

**COUNTERFEITING
& ABUSE
OF SOME**
Spiritual Gifts



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FOREWORD

Please have a bible beside you as you read this book. Many bible references are given – don't just skim over them but take pains to look them up as they occur. You will then have a better and deeper understanding of what is being discussed.

Happy reading, and God bless you!

The following **abbreviations** are used herein for various Bible versions:

RSV	-	Revised Standard Version
KJV	-	King James Version
NIV	-	New International Version
NEB	-	New English Bible
DARBY	-	Holy Scriptures & New Testament Bible by J. N. Darby
KIT	-	Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures
GNB	-	Good News Bible



PART ONE

***COUNTERFEITING
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INTRODUCTION

We live today in a world full of spiritual activity. Many see this as one sign of the end-times.

Pentecostalism is now the in-thing in Christendom and is being accompanied by charismatic. In most religious gatherings, there is always a great expectation and eagerness among the people to see a **demonstration** of the spiritual or supernatural; and the ministers, with much fervour, also strive to manufacture such for the people.

Indeed, the rise of the Pentecostal movement was a great move of God to revive a church that had fallen into lethargy and formalism. Unfortunately, trust satan to imitate and counterfeit every thing of God!

Much of this counterfeiting of spiritual gifts is very subtle, while some of it is so blatant and grotesque. Today, one sees or hears all kinds of things being done in the name of the Holy Spirit. This abuse of spiritual gifts abounds most in the areas of speaking in tongues, of dreams and visions, and of prophecy.

As a preamble, let us consider that grand and noble virtue called Love. 1 John 4:8 & 16 declare that “God is love”. In Matthew 22: 37 – 39, Jesus taught that the two greatest commandments are love for God and love for fellow men. Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-7 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 & 13 show love to be the epitome of the fruit, virtues, and gifts of the Spirit. Its qualities are described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Romans 13:9-10; 1 John 5:3 and in many other scriptures.

Lo and behold, it is this highest and noblest virtue that Satan has fought hardest to counterfeit and abuse. The filthy sins of lust and sexual immorality are also called “love”. These sins are greatly extolled and glamorized in worldly literature, music and films as “love”.

If you reprove people today for the sin of fornication, don’t be surprised if they sneer at you or earnestly pity you as the old-school fellow who is missing

out on the fun of the moment and is envious of the “love” between them. You would be viewed as the social miscreant who does not appreciate “love”, but is filled with “hate”.

The vast majority of youths, adults and even parents of today have not the slightest idea of the **true** meaning of that noble virtue, love, as explained in the Bible. They feel that the worldly, sentimental, all-embracing, no-holds-barred counterfeit is the desirable thing that all religions teach and encourage.

Such is the level of the distortion Satan has achieved!

It is sad to note that similar distortion is now going on with a view to supplanting the true biblical forms of dreams, visions, prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit.

*CHAPTER ONE**DREAMS AND VISIONS*

In Joel 2:28-29, we find the seeing of dreams and visions listed among the gifts of God’s promised Holy Spirit. Numbers 12:6 and Job 33:14-17 make us know that true biblical dreams and visions are among God’s ways of revealing things to people – they are divine revelations. These supernatural communications given while one is asleep are called dreams, and the ones given when one is awake are called visions.

However, there are also the secular meanings of these words. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary states that a dream is again “an ambition or ideal, especially when it is not very realistic”, and to dream is also “to imagine something”, that is, “to form a mental image of something” or “to think of something as probable or possible”. Imagination itself is defined as “the ability to create mental images or pictures” or “the ability to be creative and to think of new and interesting ideas”.

Vision is secularly defined also as “a thing experienced powerfully in the imagination, especially concerning the future” and again as “the ability to think about or plan the future with great imagination or wisdom”. A visionary, then, secularly, is someone who has this said ability or, also, someone “having or showing great imaginative or artistic power”.

Now, the counterfeiting of the spiritual gifts of seeing dreams and visions is that the secular aspects of these words are being popularly propagated as being the biblical meaning. To worsen it all is the fact that this propagation is championed by preachers right from the pulpits.

Satan’s insidious substitution is going on! What happened to “love” is now happening to “dreams” and “visions”. Believe you me, most people now

believe that every human ambition or lofty idea that comes into their hearts is their God-given dream or vision in life.

Contrariwise, in 2 Samuel 7:1-17 and 1 Chronicles 28 & 29, we see how King David had a lofty idea of building a temple befitting the Lord. His ambition was noble. He, no doubt, had a clear mental picture of his goal. He planned it well, and made the provisions necessary for actualizing his vision. He even sought spiritual advice, and Prophet Nathan told him to follow his heart and go ahead and realize his dreams; for, after all, he was God's anointed and beloved King, well-suited to do it, and nothing could stand on his way. However, what did God tell Nathan by revelation that night? The very opposite – God said David should not build it, for He had chosen his son to build it for Him!

Can you then see how human desires, plans, dreams, visions, ambitions, aspirations, goals and even clerical advice can be very different from the perfect will of God? Can you see that those things are not synonymous with revelation received from God through the Spiritual gifts of seeing dreams and visions? Another example of this is in Acts 16:7-10.

Most preaching today is about how to “manage your dreams” so as to become “successful” and “prosperous” in life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has been reduced to “success motivation” and the Bible to a “success manual”.

Yes, of course, it is a success manual. But what kind of success? Is it just the worldly, business, political, materialistic success?

Today, the dreamer is taught to “**visualize**” what he desires, create a mental image of it, and hold fast to that. Reason given for this is that “what you see is what you get”. (Unarguably, such visualization or imagination then means that such dream or vision is **man-made** or self-given! It is not God -given).

I know many people who had such so-called “visions” or “burdens” and felt “led”, but who later regretted when they realized they had erred.

Today, faith is no longer the carrying out of the word of God which has been heard and believed (Romans 10:17, Hebrews 11:7, 8, 28). That has now been replaced with strong will-power, doggedness, positive thinking, possibility thinking, good self-image and trust in one's abilities. (However, see 1 Corinth. 2:5, Matthew 6: 27; 1 Samuel 17:37, 45, 46, 47).

