

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Does God Still Give Revelation?**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-53

I want to just preface the message tonight, really a study of an issue rather than a text, which is a little unfamiliar to us, as normally we're in certain text of Scripture.

But I want to preface it with just a couple of comments. First of all, I want to say that I'm very much aware of the fact that not everyone who is associated with the Charismatic movement is engaged in the kind of extreme error that we will be, from time to time, referring to. There are people who are more moderate. There are people within the Charismatic movement who, themselves, are very, very concerned about the heresies and the aberrations that exist within that movement. And so the movement runs quite a wide gamut and there are people at all different points.

However, there are some salient features and elements in the movement that we're endeavoring to deal with and illustrate to you. Again, I ask you to keep in mind that not everyone in the movement would affirm all these things. There are various and sundry different kinds of viewpoints.

To reinforce that, there are, according to current statistics, 382 million members of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches worldwide. Or one out of every five Christians. So when we talk about a widespread movement, indeed it is the case. They gain about 19 million members per year and they donate about \$34 billion to Christian causes. It is a formidable group.

The movement now includes 11,000 Pentecostal and 3000 independent Charismatic denominations covering 7000 languages and two-thirds of all Charismatics live in the third world. It is a world-wide movement. And thus it demands our attention.

Now, tonight as we come to the second in our series on Charismatic Chaos, the issue at hand is does God still give revelation? That's our subject for tonight. Does God still give revelation?

If someone were to write an anthem for the Charismatic movement, it would have to be titled "God Told Me." God Told Me. You hear that over and over again. Strange prophecies abound in the Charismatic movement. In fact, it is well nigh impossible to turn on a Charismatic television station or a radio station without being exposed, almost on a daily basis, to some new Words from the Lord. I was watching one today and sure enough, "The Lord said, the Lord said, the Lord said" was repeated again and again.

This week, I listened to a very fascinating tape by a man by the name of James Ryle. In his tape, he tells about the fact that God gives him revelation through dreams. And that God revealed to him, in this incredible dream, which I listened to him explain, pictures of guitars, blue guitars, iridescent blue guitars. And then, in the dream, God showed him amplifiers, and then God told him that the guitars and the amplifiers belonged to the Beatles. And God told him that the Church will win the world to salvation when it goes into the world and sings anointed music "like the Beatles."

The tape is filled with statements, "the Lord said, the Lord said, the Lord said" and here are some quotes. "The Lord said, 'I called those four lads from Liverpool to myself.'" There was a call from God on their lives. " They were gifted by my hand and it was I who anointed them." Speaking of the Beatles.

"The purpose was to usher in the Charismatic renewal with musical revival around the world. Then the Lord said, 'The four lads from Liverpool went AWOL and did not serve in My army. They served their own purposes and gave the gift to the other side.' And then the Lord said, 'I lifted the anointing and for 20 years, I've held it in My hand and I'm about to release it again.' And then the Lord said, 'It doesn't belong to the world, it belongs to the Church.' And then the Lord said, 'I will release an anointing in music that will take the world by storm like the Beatles when they first came. New, anointing music that will capture men's hearts.' And then the Lord said, 'The same kind of reaction that the Beatles extracted will come; only this time, the girls will not scream Ringo! John! George! Or Paul! They will scream Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!'"

Did the Lord say that? Did the Lord say any of that? He says He did. Surely the most famous of all of the Lord's speakings to Charismatics is the famous Oral Roberts' death threat prophecy. A preposterous and fabricated supposed Word from the Lord. Roberts told his nationwide audience in 1987 that God had threatened to call him home if he couldn't raise \$8 million by his creditors' deadline. Whether or how that threat might have been carried out, the world will never know because Roberts received a last minute reprieve in the form of a large check from a Florida dog track owner, as you remember.

Two years later, when Roberts was forced to close his massive, multi-million dollar City of Faith Medical Center anyway, in spite of the \$8 million, he asked God, "Why? Why?" And Oral Roberts said God spoke to him and God said, and I quote, "I had you build the City of Faith large enough to capture the imagination of the entire world, about the merging of My healing streams of prayer and medicine. I did not want this revelation localized in Tulsa, however. And the time has come when I want this concept of merging My healing streams to be known to all people and to go into all future generations." So said God.

Roberts said, "It's clearly in my spirit as I've ever heard him, the Lord gave me an impression. 'You and your partners have merged prayer and medicine for the entire world, for the Church world and for the all generations.' And then he said, 'It is done.'

