

A little introduction by Ingolf Ellßel, president of the association of free Pentecostal communities.

Prophets are people from this earth. People like you and me, born-again by the grace of Jesus, nevertheless they remain human beings who fail. People who long for the gift of prophecy and now, in the turmoil of the spirit of the times, group dynamic and own thoughts try to discover the soft impulses of the holy spirit and learn to pass them on.

Yes, you read write : They l e a r n.

The proverb: No champion fell from heaven is also applicable to the prophetic service. That means: the original prophecy.

Indeed: I saw many prophetic "starters" who prophesied without fault. Whenever there were not only "rivers of grace but rivers of the holy spirit" who set people free to prophesy first, such a phenomena took place. But unfortunately this initial quality of prophecy did not hold for long. It is similar to the baptism in the holy spirit : in the beginning Christians become changed in a wonderful way, but sooner or later it is bitter for this Christian to realize that "flesh has a battle with the spirit (Gal. 5,17.) Now it is important not to give up but to learn how to walk in the spirit (Gal. 5,16) to be able to grow in this task - and the quality of this task.

1. Training for the prophetic ministry

The bible shows in many ways how to do the prophetic ministry in a correct way. This also proves to us that this ministry needs development. In times of the old testament prophets were found in groups or schools. We as Christians take it for granted that a minister , called by God has to go through thorough education to do his job well.

But, likewise the gifts of prophecy is a ministry . Why , now, should this ministry not need training ? (Eph. 4,11). The basis of our pentecostal movement does not see the necessity for prophetic training. The idea finds approval the heads of Christians, but since there is no activity in this direction it may be assumed that the attitude towards prophetic training is negative. Why?

There were three different attitudes that came to my mind when I tried to find out an answer to this question: "Thus says the Lord"..

There is the opinion , that a prophetic inspiration comes directly from the throne of God, and, since God is a God of truth - the inspiration has not to be checked. This attitude is often supported by the expression: "Thus says the Lord", . Thus , any objection would be mere rebellion against God and testing the prophecy pure mistrust. I am not against this: Thus says the Lord...but the prophet should have the humbleness to have his inspiration tested.

Otherwise you will have this black-white attitude. Either you have a right or a wrong attitude. You often will also find, that not only the prophetic message submits to examination, but also the prophetic person. The bible clearly points out that we shall have the p r o p h e c y examined and not the p r o p h e t. (1. Thess. 5,19)

Fear that prophecies are m a d e.

I personally can understand that this sort of fear exists. Was it not also normal to represent the

ministry of a pastor in many churches as 'learnable'? Especially the pentecostal movement was leading in this attitude in the beginning. The more a minister was "simple" or uneducated, the more the grace of God could do its work. No, this is not true, fear with regard to intellectual abilities is not o.k. Fear always gives bad advice. God's call and God's grace require also training acc. to the word of God. Then you may learn without fear. Training without charisma of God is worthless spiritually and charisma without education confusing. Prophecy comes from heaven, but the person receiving this prophecy forms his own words on this earth. I see two main emphasis .

Have a look behind the head lines: training attitudes: " Strive for the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy".(1. Kor. 14,1) The christian has to discover the value of his gift. As a rule this happens by biblical teaching. Having been taught he will be hungry enough to strive out for this gift. Without this firm desire there will be no reception of this gift. How many prejudices have to be eliminated how many egoistic attitudes and earthly way of thinking work against this enthusiasm. To be trained the biblical way in the power of the holy spirit does simultaneously mean that our human heart is transformed. Reflect : "The Lord does nothing, unless He reveals it in advance to His prophets"(Am.3.7) This promise of co-operation with our living God should encourage every christian.

And here not simply our human curiosity should be satisfied, but we shall long for godly advice. "Serve each other with the gift you have received" 1.Petr.4,10. In our consumeorientated society is a serving attitude extraordinary. The person "holding this gift" has to learn thoroughly to serve in a real humble serving attitude. The holy spirit is a serving spirit. Like Jesus, he came to this earth to serve and not to be served. Without this attitude the gift will go to waste.

Forgiveness

A prophet has honour, but not in his home city and in his own house " (Matth. 13..) Those who long for own honour will drown in the prophetic ministry. To bear rejection is the motto those who miss to exercise themselves in such an attitude, will get bitter.

Love

"When I can prophesy and know all secrets and have all knowledge, but no love, I am nothing"(1.Kor. 13,2) You can exercise yourself in loving (Micha 6,8) Love gives the sound to the prophetic information . Without love I am useless with all my charisma. The prophetic ministry is at the same time also a ministry of spiritual welfare. In one church I said to a lady that she was healed from the sickness of death. The pastor of this church, who assisted me during my service said after the service, that my prophetic word must have been wrong, since this lady was not sick at all. One year later the secret was lifted. The husband of this lady was suffering since five years from aids, since he had had intercourse with other women during his marriage. The doctor could convince the husband to tell this his wife. She was completely shocked then and directly went to the doctor to have a medical check-up, sure she was infected by him during the last years. But, astonishing enough, she was not infected by Aids at all. Then she thought of the prophetic word and thanked God for it. For me this time of waiting was hard to bear, I was unsure whether I had heard the voice of God properly.

Respect

"Do not add anything to the words of God (Spr. 30,6) Without real respect of God prophets would be tempted to tell stories. In preacher 5,2 it says :

"Do not hurry to talk before the Lord". The respect before God protects the prophet to speak out inflationary...- Samuel is testified, that none of his words was lost!

Order

The spirit of the prophet is subordinate to the prophet. The impulses of the holy spirit can be held back until their time and circumstances are appropriate. For example during a service. Those who do not know this fact tend to overtake leadership during a service, due to the fact that he believes he has to obey immediately. Otherwise he/she would deeply distress the spirit. We feel relaxed as we realize that we ourselves decide when the word of God can be passed on. Our prophecies are only pieces of the whole and we shall do this according to our faith. (1.Kor. 13,9) Apostle Paul clearly points out that the prophet has to learn his ministry and to exercise. This knowledge encourages us to transmit even little Prophecies, even though there are not all questions answered. Prophecy is a ministry that only shows pieces of the whole spiritual truth. With this introduction in short I want to show that training of the prophetic ministry is absolutely necessary. Active practice of these gifts belong to this field.

2. Charisma training schools

Paul talks with Timotheus, that it is necessary to often practice the gifts of grace in order to see progress (1.Tim.4,14,15). Those who prophesy only "a little bit" will not grow very much in this ministry. The fear to have faulty prophecies is a real handicap. The charisma is trained in three different ways. Until today I have to decide deliberately to prophesy. A key to this attitude is the order of Samuel: "God, talk, your servant listens to you". In addition the charisma develops in the church community. Here it is helpful that the members of the church give their indications in a loving way, when a prophecy was not so exact, or confirm it, when it met to a situation. By this the person ministering with this gift will gain more and more certainty. And God Himself helps to grow in this ministry While I am willing to serve in all my weakness in the beginning, his promise becomes active that says. "Those, who are faithful in little things, will be given much".

I watched the following development in the prophetic ministry .

1. First of all it starts with general and positive promises from the word of God: "God loves you, He is with you, He helps you". Effective is the inspiration and the time of the inspiration for the person receiving the prophecy.
2. Positive detailed promises from the word of God with description of the situation in which the person receiving the message is living at the time being
3. Comfort and clear description of the receiver's situation
4. General reproof
5. Exact reproof description of the circumstances in which the receiver of the message lives.
6. General warnings with instructions showing a solution to the problem.
7. Exact warnings with detailed instructions regarding God's means of education.

8. Prophecy with time indication.