Faithful servants of God like Job, Elijah, Abraham, Moses and Jeremiah are now being portrayed as having been timid, fearful, pessimistic, hot-tempered and not knowledgeable enough. The heroes and idols of the 'modern' teaching are, rather, worldly figures like Abraham Lincoln, Bill Gates, Walt Disney, Michael Jordan and other political, military, intellectual, sports, entertainment and entrepreneurial gurus.

Next, the dreamer is taught to plan and work towards **actualizing** his or her dream. Nothing is said about God's time or God's ways, but folks are urged on with the words that "after all, the end justifies the means". Nothing is being taught about the existence of a perfect will of God and a permissive will of God. Nothing is being taught about submissiveness – the forsaking of one's plans and thoughts to yield to God's own (Isaiah 55:6-9, Mark 8:34-36, Matthew 26:39, John 6:38).

People are taught to "follow their heart" and to "hold on to their dreams". Any revelation or advice to the contrary is labelled a "dream-killer", and should be stoutly rebuffed.

The teaching is now raising a generation of **stubborn, self-willed** people who think they are faithful Christians, but who know not God's will nor yield to it!

People are never told about the unreliability and deceitfulness of the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9-10), the enmity of the carnal mind against God (Romans 8:5-8, Hebrews 3:7-11), and the pitfalls of high-mindedness and covetousness (1 Timothy 6:5-12, 1 John 2:15-17).

People are never told that some dreams or visions can be false, man-made, or falsely claimed (Jeremiah 23:16-18, 25-28; Ecclesiastes 5:7; Zechariah 10:2), and that there exist things called deceiving spirits (1 Timothy 4:1).

They are just encouraged to follow all their whims, and are taught various ways to “actualize their dreams” and achieve all their set goals.

A comparison of true biblical dreams, visions, dreamers and visionaries with what is being presented today will help to highlight the subtle but vast differences.

One outstanding difference is that the modern-day so-called ‘dreams’ and ‘visions’ are always about the future and concern an ambition, objective or goal to be attained by the dreamer or a task to be accomplished by him or her.

On the contrary, in the bible we read of dreams and visions which revealed past, current or future things, and those that were messages for others and not for the dreamer or visionary. We also see that while some gave guidance and direction, others were warnings and rebukes. (For example, Matthew 1:20-24, Matthew 2:12-22, Luke 1:11-37, Luke 2:8-20; 1Kings 22:17-28; 2Kings 5:25-27; 2Kings 8:11-13; 1Samuel 15:16-23).

Another difference is that the modern-day dream or vision is always very clear and well-understood by the dreamer or visionary, who knows his or her set objectives and well-defined goals. On the contrary, many biblical dreams and visions were symbolic and could only be deciphered on employment of the Spiritual gift of interpretation of dreams. (Some examples are Genesis 37:5-11, Genesis 40:8-22, Amos 7:7-9, Zechariah 4:5; Acts 10:10-12).

Consider the biblical example of Joseph the dreamer who had dreams of God’s plan for his life. His life story is found in Genesis chapters 37 through 50.

As a teenager, he received two symbolic dreams, whose meanings he did not even know. It was his father and elder brothers who gave him a hint of their implications. The dreams were neither self-created nor his ambition in life.

He didn't lead a life of working towards the goal of ruling his brethren, but just lived his simple life of righteousness, faithfulness to God, diligent performance of his duties and exercise of his Spiritual gifts.

The events that happened in his life were not as were planned and worked out by him to make him become ruler in a faraway country called Egypt. Rather, God used even the schemes of his enemies and detractors to perform God's will in his life in God's way and in God's time.

If Joseph were like those who "have dreams" today, wouldn't he have hurriedly seen a relationship with Potiphar's wife as 'favour' that had 'located' him and which would help propel him to the top? After all, doesn't 'the end justify the means'? Would he have agreed to instead be incarcerated when that was not part of his original ambitious 'dream', and certainly 'not his portion'?

(Similarly, in 1 Samuel chapters 24 and 26, if David were like those today who live to 'realize their goals', would he have hesitated to grab such glaring opportunities when it appeared that "God had given his enemy into his hand", thus giving him a way to have his 'breakthrough' and 'enter straight into his destiny'?)

The fact that, despite all that went on, Joseph's family still finally bowed to him proved that his original dreams had been revelations from God.

Compare that to a modern glamorous West African Pentecostal minister who declared that God had told him to go into politics and that he would become his country's president. He even went as far as disclosing that even if the presidential elections would be rigged and thus prevent his winning, disasters would occur that would force those who had rigged and won to hand over power to him, otherwise they would die. However, after several attempts at the polls, the minister is still very far from the presidency! Even though he had dreamt, visualized, held fast to his vision, planned well, thought positively, applied all the success techniques and persevered, yet his pronouncements did not come to pass. Those politicians are still alive. No post has been relinquished

to him. It was not a revelation from God; it was a self-given vision, a human aspiration!

Please don't get me wrong. I am not trying to say that people should never have good intentions, ambitions and aspirations in life. It is very good to have great plans and aspire high in whatever your field of endeavor in life. What I am stressing is that human imaginations, plans, ambitions and aspirations should be seen as such and known to be just that! Any teaching that presents them as being the spiritual God-given dreams and visions is erroneous and unbiblical. Any attempt to substitute them for revelations from God is a subtle and dangerous **counterfeiting** and abuse of the Spiritual gifts of seeing dreams and visions!

One scripture greatly orchestrated by the teachers of the secular meaning of dreams and visions is the first **half** of Proverbs 29:18, as rendered in the King James Version. Let me here quote the whole verse: "*where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*". Even this KJV rendering of the **whole** verse shows that the context is that of loving God and keeping his law or not doing so – a context of the blessedness of lovingly obeying God's law instead of doing so only from fear of one's sin being exposed by revelation (vision). It is **not** a context of ability or inability to plan the future imaginatively and attain success.