"And then I asked, 'Is that why, after eight years, You're having us close the hospital and after eleven years, the medical school?' And God said, 'Yes. The mission has been accomplished in the same way that after the three years of public ministry, My Son said on the cross, Father, it is finished.'"

Putting yourself in company with Jesus Christ is a bold move. That kind of arrogance almost makes us catch our breath. I recently had the opportunity to stand on the dandelion patch that now surrounds the City of Faith Medical Center in Tulsa. A 60-floor building next to a 30-floor building. An absolutely unbelievable edifice rising out of the midst of nothing in the outskirts of the city, a monument to a man's folly and certainly no testimony to the character and the quality and the power of God. Well, it stands empty and unfinished, wasted.

The arrogance that causes people to think that God talks to them and puts themselves on a plain with even Jesus Christ and his work is amazing. But Oral Roberts is not the only Charismatic who thinks he's receiving private revelation from God. Most Charismatics, at one time or another, feel that God speaks to them in some specific way. Either through an audible voice, some kind of internal impression, a dream; and that's kind of a new one, a vision or a prophecy.

Linda Fell, founder of Raffa Ranch, sells a tape of songs she was given by the Holy Spirit as she was being healed of cancer. An editor for a Christian publisher once told me that he receives submissions every week from Charismatics who claim God inspired them to write their book, article, psalm or poem. My editor friend noted that these manuscripts are often poorly written, filled with bad grammar and marred by factual and logical errors. Or full of poems that mutilate the language or attempt to rhyme but just miss. And these are supposed to be authored by the Holy Spirit?

Lest you think that cranks and obscure eccentrics or naïve Charismatic believers are the only ones who have made such claims, you need to know that's not the case. Even Jack Hayford, who is very near to us, and would be known, even among Charismatics, as a man of honor and integrity and who believes the Scripture. Recently, he told the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America that God had revealed to him that a new era is coming. He related a vision in which he had seen Jesus seated on His throne at the right hand of the Father. And in his vision, Jesus began to lean forward and rise from His seat and as the anointing caught in the folds of His garments, it began to splash out and fall over the Church and then Jesus said, "I am beginning to rise now in preparation for my second coming. Those who will rise with me will share in this double portion of anointing." This is a private revelation that Jesus' second coming is near.

Larry Lee, popular Charismatic preacher wrote, "Recently I was in Chicago preparing to preach and the Lord's spirit came upon me. He spoke. 'I am going to tell you now the name of the strongman over

this nation. The spiritual strongman you are facing. The demonic strongman that has your nation under his control. It is the strongman of Greed."

Now, the question is, did God talk to this man about the Beatles? Did God talk to Oral Roberts about the City of Faith? Did God write a song for Linda Ell? Did Jack Hayford actually see Christ rise from His seat and get ready for His second coming? Was Larry Lee's prophecy really a Word from the Lord? Are we to believe that that is revelation?

One television evangelist claims that he had a seven hour conversation with Jesus Christ. Seven hours. And during that time, they talked about the problems on earth and discussed decisions which he, the evangelist, was facing. And Jesus was trying to help him work out some of these decisions.

Significantly, this man also has said he had some direct encounters with Satan who has tried to choke the preacher in his bed. Unfortunately, the man doesn't see the connection between the two events. Seems to me that the Jesus appeared to him was nothing different than the manifestation of the demonic spirit who took the name of Jesus Christ and was very likely that same spirit that wanted to choke him. Certainly, there's no way to tell the difference in that kind of mystical experience.

Spirits who claim to be Jesus Christ abound in my limited experience. I have even heard them take his name myself, and say they are Jesus Christ when it is apparent they are not. Anyone who seeks direct communication with God or Christ is in serious danger of demonic impersonators of deity.

And there is another even more basic issue than that and that is are Christians still receiving, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, direct revelation from God? Are we still getting it? Is God still talking? Most Charismatics would say a loud and resounding yes. One of their leaders, a Theologian by the name of J. Rodman Williams, former president of one of their schools, wrote this, and I quote. "The Bible truly has become a fellow witness to God's present activity." That's an amazing statement. When you say the Bible is "a fellow witness to God's present activity', you mean that it's not alone. There's somebody else there witnessing as well. He goes on, "If someone today perhaps has a vision of God or Christ, it is good to know that it has happened before. If one has a revelation from God, to know that for the early Christians, revelation also occurred in the community. If one speaks a 'thus says the Lord' and dares to address the fellowship in the first person, even going beyond the Words of Scripture, that this was happening long ago. How strange and remarkable it is.

