality or heresy - but such things as differences over the church's location during the tribulation, all paid pastors being hirelings, dreams and prophecies which were factually incorrect, etc., etc.

There have been approximately a dozen individuals pass through our church whose voice, though sometimes at least partially accurate, has sounded more like the accuser than My Father. They are not all false prophets; I'm not sure any of them were truly false, at least at the beginning. The factor consistent with each of them was their superior knowledge, advanced ability to hear God, and rejection of all authority! They each came, stayed a little while - took issue with something that in leadership's opinion was not the most critical and highest priority of the moment - created a controversy - and left. Of course most had to justify their actions by telling people the reasons for their displeasure.

I know that Jezebel hates the prophetic voice, and I refuse to let her win in my life; but I can honestly say that the biggest enemy of the prophetic movement is themselves. Immature prophets (?), driven by pride, arrogance, and self-centeredness have hurt my flock. Many, if not all were probably just people who prophesy occasionally, and whose desire to serve God were inflamed with vain imaginings, and did not deserve the title of prophet. In not a single instance was their self-proclaimed authority as prophet officially recognized by our church. In most of the instances, I saw tremendous potential for the Kingdom, and wanting desperately for them to succeed gave them initially the benefit of the doubt, thereby bearing a portion of their blame.

Authority is a protection! Romans 13:1-2 says "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and those who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." And does not Hebrews 13:17 say "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your soul as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

I can honestly testify that my involvement with the ones I am referring to has brought me much grief - even to the point that if I was absolutely sure of my call - I would have considered quitting. Who the demonic forces cannot seduce, or defeat by fear will often cause to flee because of discouragement. Which side wants me to quit? Should the prophets not be coming against the enemy rather than their own side? Should the prophets of Jehovah take sides with the Jezebel's false prophets?..

Did Jesus not warn of uprooting the wheat while attempting to discard tares?..

Unless one is an authority recognized by both God and The Church, our responsibility ends with a persuasive defense of what we believe to be “Truth”. Individual members of the body are not at liberty to proclaim themselves as “authority”, and then feel the obligation to wound the shepherds and the sheep by forcing conformity to their own standards.

Please consider the following questions:

- Who** is the authority for those who believe they are prophets?
- How** should the prophetic call be confirmed?
- Where** does the local pastor, elders, and body fit in?
- Who** recognizes people as prophets? Are they self-proclaimed?
- How** are differences with “prophets” resolved? (I have been told by several prophets that prophets are not in subjection to pastors or elders. I have also found that they do not listen to other prophets unless they agree with them!)
- Why** is it that in our small county of about 43,000 people we have at least a dozen full blown prophets, and not a single church pure enough for their involvement?
- Should** those who say they hear God be reasonably expected to produce a track record of success?
- Should** their home life and ministry experience demonstrate mature Godliness?
- Should** not those who say they have a gift of healing be able to point to some who have been healed? In like manner shouldn't those who prophesy be held accountable for the accuracy of what they say?
- If** they will not listen - how will they be held accountable? (When you disagree you are “Ichobod” and they invariably leave, demonstrating division rather than unity.)
- Is there** not a time to suffer with the brothers when they have missed the Lord?
- Can** we help pick them up if we have moved on in search of the perfect church?
- Is** independence Godly, or does God want us to be (has declared us to be) inter-dependent? Is it generally God who separates believer from believer, or the enemy?

I could go on, but I am running out of space. I hope that my heart comes through in this impromptu e-mail (composed on the fly as I type). I am deeply concerned that the enemy has managed to emphasize ugliness in something God intends to use, and I pray will use as a thing of great profit for the Kingdom.

Shouldn't prophets be profitable servants? I need to see more demonstrated holiness, commitment, and faithfulness from those who want to tell everyone else what is wrong. Show me how to do better! God knows, and I know we are not doing a very good job as the representatives of Christ in the World. I include me and my ministry in that group - but sad to say those who I know who have called themselves prophets are included also. I pray that it will change!

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