The correct context is brought more to light in other more accurate renderings as follows:

"Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint; but happy is he that keepeth the law" -- (Darby)

"Where there is no revelation, the people cast of restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law" – (NIV)

"Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law" – (RSV)

This proper meaning of Proverbs 29:18(a) agrees with 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. It shows what genuine visions and revelations from God can do. They make men realize the nearness of omniscient God and, hence, instill that awe and restraint in them, whereby they won't perish through sinning!

Those teachers surely know that by picking scriptures out of their contexts, you can make them say anything you want them to say. Why then do they do so with Proverbs 29:18(a)? The teachers are also aware of the other more accurate renderings of Proverbs 29:18(a), but they suppress those and orchestrate the KJV rendering because it can be **bent** to suit the secular meaning of dreams and visions that they are propagating.

Dear Christian, seeks the Spiritual gifts of seeing true dreams and visions from God, and don't be content with the secular food being dished out by modern teachers. (Colossians 2:8). That secular leaven is beneficial for achievement of earthly success, but cannot replace God's true Bread which is for your spirit, soul and eternal life.

CHAPTER TWO
PROPHECY



The secular understanding of prophecy or prophesying, as expressed in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is that of "Predicting". However, biblically, there is much more to prophecy than that.

Bible dictionaries do well in trying to capture the meaning of prophecy in one-sentence definitions, but more explanation is still necessary. For example, the NIV bible dictionary states that to prophesy is to "forthtell and foretell by words from God". The KJV family bible dictionary further explains that the forthtelling (or telling forth) is to "expound or interpret", and I would like to add that it also includes exposing or disclosing.

What do these concise definitions convey? To forthtell (or tell forth) shows that prophecy is not like prediction, which is only about the future. Prophecies may also expound or expose both present and past things. That is, prophecies usually **reveal** things.

Another point is that the forthtelling and foretelling are "by words from God". They are not made by human analysis, experiment, statistics, inference, extrapolation, etc. They are words **given** by God. They are different from prediction or forecasting. There is no probability in prophecy. It is declared with 100% assurance since the words are from God.

These "words from God" are usually called "THUS SAITH THE LORD". Hence, prophecy has also been defined as 'relaying a direct "thus saith the Lord"'. The word "direct" means that to refer to an earlier prophecy is not prophesying; it was the original declaration of that "thus saith the Lord" by the receiver that was prophecy.

For instance, when we preach about the prophecies of Isaiah or Daniel, we are preaching not prophesying; it was Isaiah and Daniel who had prophesied long ago. Indeed, preaching is NOT prophesying, as we shall explain later.

In olden days, “the word of the Lord” usually came to the prophet. This usually came as an audible voice that God opened the ears of the prophet to actually **hear**. Some of them usually answered “here am I” when God spoke, and even conversed with God. (1Samuel 3; 1 Kings 19:9-18; Ezekiel from 1:2 to 2:2; Genesis 22:1; 2Samuel 7:4; Luke 3:2). It was not some thoughts, impressions, or ideas flooding the mind (2 Peter 1:21, Jeremiah 23:16 – 18, Jeremiah 23:21 – 26, Jeremiah 17:9).

Also, the prophets usually **saw** a definite vision, not some thought, imagination or feeling. The Word was received in a revelation (Numbers 24:3,4,15,16; 1 Kings 22:17-28; Isaiah 2:1, Jeremiah 1:11-16, Amos 1:1, Micah 1:1, Revelation 1:2-3, John 1:29-34, Acts 21:10-11). That is why the prophets were also called **seers** (1 Samuel 9:9, 19; 2 Samuel 24:11; 2 Chronicles 16:7, Amos 7:12).

This “seeing” or “hearing” is important, and it usually pays a Minister to ask someone who had just prophesied to tell what he “saw” while prophesying or, if not, **how** he “heard” what he was prophesying. Unsatisfactory answers to these questions would help the church escape things that issue from human mind worked into a state.

When it is said that “the word of the Lord came to” someone, it is not meant that the person had just heard an energizing sermon or read some faith-inspiring literature. It means the Holy Spirit came upon him and he was “in the Spirit”, either in trance, vision, dream, or open vision, and the Spirit Himself **spoke** to him audibly, telling him the exact words to relay. (Revelation 1:10. Revelation 4: 2, Ezekiel 2:2, Ezekiel 3:22 – 24, Ezekiel 11:24 - 25, Daniel 10:7 – 11, Luke 1:67). There are some prophecies in which the Holy Spirit speaks directly *through* people. In such cases, the Spirit uses people in such a way that they don’t even know or remember what they were doing or saying. Those things have to be later recounted to them by other people, after the whole process had ended (e.g. 1Samuel 19:23-24).

Moreover, the “word of the Lord” does not need a hyper-charged atmosphere before it comes to someone. Prophecy does not necessarily have to involve running, jumping, sweating, or shouting oneself hoarse. It does not need

human exertion or drug-enhanced performance, nor does it need sighing or weeping. (1 Kings 19:11-13, Jeremiah 23:21; 1 Corinth. 2:5; 2 Kings 5:10-11, 2Kings 3:15-16). Yield by faith, and don't work anything up! (1 Corinth 12:29; 1 Corinth 7:17, 20; Romans 12:4-6)

In the bible, apart from symbolic visions about the future that were purposely sealed for the time being, other prophecies were often specific statements and NOT vague. God even called names (1Kings 13:2, Jeremiah 32:6-7, Matthew 1:22-23; 1Kings 20:14, Acts 21:10 -11); stated times (2Kings 20:5-6; 2Kings 7:1, Jeremiah 29:10, Jeremiah 28:15-17, Matthew 20:18-19); specified ways and manner (2 Samuel 12:11-12, 2Kings 3:16-17; 2Kings 19:6-7). Sometimes, God even gave preliminary signs to show He was the One speaking and to assure that the prophecy would be fulfilled (1Kings 13:3,5; 2Kings 20:8-11; 2Kings 19:29; 1 Samuel 2:34). If it concerned sin, God usually exposed particular secret sins by Himself as the all-knowing, rather than force or bully culprits to confess (2Samuel 12:7- 9; 1Kings 21:17-19, Acts 5:3-4).