"If one speaks in the fellowship of the spirit the word of truth, it is neither his thoughts and reflections or simply some exposition of Scripture for the spirit transcends personal observations however interesting or profound they may be. The spirit, as the living God, moves through and beyond the records of past witness, however valuable such records are as a model for what happens today."

What he is saying is that the Bible is simply a model of what is going on all the time. It is one of many witnesses. There have been witnesses in the past, there are witnesses in the present and they just stand along side the Bible. The Bible is one of many. He is alleging that the Bible is not the final source of God's revelation but simply a witness, like a lot of other witnesses and there's plenty of additional revelation that God is giving today. He is saying that Christians not only can but should add to the Bible and such additions are normal and conventional. The Bible is just a model for what the Holy Spirit continues to do today.

This obviously is a frightening view. Relativistic, mystical, subjective. It tells us that God continues to speak and there's all kinds of things that He has been saying and continues to say that need to be placed alongside the Scripture and here we are and we don't have a record of that. That's inherent in the Charismatic movement. The belief that there is continuing, ongoing revelation and God is continuing to speak, which, of course, is the denial of the singular authority of Scripture.

Edward Gross, in his book, *Miracles, Demons and Spiritual Warfare*, sees the deadliness of this trend in the Church. He writes, "The age of models has come. A model takes the place of a law. Models are human perceptions of truth. They are tentative and thus subject to change as new data becomes available. These models are open and constantly tested. No scientist dares claim any longer than one model is the way to explain all known phenomena for fear that some newly discovered data will prove that scientist to be a precipitous old fool. The world of science has progressed from the old approach, closed systems, to a new approach, open systems. And there are all kinds of new models.

"If the Bible," writes Gross, "is a closed system of truth, with no new revelation being given through inspired prophets or apostles, then the model approach is an erroneous and dangerous tool in Hermeneutics.

"There should be no confusion in this area. The Orthodox teaching of Christianity is always affirmed that God's special saving revelation to mankind is restricted to the teaching of Scriptures. That is the issue. If the Bible is complete, then it represents a closed system of proof. If it entails a fixed and absolute standard of truth, then the teaching of Scripture must be ascertained and dogmatically asserted.

"If God is still granting new revelation, then the truth of God is still being progressively revealed and if this were the case, our duty would be to faithfully listen to today's prophets as they unravel God's truth in new and clearer representations than we find in Scripture."

Well, he says I don't believe that. I don't believe that the Bible an open system but a closed - "Scripture is a closed system of truth, completely sufficient and not to be added to" Revelation 22:18-19. The last chapter in the Bible says, "If you add to it, God will add to you the plagues that are written in it." And yet, we have all these supposed revelations. What are they? Imagination? Fabrication?

Demonization? But not divine revelation.

When understanding this issue, we need to face some questions. Question number one, what does inspiration mean? When we say that the Bible is inspired, what are we talking about? Our word inspired comes from a Latin root that means 'to breathe in'. To inspire. Unfortunately, that doesn't convey the true meaning of the Greek term used in Scripture. Actually, the concept of breathing in is not found in 2 Timothy 3:16 where it says, "All Scripture is inspired by God." It's not the word for breathing in. That translation, unfortunately, has misled some folks and they've assumed that men wrote a lot of words and God breathed into them some kind of power, some kind of divine light. That's not it.

When it says, "All Scripture is inspired", the word inspired is *Theopneustas*. It is actually a word that says 'God breathed.' It is God breathing it out, not God breathing into it. Literally the verse says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." It is the breath of God, not the words of men into which God puffed some divine life. It is God's breath, it is God's speaking. Inspiration does not mean that the Bible has somehow been blown on by God and given some supernatural quality. It means that the Words of the Bible are the Words of God Himself, out of His own mouth. Every word a Scripture breathed out by God.

That's why at the burning bush, God said to Moses, "Go and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say." Exodus 4:12. And Jeremiah, the weeping prophet of Judah, received this charge from God, chapter 1, "Whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Behold, I have put My Words in your mouth." And God said to Ezekiel in chapter 3, "Son of man, go get thee unto the house of Israel all My Words that I shall speak under thee, receive in thine heart and hear with thine ears and go and speak them."