Of course, right from the days of old there have also been false prophets and prophecies -- counterfeits. There is always the rule that anything contrary to scriptural truth and known word of God cannot be a God-given prophecy (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, Gal. 1:8-9).

However, today other subtle forms of error are being propagated. For instance, the **substituting** of "Faith Declarations" for prophecy.

It is very true that God has given certain rights, powers and privileges to his faithful children. Read about some of them in Job 22:28, Matthew 21:21-22, Matthew 18:18-19, Isaiah 44:26. Nevertheless, it does **not** mean that when we use these privileges and pronounce something by faith, then we are prophesying. No!

It is sad to hear some Ministers call on their congregations: "Now, begin to prophesy, all of you, begin to prophesy about yourselves and your situation, prophesy, prophesy!" Does prophecy now come by human command and no longer "thus saith

the Lord” as the Holy Spirit gives utterance through revelation? How can one prophesy when the “word of the Lord” has not come to him? Not possible!

It is very good for Christians to wisely use the power of the tongue and make positive declarations, but we should not claim that we are then prophesying.

Some positive statements may not come to pass, especially when they were not perfect will of God (see 1Kings 22:12-14), but the actually-received “thus saith the Lord” never fails (1Kings 22: 17-22, 34-38).

Pronouncing things by faith is what every Christian can do, yet in 1 Corinthians 12:10-11, 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 1 Corinthians 14:12 prophesying is said to be **a gift** of the Spirit given by God to **some** people as He wills. Again, exercising faith and making positive declarations is what every Christian can do, yet 1 Corinthians 14:1,5,12,39 advise Christians to **covet** or **desire** the Spiritual gift of prophecy from God. This means that not all Christians automatically have the ability to prophesy. Further still, how would mere faith pronouncements (not revelatory words given by Holy Spirit) disclose the secrets in the lives of people as stated in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25? In Luke 22:64, when the soldiers asked Jesus to prophesy, it wasn't to make a faith declaration or preach the gospel but to disclose, by Holy Spirit, something otherwise hidden or unknown to him. Acts 21:8-9 states specifically that Philip the evangelist had four virgin daughters who usually prophesied. This does not mean that of all the Christians in that household (Philip inclusive), only the four maidens could make positive statements with faith or expound the Word. It means that God had given those virgins the Spiritual “*gift of prophecy*” (*Amplified Bible*). In Act 21:10-11, when Agabus prophesied, he was not pronouncing things by his own faith or teaching the Scriptures but was delivering a specific message as revealed by the Holy Spirit. (See also Acts 11:27-28). Notice that all these are **New Testament** references.

When Ezekiel of old prophesied to the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-10), he was *not* making *his own* pronouncements by faith to those bones; he was relaying precise “THUS SAITH THE LORD” to them. Verses 7 and 10 state that he spoke “as he was commanded”. He was not pronouncing by faith what he *wanted* or *desired* to

happen to the bones – this is established by his response to God in verse 3 which shows that he did not have any specific idea in mind what next should happen to the bones. He never presumed to go beyond God or say more than God told him to say. For instance, he spoke to the four winds and called for breath only at the stage God told him to do so. He applied the prophecy to Israel only as God gave the interpretation and application and as God told him to prophesy (verses 12-14). Notice that ever before he prophesied, “the hand of the Lord was upon him” and he was thus “in the Spirit”, which then led him where and how it liked (verse 1).

[Let us now take a closer look to explain a point. I had deliberately indicated that the quotation above of Act 21:9 was taken from The Amplified Bible. Why I did so is that in its rendering of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Corinthians 12, the Amplified Bible repeatedly wrongly claims that prophecy means preaching or teaching the Word. However, in Acts 21:9 it could not circumvent the truth but admitted the existence of a distinct spiritual “*gift of prophecy*” that is definitely not preaching or teaching.

It is claimed that the amplification of prophecy as preaching or teaching the Word (proclaiming the gospel) is derived from the last statement in Revelation 19:10 that “..... *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*”. That interpretation and application of that statement is made OUT OF CONTEXT, considering the following facts:

(i) What kind of ‘testimony of Jesus’ did the angel then have and was giving to John? Was the angel preaching sermons to John, evangelizing or teaching John the Scriptures? No! He was giving John visions, revelations and direct ‘thus saith the Lord’. This is clearly confirmed at the introduction of the Book of Revelation in chapter 1 verses 1-3 and is obvious in the contents of the Book from its first chapter to the last.

“The REVELATION of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to SHOW to his servants, things which must quickly take place; and he signified it and sent through his angel to his servant John, who bore witness of the word of God and the TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, as many things as he SAW. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this PROPHECY, and keep those things written in it; for the time is near.” – (Revelation 1:1-3).

Hence, the kind of testimony of Jesus referred to were revelations, visions and direct words from God (i.e., ‘thus saith the Lord’); and these were called prophecy.

(ii) In the middle of Revelation 19:10, the angel had spoken about John’s “brethren”. Who were those brethren? Some people claim they are pastors, evangelists, preachers, teachers or all born-again Christians who proclaim the gospel. However, the Bible had given its own answer: the angel specifically stated in Revelation 22:9 that the brethren he was referring to are “the prophets”. Hence, those fellows or brethren of John who have the testimony of Jesus as stated in Revelation 19:10 are not preachers, evangelists or all believers, but are “the prophets”. In the Book of Revelation, John is not manifesting his gift or operating in his office as John the evangelist (which he did in his Gospel) or John the teaching elder (which he did in his Epistles), but as John the revelator, the prophet!

(iii) What kind of testimony of Jesus did the prophets have which others had not? Was it the sermons they preached? Or, the way they taught the Scriptures and evangelized? Or, was it the songs they could sing? No! It was the direct ‘thus saith the Lord’ they could receive by Holy Spirit revelation. For instance, why was Daniel a prophet while Ezra was not? Why was King David called a prophet (Matthew 22:43-44, Mark 12:36, Acts 2:24-36) while King Hezekiah was not? The distinguishing factor is that the prophets could “be in the Spirit”, see and hear spiritual things, have visions and revelations, receive and relay direct ‘thus saith the Lord’.