And so, we have in the Bible, the Words out of the mouth of God. 2 Peter 1:21, a very important text says, "No prophecy," that is, no revelation, "was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The word moved means carried along. They were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Theologian Thomas Thomas recalls that as a boy, he would play in little streams that ran down the mountainside near his home. "We boys," he says, "like to play what we call boats. Our boat would be a little stick which was placed in the water and then we would run along beside it and follow it as it was washed downstream. When the water would run rapidly over some rocks, the little stick would move rapidly as well. In other words, that little stick which served as my boyhood boat, was carried along, borne along under the complete control and direction of the water. It moved as the water moved it.

"So it is," he says, "with reference to the writers of Scripture. They were carried along, borne along under the control of direction of the Holy Spirit of God. They rode as the Spirit directed them to write. They were borne along by Him so that what they wrote was exactly that which the Holy Spirit should

be there and what they wrote was, in a very real sense, not their words; it was the very Word of God."

That's what we mean by inspiration. That the Bible is the very Word of God. Now a second question faces us. Now that we know what inspiration means, what is the contemporary approach to Scripture? What's going on today that threatens this?

Moving outside the Charismatic movement, just a very quick lesson but you need to understand this. Modern theologians want to allow for continued inspiration. In liberal theology or neo-Orthodox theology, which is liberal in the sense that it denies the inspiration of Scripture? They want to deny. They start from the denial point. Liberal theology, as I told you this morning, and neo-Orthodox theology came out of the enlightenment when man began to worship his own mind, believing that he was the ultimate judge of all truth, being enamored with his intellectual capability, man said, "I go to the Bible, I find all kinds of things that aren't reasonable, rational, logical; all the supernatural and miraculous things that I can't comprehend, I eliminate." So he starts eliminating all of that, so immediately of course, he denies the inspiration of Scripture. It isn't the Word of God; it's the word of men. It has to be changed because there's some foolishness in here.

So modern theology, then, reduces the Bible to just the best efforts of men. Well, once it's reduced to the best efforts of men, then you can have continuing revelation, right? Because men can continue to make those kinds of efforts. So modern theology wants to allow for continued inspiration. Continued, updated Word from the Lord in some sort of mystical, personal way. It's the best of men writing about their religious experiences and perhaps even prompted somehow by God to write down their own thoughts and ideas.

At least one of these modern writers, Dewey Beegle by name, believes that some of the classic anthems of the Church are inspired in the same way as Scripture. So this is how he would understand inspiration. And he's very popular.

He's written some of the great hymns that are practically on a par with the psalms and one can be sure that if Isaac watched Charles Westly Augustus Toplarian, the original Heber, had lived in the time of David and Solomon and had been no more inspired than they were in their own day, some of their hymns of praise to God would have found their way into the Hebrew Bible.

In other words, the kind of inspiration they're talking about is just the kind of sort of emotional, intellectual stimulation that makes you write down some good thoughts about God. But it's a human effort. Beegle refers in particular, for example, to George Matheson, the blind Scottish pastor who wrote *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go*. And he says it's that kind of inspiration that characterizes the Bible of writers. He says, "What distinguishes the Bible," and I'm quoting, "is its record of special revelation, not a distinctive kind of inspiration. It's just that the Bible has a unique revelation, that's what makes it distinct."

But the inspiration that brought that revelation, revelation being the content, inspiration being the process, the process of inspiration which brought that content is being repeated over and over again with new content. So you have the Bible and then you have this and then you have this and then you have this and then you have this and it all comes to the same kind of inspiration. The same kind of inspiration that, for example, is characteristic of one who writes good music.

Beegle believes that the canon of Scripture has never been closed. He has written "the revelation and inspiration of God's spirit continues. For this reason, there is no basis in considering all of the biblical writers and editors as qualitatively different from post-canonical interpreters."

It's all the same. You just keep having revelation and just keep having revelation. That's neo-Orthodoxy. That's liberalism. And that is, in effect, precisely what the Charismatic movement believes. That is why, beloved, you can have neo-Orthodoxy and Charismaticism co-existing in an institution. Because they basically believe in an open canon. They basically believe in ongoing revelation. They may define it a little differently, but they believe that there's still inspiration and revelation coming.

That heretical view frightens any true biblical scholar, any true believer in Scripture because it destroys the distinctiveness of the Bible. If God is still inspiring revelation, we've got real problems. If the canon of Scripture is still open and God is still giving prophecies and songs and words of wisdom and words of knowledge, then we ought to be seeking to compile all that stuff and we ought to be most interested in studying the more recent revelations because they're the ones that speak directly to our times.

Now, by the way, some of the Charismatics can see the problem here. Their most popular magazine is a magazine called *Charisma*. An article in *Charisma* recently said this, "To meditate on our personal prophecies, we should record them, if at all possible. If someone approaches us saying he or she has a Word from God, we should ask the person to wait a moment until we can get an audio recorder or else ask the person to write it down.

"If the Word comes from someone on the platform during a meeting that is not being recorded, we must try to write down as much as possible, getting at least the main points." This is Scripture. We have to write it down. My friend, that's heresy. That is outright heresy that the Bible is still being written. The canon of Scripture is not open. God's Word, Old Testament and New Testament is one, unique miracle. It came together over a period of 1500 years, more than 40 men of God, prophets and apostles wrote God's Word. Every jot and every tittle without error, in perfect harmony, and when it was done, it was done.

No hymn is worthy to be compared with Scripture. No modern mystical experience can be spoken of in the same breath with Scripture. Now, that leads to a third query. Is revelation progressive? These



people who say it is progressive, are they right?

Going back to J. Rodman Williams, Charismatic theologian, he argues for ongoing revelation. Quoting him, "In the spirit, the present fellowship is as much the arena of God's vital presence as anything in the biblical account. Indeed, in the light of what we may learn from this past witness and take to heart, we may expect new things to occur in our day and days to come. In prophecy, God speaks. It is as simple and profound and startling as that. What happens in the fellowship is that the Word may suddenly be spoken by anyone present and so variously a 'thus says the Lord' breaks forth in the fellowship.

"It is usually in the first person such as, 'I am with you to bless you' or has the directness of an I/thou encounter. It comes not in \_\_\_\_\_ of the language but in the native tongue of the person speaking and with his accustomed inflections, cadences and manners. Indeed, the speech may even be coarse and ungrammatical. It may be a mixture of King James and modern; it may falter as well as flow, such really doesn't matter for in prophecy, God uses what he finds and through frail human instruments, the Spirit speaks the Word of the Lord."

Now, that is as clear as you could ever hear it, that God is still giving revelation. Bad grammar, but revelation. "All of this to repeat is quite surprising and startling," says Williams. "Most of us, of course, were familiar with pathetic utterances recorded in the Bible and willing to accept that as the Word of God. Isaiah's or Jeremiah's 'thus says the Lord' we were accustomed to. But to hear a Tom or a Mary today, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century speak the same way?

"Many of us also have convinced ourselves that prophecy ended with the New Testament until suddenly, through the dynamic thrust of the Holy Spirit, prophecy comes alive again. Now we wonder how we could have misread the New Testament for so long."

"Now we wonder how we could have misread the New Testament for so long." In other words, he's saying that the New Testament should have told us the prophecy would continue. In a later issue of Lagat's magazine, when he was taking to task for such foolish and heretical views, he tried to clarify his view and this is what he said. "I do not intend in any way to place contemporary experience on the same level of authority as the Bible. Rather, do I vigorously affirm the decisive authority of Scripture? Hence, God does not speak just as authoritatively today as He spoke to the biblical authors. But He does continue to speak, thus He moves through and beyond the records of past witness" (that's the Bible)"for He is the living God who still speaks and acts among his people."

Double-talk. Nonsense. Pointless. What do you mean? He says, "I don't want to put this on the level of Scripture authority. God isn't speaking as authoritatively today as He spoke in the biblical time, but He is still speaking." Well, what's the difference? This doesn't matter? This isn't authoritative? This is erroneous? That is double-talk. Are some of God's Words less authoritative than others or less true or

less accurate or less important?

The view of Charismatics is not distinguishable, as I said, from the neo-Orthodox who have an incessant kind of free-flowing revelation. The Charismatics says it comes from a prophecy, a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge and the neo-Orthodox says it's whatever you feel, it's whatever happens inside of you becomes the Word of God to you. But both of them destroy the central doctrine of Sola Scriptura.

Once a congregation or a person sees Scripture as less than the final, complete, infallible authority for faith and life, it is thrown open the doors to absolute chaos. Can you imagine being in a church, where when people stand up and say they have a Word from the Lord, you're supposed to believe it every time? Anybody can claim anything. And they do. They do. And pass it off as divine truth.