(iv) Now, follow this sequence: John’s brethren in question are the prophets --- these brethren of John are they that have the testimony of Jesus --- the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy --- which means the prophets are they that have the spirit of prophecy. Revelation 19:10 is simply saying that that thing that prophets have is the spirit of prophecy. That is, in Revelation 19:10 we have an angel’s definition that when a person has that kind of testimony of Jesus that the angel himself then had and John had and the prophets have, the person has the spirit of prophecy (or, the **spiritual** gift of prophecy). Whoever is giving that kind of

testimony of Jesus is prophesying. Otherwise, he is NOT! (The Greek word here is *pneuma* which specifically means ‘spirit’. It is NOT other words that can be rendered as ‘essence’, ‘substance’, ‘inspiration’, ‘purpose’ or ‘vital breath’. The noun *pneuma* occurs 385 times in the New Testament. In all the other 384 instances, it always refers to Holy Spirit or a spirit. How does it suddenly become ‘essence’, ‘purpose’, ‘inspiration’, ‘substance’ in Revelation 19:10? Similarly, all the 26 occurrences of the adjective *pneumatikon* always mean ‘spiritual’ and never ‘essential’, ‘substantial’, ‘purposeful’ or ‘inspirational’). The last statement of Revelation 19:10 should not be lifted out of context and misapplied.

Hence, the amplification of prophecy as expounding or teaching the gospel is misleading rather than enlightening. Note that by pointing out this instance of error in amplification, I am NOT condemning the whole Amplified Bible. I am contributing to knowledge of truth. We must realize that although God’s Word itself is infallible, human Annotations, Commentaries and Amplifications do sometimes miss the mark.]

Consider the example of Peter. In his reference (2 Peter 1:16-19) to their experience of being in the Spirit and overshadowed by its cloud, and seeing the vision of the transfigured Christ and Moses and Elijah conversing with Him, and hearing the direct ‘thus saith the Lord’ from the Father that Christ was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased and should be hearkened to, Peter said they were THEN having a sure word of **prophecy** or firm **prophetic** word or the Word made firmer to them in that **prophetic** way! And, in verses 20-21 he explained the general principle that true prophecy can never be by human will and pronouncement but must come only by the Holy Spirit giving the revelation and the Word, as was the case with them on the Mount and with the prophets of old.

If I am at the pulpit powerfully preaching words of faith to the people and then I authoritatively pronounce upon the people words such as: “My God shall bless you! You will experience a season of upliftment! You shall possess the gates of your enemy! A miracle is coming your way! You are going to find great favour! God is up to turn things around for you! Etc.”, I am **not** prophesying on or to the

people, but am pronouncing blessings on them. I am using my God-given authority! Those are benedictions, prayers for their good, pronouncements by faith!

If I'm a faithful servant of God, he will honour my word and those in the congregation who have faith will receive those blessings; it will be fulfilled for them. The fulfillment would not mean that I was prophesying; it would mean that God has performed my word, he has answered my prayers!

No human declaration is prophecy, even if it is backed by all the faith in the whole world. It can come to pass, no doubt, but it is still a human pronouncement by a man of God who has great faith. It is not "thus saith the Lord", it is not prophecy.

An outstanding example of this in scripture is Elijah's pronouncement of drought in Israel. Read about it in 1Kings 17:1; 1Kings 18:41-46 and James 5:16-18. Notice that when Elijah pronounced the drought, it was not "thus saith the Lord", but was "by my word". Elijah had to pray earnestly for his word to stand because there were contrary forces who did not want things to be that way. James explains that the 3½-year drought was not a fulfillment of prophecy but was in answer to the earnest fervent prayer of a righteous man (which usually availeth much). It later took fervent prayer again – seven times of Elijah's faithful spiritual intercession – for the rain to finally fall.

Another example is when Elisha was offended and cursed the insolent youths (2Kings 2:23-24). It wasn't "thus saith the Lord", yet God sent the two bears. The destruction of the youths was not a fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy, but rather a performance of Elisha's word!

If, while preaching or ministering in a healing service, I make the following declarations: "The Lord will bless someone tonight! Jesus will lift your burdens! By His stripes you are healed! Your yoke of sickness shall be broken tonight! Somebody is going to return home tonight completely restored! etc", I am NOT prophesying. These are authoritative pronouncements by faith. After all, wasn't the Healing Service obviously for those purposes?

However, if God had told me certain things about the service and I subsequently declared it to the people that "As I was preparing for this service, God

told me this and that”, it would be a different matter because I would then be relaying to the people a direct message from God.

Also, if while ministering, the Spirit takes over and I get into vision and say something like: “you that person sitting there (and I describe the person in detail), I see the light of God all around you and an angel of God is restoring your limbs, you are healed, throw away those crutches and walk!”, this too would be a different matter – I would be prophesying by revelation.

Likewise, if while ministering, the “word of the Lord” comes to me and I, under His Spirit, say certain detailed and specific things like: “you that person by name so-and-so, you have come from such-and-such place, your request is such-and-such. Really, your problem started at such-and-such a time, in such-and-such a way, and your condition is now such-and-such. But I the Lord have visited you today and have taken away your problem. Go in peace. At such-and-such time my word will be fulfilled to you and you will glorify me”, this would be quite different from my declaration by faith – it is “thus saith the Lord,” a direct prophecy to the person concerned.*

We should be very careful about these things. Great servants of God, like Paul, who understood the serious and delicate nature of speaking “in the Name of the Lord” (Proverbs 30:5-6, Revelations 22:18-19, Jeremiah 23:28-29), always took great care to differentiate between “thus saith the Lord” and their own pronouncements as Spirit-led men of God. For example, see 1 Corinthians 7; Jeremiah 28:5-9; 1Kings 22:15-17; 2 Samuel 7:3-5; 1 Corinthians 14:37.

There is also this idea about prophecy that some people **wrongly** draw from 1 Corinthians 14:3. They claim that any revelation that evokes unease, fear, consternation, perturbation, inhibition or wariness cannot be from God, but is demonic. They claim that all God-given prophecies must give reassurance, comfort, calmness, peace of mind and rest – and thereby edify.

But the KJV family Bible dictionary defines “edify” as: “to build up, promoting the spiritual growth and development”.

Footnote:

* See also: *Branham, W. M. (1991 Edition): Conduct, Order, Doctrine of the Church Vol. 2 pp 879 – 883 Indiana: Voice of God Recordings*

Can Spiritual welfare be achieved by ALWAYS encouraging and reassuring? (Jeremiah 23:14,17,22). Will there not be occasions that call for warning, rebuke, correction, reproving and shaking up?

The Bible is full of prophecies in which God rebuked both individuals and nations for their sins and revealed the evil consequences they would suffer, especially if they would despise his words and fail to repent.

Read the following passages, for example, and see whether the prophecies were encouraging and reassuring to the recipients, or were disturbing and unsettling.

Genesis 49: 3-7; Numbers 14:28-35, 39; 1 Samuel 2:27-36; 1 Samuel 15:16-29; 2 Samuel 12:7-14, 1 Kings 21:17-24; 1 Kings 22:17-23, Jeremiah 28:16, Luke 21:20-24.

Anybody who would not “tremble” at God’s word (Isaiah 66:2,5) and does not want to be shaken by it, is a willful reprobate who is not prepared to forsake his own ways and heed God’s word.

The wrong ideas about prophecies together with the confusing of human pronouncements with direct ‘thus saith the Lord’ have had severe impact on the lives of many. For instance, if God reveals coming evil (e.g. death) about someone and gives some warning, advice or appropriate steps to follow (all aimed at averting or overcoming the evil), many a ‘believer’ today would respond: “the devil is liar, it is not my portion”. If this response comes from a heart that has believed God’s message and has gratefully and humbly accepted God’s warning or advice and is ready to take the appropriate measures, then it is well and is a statement of faith pronouncing failure on all the evil plans. However, if the response comes from a heart that does not believe the revelation but considers it demonic and is not prepared to heed the advice and take the precaution, then it is a statement of contempt and rejection of the Spirit’s revelation. Such a respondent may even accuse God’s messenger of prophesying evil for him or her, meaning that the messenger is wishing and decreeing evil for him or her.

Yet such ‘believers’ fail to remember biblical examples like 2 Kings 6:8-12. Was Elisha then prophesying evil or death for the king of Israel? Another example is Matthew 2:13 ,14,21-23. Did Joseph not have faith when he fled with the babe? Why didn’t he say that infant death was not the portion of God’s Son and that the dream

was negative and demonic? When Agabus prophesied of the evils that would befall Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11), he was not a cowardly ‘negative-talker’, his revelation was not demonic, and he did not wish Paul evil. He was simply relaying what the Spirit showed to him. We should not take positive thinking and positive declaration to the extent of rejecting any true revelation from God which we feel is ‘negative’!

In modern Pentecostalism, is to be forewarned no longer to be forearmed? Proverbs 22:3 says that ‘a prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished’. Deuteronomy 29:29 says that ‘secret things belong to God, but what He reveals belongs to us, so that we may be able to do His words’. Hence, a revelation is actually meant to help us know how to walk! One of the duties of the Holy Spirit is to reveal hidden things and tell us of things to come (John 16:13-14). God’s revelation of evil is not meant to make us fear, nor is it a pronouncing of evil on us. God’s exposure of an evil plan rather shows that He has reproved it and doesn’t want it to succeed! It is a step to victory over the evil. Revelation is one of the ways by which the Spirit helps the believer in his infirmity to pray as he ought to about what he otherwise would not have known to pray about (Romans 8:26-27). A person who believes God’s message, heeds its warnings, follows its instructions and prays about it as he ought to is sure of either preventing the evil altogether or having victory over it!

Isaiah told Hezekiah God’s message about his imminent death. The revelation was not demonic, nor did Isaiah wish Hezekiah death. Hezekiah reacted well, prayed about it, and God averted death and gave him 15 more years (2 Kings 20:1-6). Elijah told King Ahab about imminent punishment. That revelation was not ‘negative’ and demonic. Ahab humbly received God’s message, fasted and prayed about it, and the punishment was deferred for him (1 Kings 21:21-29). More examples like Jonah and the Ninevites and others abound in the scriptures.

God will not always give the pleasant ‘prophecies’ that we would like to hear, but always says what is true. Christians ought to always be able to humbly accept God’s truth and do what God expects. Failure to do this may still result in the occurrence of those things we had claimed not to be our portion.

*CHAPTER THREE**SPEAKING IN TONGUES*

Naturally, while some people may be very slow to learn, understand and speak a foreign language, there are others who have a wonderful ability to quickly achieve these feats. In fact, I once had a neighbour who could very fluently speak five widely diverse languages in addition to his mother-tongue and English – a total of 7!

The spiritual gift of “speaking in tongues”, on the other hand, is a purely supernatural matter. It does not involve the speaker’s learning or understanding. It is the activity of spontaneously speaking in unknown language under the power of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit gives utterance. In this case, the speaker does not even know what he or she is speaking. (However, this does not mean that it is meaningless babble, as we shall explain later.)

This spiritual gift was fully manifested on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and continued to manifest in the early church, but there had been few instances of it in the Old Testament. It had been promised by God since Isaiah 28:11 and is listed among Spiritual gifts in 1 Corinth. 12:8-10, 28.

It is surprising, however, that some people use 1 Corinth. 13:8-10 to teach that this gift was temporary and had ended with the early church of the Acts of the Apostles. This is gross error! Why don’t they use that same scripture to also infer that prophecy and knowledge were temporary and had ceased with the apostolic church?

Even amongst those who rightly believe that this gift should still be in the church today, there is much counterfeiting and abuse of the gift. There is so much confusion in its operation that one wonders whether some Christians have never read 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

Let us here examine some Bible truths about the gift of tongues that should make any sincere Christian to avoid error and sin.