And corrupt Charismatic leaders, the ones that are corrupt, and the ones that are self-aggrandizing and do things for their own gain, do it all the time. Perhaps the most brazen example of that is a widely publicized prophecy delivered by Kenneth Copeland. He claims that Jesus gave him a message during a three-day victory campaign held in Dallas, Texas. Judge for yourself whether this could be a message from the Christ of Scripture. I'm quoting Kenneth Copeland. This is what he said.

"It's time for these things to happen,' sayeth the Lord." This is his prophecy. "It's time for spiritual activity to increase. Oh, yes, demonic activity will increase along at the same time, but don't let that disturb you. Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're God. Don't be disturbed when people accuse of a fanatical way of life. Don't be disturbed when people put you down and speak you harshly and roughly of you. They spoke that way of me; should they not speak that way of you?" And again, he's quoting Jesus.

"The more you get to be like Me, the more they're going to think that way of you. They crucified Me for claiming that I was God, but I didn't claim I was God. I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me. Hallelujah. That's what you're doing."

You mean to tell me Jesus gave him a revelation that said he didn't claim to be God? Copeland's prophecy is clearly false. The real Jesus, the Jesus of the New Testament did claim He was God. Using the covenant name of God, He told the Jewish leaders, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Is Copeland genuinely a prophet, or is he one who Peter spoke of when he wrote, "False prophets also arose among the people just as there will be false prophets among you."

Now, not all of these bizarre prophecies and visions are as clearly in conflict with Scripture. Some are merely frivolous. Silly. Like the guy with the blue guitars and the Beatles. Larry Lee wrote this, "Several years ago, one of my dear friends said, 'Larry. When I was praying for you the other day, I had a vision. I saw you with great, big Mickey Mouse ears. Everything else about you looked normal,

except for those elephant-sized ears.

"When I asked the Lord to tell me what the vision meant, the Spirit of the Lord spoke back to me and said, Larry Lee has developed his hearing. He has developed his spiritual ears." Charismatics have abandoned the uniqueness of Scripture as the only Word of God and the result is a mystical, trivial, silly, foolish and heretical free-for-all. Longing for something new, longing for something sensational, longing for some emotional experience has replaced settled confidence and diligent study of God's Word and this invites Satan's deceptive counterfeits.

Melvin Hodges is a Charismatic pastor who has admitted his strong reservations about these new revelations. He's an honest fellow. Melvin Hodges is very worried about all of these, even though he's a Charismatic. Let me pull up what he says just to show you that some of them are concerned.

"Today, some people tend to magnify the gifts of prophecy and revelation out of their proper proportion. Instances have occurred in which a Church has allowed itself to be governed by gifts of inspiration. Deacons have been appointed and pastors removed or installed by prophecy. Chaos has resulted. The cause is obvious. Prophecy was never intended to usurp the place of ministries of government or of a gift or a word of wisdom.

Paul teaches us that the body is not made up of one member but of many and the prophecy usurps the role of the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge, the whole body is dominated by one ministry, that is prophecy. In other words, the whole body becomes ruled by the prophetic member. The idea that the voice of prophecy is infallible has confused many people. Some have felt that it is a sin to question what they consider to be the voice of the Spirit. However, in the ministry of all gifts, there is cooperation between the divine and the human."

What's he saying? Absolutely nothing. But he understands there's a problem and he hasn't got clue one how to deal with it. He didn't say anything. He didn't say a word about anything. He didn't give you any criteria to judge anything. All he's saying is we've got to cooperate. We can't have too many prophecies but he has nothing to say about how do you know it's true or not true? He wants a way to resolve the confusion, but there isn't any.

Not all Charismatics would agree that the problem of abuse is one of overemphasis. Some thing people just aren't well-trained enough. One group has started a School of the Prophets. I'm quoting from their literature. "Perhaps you feel that you have been called to be an oracle of the Lord. And have had difficulty explaining your experiences or finding someone that you could relate to and learn from.

"The School of the Prophets is designed to help bring grounding and clarity to the myriad of dreams and visions that are the hallmark of a prophet and see your ministry. And to assist in the restoration of the prophetic ministry within the body of Christ.

"There are many that have become disillusioned and disenchanted with the prophetic ministry because of abuses and ignorant usage of the gifting. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. But if you've had the bitter experience of the counterfeit, know that there is a reality to discover. Abuses and misrepresentations occur simply because of the abomination of ignorance.

"Come and be trained at the School of the Prophets so that you will be properly prepared to fulfill the destiny that God has chosen for you."

So their suggestion is you've just got to have good training, take some good courses, and you'll be an accurate prophet. Is the distinction, by the way, between true and false a matter of technique? Is a true prophet a true prophet because he's gone to school to learn how to do it? Was there a school that trained the biblical writers?

Listen, false prophecy is no peccadillo. That's means a trivial thing, trifle in fault. This is a major issue. In fact, if you were a prophet and you missed one, you got killed. They executed you. In spite of this, some Charismatics believe that anybody with any claim to have a Word from the Lord should be believed, should be heard; you don't even need a call from God.

*Charisma* Magazine carried an ad teaching people how to listen to God's voice and talk with Him 24 hours a day so they could really be good at it. They will teach you how to get it and how to pass it on. It's a lark. No accountability. And of course, it points Christians away from the Scripture which is trustworthy and teaches them to seek truth through the Word.

Nothing in the Charismatic movement is as destructive as a failure to adhere to Scripture alone. It opens the movement to everything, worst of all, demonic lies. "Seduction from spirits pumping demon doctrine through hypocritical liars." 1 Timothy 4. Once you have gone beyond the Word, you are in chaos and confusion.

I want to conclude with just a brief statement about the close of the canon of Scripture because I think it's important. Jude 3, you might want to look at it. We'll bounce off this for just a moment. Jude chapter 3. It's a crucial passage on the completeness of the Bible. Jude verse 3.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that we should earnestly contend" now listen to this - "for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Literally, the Greek text says, "The once for all delivered to the saints' faith."

In the Greek text, the definite article, "the", preceding "faith" points to the one and only faith. There is no other. The one and only true faith. Such passages as Galatians 1:23 refer to preaching the faith. 1

Timothy 4:1, "Some will fall away from the faith."

And so it is an objective use of the expression "the faith". Greek Scholar Henry Alford is right when he says, "Faith here is objective. It means the sum of that which Christians believe. It is not subject, a faith that is believing, in a verbal sense. It is the sum of what we believe the Christian faith."

"The faith," he says, "was once for all delivered." Once for all is hofox. It refers to something done once and no more. Done once and no more. It has lasting results; it never needs repletion. "The faith was once for all delivered." Delivered. Christian faith, then, is complete. It is unchangeable which is to say that it does not need to be fixed; it does not need to be edited. It does not need additions or deletions. Every doctrine and every revelation that has arisen since is a false doctrine or a false revelation. All claims to additional revelation are false claims and must be rejected.

The word "delivered" is important as well. In the Greek, it is an aorist passive participle, which in this context, indicates an act completed in the past with no continuing element. An act completed in the past, with no continuing element. Once in the past, once for all, never to be repeated. The faith was delivered.

So, through the Scriptures, God has given us a body of truth that is final and complete. Our Christian faith rests on historical and objective revelation. That rules out all prophecies, all seers, all forms of new revelation until God speaks again at the end times.

Now, you can see the pattern of this even in looking at Scripture. The Old Testament was written. The final Book says, in Nehemiah, they're not the final one in your Book, your Bible chronologically, but they were the final ones written. There was a rearrangement of the order of the Books.

But after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Old Testament was completed, there was no more revelation. Four hundred years of silence. No prophet spoke God's revelation. For 400 years, no prophets spoke. Why? God was making a point. The revelation is complete. It is done. And no prophet existed for 400 years. And God was punctuating the completion of the Old Testament canon with silence, sending a message to us that said, "Revelation doesn't go on all the time, it has an ending point."

The silence was finally broken and the prophet came. He was related to the Messiah and his name was John the Baptist. And God began to speak. The New Testament revelation. And when the New Testament revelation was done, revelation was done. The last Book was Revelation, penned by John in 96 A.D. and it was over.

By the second century, the complete canon - the word "canon" means standard rule of faith and practice - the complete New Testament, exactly as we have it today, was popularly recognized. Church councils in the fourth century made it official. The canon was complete.

And from then on, God has been silent as to revelation. Just as the close of the Old Testament was followed by silence, the close of the New Testament has been followed by the utter absence of new revelation in any form. Since the Book of Revelation was written, there has been no new written or verbal revelation from God. Scripture is the test of everything. It is the Christian's only stamp.