❖ **It is not Compulsory that all Christians must Speak in Tongues**

The affirmation in Romans 8:9 that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His” means that ALL truly born-again Christians have the Holy Spirit. Yet the question in 1Corinthians 12:30 shows that NOT all Christians speak in tongues. These two scriptures, taken together, imply that speaking in tongues cannot be taken to be the initial evidence of receiving the Spirit of God, nor is it the evidence of being filled with God’s Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 explains that speaking in tongues is one of the gifts of the Spirit and, like every other gift, is apportioned by God to whomever He wishes. Just like we cannot expect everybody to work miracles, we also should not demand that everybody must speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28-30).

However, it is true that a Spirit-filled person who lives under the altar of God will speak in tongues sometime or other. That is, if you constantly lie there before God by engaging all the time in deep, earnest, yielded communication with God, with baptism after baptism striking you, something will surely take place sooner or later. You will one day come to a point of stammering lips where the Holy Spirit will take over and help your infirmity as you pray (Romans 8:26-27).

Mark 16:17 lists supernaturally speaking with tongues among some signs that will accompany them that believe. If we use this to claim that all Christians must speak in tongues at will, why don’t we also claim that all Christians must take up serpents at will? We should better understand Mark 16:17 to mean that those to whom God has apportioned the Spiritual gift of speaking in tongues will have this sign gift manifested in them (and their ministry) if only they would truly believe in Him and doubt not. Mark 16:20 reveals that it is the Lord himself who would use the accompanying “sign” to confirm His Word, and not

the human being operating it anyhow and anytime he likes regardless of the Lord's Spirit and will and instructions.

Another **important** truth we should realize is that even when it is the genuine Holy Spirit of God that has come upon someone, He does not always come to use the person's speech organs to utter strange tongues. There are many other things the Spirit may want to do through someone. For example, He may come upon someone to make him preach mightily. He may descend mightily on someone to use him and perform great healings and miracles, without giving him a single utterance in strange tongue. Yes! Therefore, when the Holy Spirit is upon a Christian and he really senses it, he should not just start to speak blah blah blah all by himself. By doing so, he would **grieve** the Spirit who has not given that utterance and he can block any other things the Spirit would have done through him. This is very important, especially in a religious gathering.

It has been pointed out that the real evidence of a Spirit-filled life is rather the bearing of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Thus, the current fashion of interspersing one's preaching, prayer or singing with some phrases spoken in tongues to show that one is Spirit-filled is an uncalled-for abuse or counterfeiting of the gift of tongues. No gift of the Spirit is meant for showing off one's spirituality.

❖ **Non-interpreted Tongues are Only for PRIVATE Communication with God, and NOT for Public Worship.**

This fact is clearly explained in 1 Corinthians 14.

In verses 18 and 19 Paul stated that he spoke in tongues more than everybody in the Corinthian church, but that during church gatherings he was not in the habit of speaking in tongues.

Where, then, did he do all that his speaking in tongues? Paul was a man of prayer and intercession, and he also knew the value of praising God always

(1Thessalonians 5:16-18, Ephesians 6:18, Ephesians 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 14:15). Tongues frequently featured in those his extensive, deep, heart-felt, Spirit-filled PRIVATE communications with his Lord.

The fact that un-interpreted tongues edify only the speaker and no other person in a gathering further confirms that such is only meant for private Christian life.

1 Corinthians 14:2 states that all un-interpreted Holy Spirit-given tongues are mysterious communications made NOT for human consumption, but had with God. Verse 28 then directs that in a church gathering, “if there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet and speak to himself and God” (NIV).

In fact, verse 27 INSISTS that the following three things must obtain for tongues to be spoken in a church gathering:

- i. There must be interpretation
- ii. Only a MAXIMUM of THREE persons can speak in a gathering, and
- iii. Even those three persons cannot speak simultaneously, but **must** speak ONE AT A TIME.

These specifications are so plain and crystal clear! Whence comest the speaking in tongues simultaneously by hundreds or even thousands of long-standing Christians anytime they gather, and with no interpretation at all? Can the **true** Holy Spirit of God move people to do things contrary to His own prescriptions? No! God is not an author of confusion (verse 33), but requires that in His house everything should be done decently and in order (verse 40) -- God’s own clearly stated order!

It is surprising that even though these things have been written in 1 Corinthians 14 and we have been reading them, yet much error and abuse is still being practised everyday.

Also appalling is the current fashion of praying in tongues into a microphone and blaring it over loudspeakers. Is the mysterious communication no longer

between the speaker and his God? Is it now meant for the whole neighbourhood and passers-by on streets?

❖ **“Tongue” Means “Language”, Not Just Incoherent Words**

In Acts 2, when the believers spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost, verses 4, 6, 8 and 11 clearly show that the “tongues” were “languages”.

The NIV bible always states in its footnotes that “tongues” means “languages”. Even if it is not any of the ones on earth but a purely spiritual one of “angels” (1 Corinthians 13:1), it is still a language and NOT incoherent words or a one-word diction.

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines language as: “The system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings”, and as: “signs, symbols, gestures, etc used for indicating ideas or feelings”.

There has never been any one-word language or dialect in the whole world! (1 Corinthians 14:10 – DARBY). Every language consists of a wide set of vocabulary needed to express various thoughts. Otherwise, it is ineffective in giving meanings.

This is true even for animals and machines, as explained in 1 Corinthians 14:7-10. The Bible says that if a musical instrument like flute, harp or trumpet keeps playing without variation in the notes and intervals, how will one know what tune is being played? For example, there must be a difference between when it is playing the tune of ‘Amazing Grace’ and when playing that of ‘Hallelujah Chorus’.

(Even in computers that use binary language, there are vast distinctions in the arrangement of those figures for the computer to understand the instructions when it reads them).

The Bible says it is equally so when someone speaks an unknown language by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, if someone speaks some words in tongues when thanking God in prayer, then uses exactly the same words when casting out demons and when asking for forgiveness of sins, then it becomes questionable.

I once attended a fellowship where a brother spoke in tongues and another interpreted. However, the interpreter was giving various meanings when the speaker repeated exactly the same words. After some time, the pastor rose and stopped the whole process when he noticed that something was surely wrong somewhere.