Spurious books have been offered; the Roman Catholic Church includes *The Apocrypha*. The Roman Catholic Church accepts it as Scripture but it is not. If you study it, you will find, as I did, when I studied it in seminary, there are errors of history, errors of geography and gross errors in theology.

Jerome, who lived from 345-419 was a spokesman for excluding the Apocryphal books. Some of the early Church fathers, most notably, Augustine, did accept them though not necessarily on a par with the Hebrew Old Testament. Finally, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Reformers affirm Sola Scriptura, the truth of Bible alone is authoritaded, denied the Apocryphal for any place among the inspired writings; it never had had any and it shouldn't have had. The Roman Church reacted against the Reformers and the Council of Trent, from 1545 to 1563 stating that all of the Apocryphal was canonical and Protestants and Catholics have maintained the disparity to this day. If you have a Catholic Bible, you'll find that the *Apocryphais* in the middle. Those are spurious, uninspired books.

How did Christians know what the inspired books from the ones that weren't inspired? There were three tests. One was apostolic authorship. If it was written an apostle or a close associate of the apostle; for example, Mark was not an apostle but the companion of Peter who was. Luke was not an apostle but worked closely with Paul who was.

A second test by the early Church was content. Was the content consistent with apostolic doctrine? Was it absolutely accurate doctrinal? This was very important because the heretics were writing the false books, but in all of the false books, there was false teaching because why would a heretic write a book about truth? They'll want to get a heresy in. The heretics try to worm their way to the Church, their doctrinal errors were easily spotted because the contradicted the apostles' teaching.

The third test was the response of the Churches. If God's people accepted it, used it for worship, made it a part of their lives, that Christians were universally being taught and blessed by the book, that was another stamp of approval.

By 404 A.D., the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible was complete. It was the earliest known translation of all 66 Books of the Bible and they were the very same 66 in 404 A.D. that we have in our Bible today. God spoke once for all, delivered it and preserved it through the ages and you have it exactly the way he delivered it.

True Church has always believed the Bible is complete. The Charismatic movement doesn't believe that. Now, they want to deny that they're adding to Scripture, but their view on prophetic utterance,

prophetic gifts, knowledge, wisdom, visions, dreams, revelations, add to Scripture. Unwittingly, they undermine the uniqueness and the authority of the Word of God.

You see, Christians can't play fast and loose with inspiration and revelation or they'll never be able to distinguish the voice of God from the voice of Man from the voice of Satan.

The Holy Spirit is working mightily, I believe, in the Church today. But not in the way most Charismatics think. The Holy Spirit's role is to empower the Church to preach the Word. To empower the Church to teach the Word. To empower the Church to write about the Word that it might be understood. The Holy Spirit is empowering the Church to worship according to truth, to witness to the truth and proclaim it. To grow by the study of the Word and to serve as the Word calls and commands. He does lead us into God's truth and He directs us into God's will for our lives through the Word, not through new revelation.

'God told me' is a dangerous and heretical motto for anyone to take because it opens to chaos, confusion, mysticism, subjectivism, demons and deception. All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable. It is completely profitable. It is so profitable that the man of God is made perfect by it thoroughly furnished unto all good works, right? The Scripture is sufficient; we need nothing more than this. And once you introduce any more than this, the chaos is irretrievable.

That's the tragedy of the Charismatic movement and that is why it is in chaos. That is why there are some people in the movement who are tearing their hair out because they can't control what's going on. But once you allow for additional revelation, it's gone. There's no control.

This Word is all that God wanted us to have. Once for all delivered. Let's bow and pray.

Father, we thank You for the affirmation again tonight as we think through these things that Your Word is sufficient, that we have a faith once for all delivered to the saints. It had a beginning and an end. You spoke then You were silent. And now Your work to implement and apply and proclaim this already revealed truth. We pray for our people caught in the confusion in new revelations, the chaos who thus are turned away from the single authority of Scripture and the responsibility to diligently study it and find themselves running after and pursuing mystical experiences that mean nothing. That is, nothing holy and righteous but things confusing and even demonic.

Deliver folks from that, Father. Take them into the green pastures of Your Word where their souls are fed with all the nourishment they could ever need.

We thank you for this treasure. Nothing is to be compared with it. We acknowledge the great gift that it is and desire to live by it in Christ's name. Amen.

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