For instance, if someone praising God in tongues keeps repeating the same word like “Nuku, Nuku, Nuku, Nuku,…” there is no problem because it may well mean that he is praising God by saying something like “Holy! Holy! Holy!…” or “Glory, Glory, Glory…” However, questions arise when the prayer is for making various requests to God, or for healing, etc, and the person still uses the same “Nuku, Nuku, Nuku …” Is there any language whether human, animalistic, mechanical, electronic, demonic, angelic, etc that always uses the same group of words arranged in exactly the same order to mean all kinds of different things?

Someone once tried to explain that this might happen because the person involved is a baby Christian and is like a child just learning to talk .As he keeps learning and trying, his vocabulary will gradually increase such that he will speak in tongues better and better. What does that really portray? It betrays the active involvement (fruitfulness) of the human mind in such cases of speaking in tongues, contrary to the condition described in 1Corinthians 14:14. This is because every learning process entails both the active involvement of the learner’s mentality and his conscious effort. In their very first experience of speaking in tongues (Acts 2), did the disciples speak as learners? No! They fluently and accurately spoke complete languages as the Holy Spirit gave the utterance. Does the Holy Spirit have to learn any language as a child before speaking it, and keep improving on it the more He practises it? Realize that we

are here not talking about someone's preaching getting better the more experienced he becomes or someone's prayer life getting stronger the more he devotes his time to earnest prayer, but we are talking about the operation of a gift in which the human mind must temporarily lie fallow (1 Corinthians 14:14). What we infer is that those who keep "increasing their vocabulary" and "improving" their speaking of tongues are merely consciously practising a method taught them by a human being, and usually do not speak as an overwhelming Holy Spirit gives the utterance.

The Bible says we ought to test all things, hold fast to only that which is good, and avoid what is not good (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

❖ **Speaking In Tongues Involves Complete Takeover By The Holy Spirit**

This complete takeover is what is referred to as being FILLED with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), as distinguished from a partial experience of the influence of the Spirit. On such occasions, 'none' of the human vessel still remains but all is filled, taken over.

Let us examine some things the scriptures reveal would happen on such occasions. 1Corinthians. 14:14 says,

"for if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful" – (NIV), or

" If I use such language in my prayer, the Spirit in me prays, but my intellect lies fallow" – (NEB), or

" For if I pray in this way, my Spirit prays indeed, but my mind has no part in it" – (GNB).

This means there is a temporary suspension of the operation of human mentality or intellect just like a plot is left unused in the bush fallow system of agriculture.

The Holy Spirit also takes over control of the person's lips, tongue, mouth, and possibly other organs like hands and feet. The person is, in that

condition, not ‘the boss’ of himself, so to say. This temporary ‘loss of control’ caused by the Spirit’s takeover may result in staggering, drunken appearance, stammering lips, uncontrollable shaking and swaying (Acts 2:13; 1 Samuel 1:12-15; Eph. 5:18; and 1 Samuel 19:20 – 24 (GNB)).

Indeed, even the person’s countenance and mien may become so transformed that it would be very apparent to onlookers that ‘something else’ has gotten into that person! He would not just be his normal, empty, controlled ordinary self.

The Holy Spirit (who is then in control) moves the person’s lips and tongue in such ways as to produce the words that the Spirit wants him or her to speak, just like He did with Balaam’s ass (Numbers 22:28). This is what is meant by “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Here, the person has no control over what he is saying and, being said in a strange language, does not even know what it means. The only thing a knowledgeable and experienced Christian does is to willingly and readily yield his voice; but in the case of ignorant and inexperienced folks, the Holy Spirit may also draw out their voice by His power and working.

The NEB in 1 Corinthians 14 translates speaking in tongues as speaking the “language of ecstasy”. Though this may not be the very best of expressions since there exist many other kinds of ecstasy, including carnal and demonic, yet it still confirms the idea of the person’s temporary loss of control and the fact that you don’t just wake up and on your own start speaking in tongues when, obviously, the Holy Spirit ecstasy has not overwhelmed you and you lose control and the ecstatic utterance breaks forth.

Genuine speaking in tongues is 100% Holy Spirit utterance. Hence, when it comes together with genuine interpretation of tongues both add up to a prophecy, because a direct message from God has been relayed to the people (1 Corinth 14:5, 12, 13, 27).

The Spirit must give the utterance, and human mentality is not in control. Hence, nobody can speak in tongues AT WILL! It is very saddening to hear ministers commanding their emotionally charged congregations: “Now begin to speak in tongues, all of you, open your mouths, begin to say something. Speak, speak!” The minister would later do or say something indicating they should stop, and all would stop speaking. Does speaking in tongue now come by human command and at a moment the human being wishes?

The bible does say in 1 Corinthians 14:32 that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets”. However, the context is that of someone in whom the Holy Spirit has already sufficiently welled up, but the person concerned restrains its activity for reasons such as absence of an interpreter, unwillingness to disrupt a service, compliance with the requirements of 1 Corinthians 14, etc. The context is not that of commanding the Holy Spirit by any individual. If, by the time a minister orders everyone to start speaking in tongues the Spirit had not welled up in me to the point of outburst, yet I obey that command and start producing unintelligible phrases ‘by faith’, wouldn’t I then be faking the gift of speaking in tongues?

When Peter was preaching Christ to the house of Cornelius, was he hyping to get them psyched? When they spoke in tongues, was it at Peter’s command? In fact, the Jewish apostles were even amazed by the **unexpected** falling of the Spirit upon Gentiles! (Acts 10:44-46).

Speaking in tongues cannot be “taught” or “learnt”. The highest you can do is to preach Christ and genuine repentance. When a soul truly repents and, in a broken and contrite spirit, is confessing and yielding to God, then the Holy Spirit can fall on him. You can also teach Christians how to persevere in earnest prayer to the point where the Spirit takes over.

I once attended a little fellowship where I saw that the brethren had a pamphlet titled “Words of Power”, in which were printed many strange words. The meaning of some of the words were given, and of some not given. The

brethren were studying and memorizing the words. When I enquired, I was told they were Spiritual ‘tongues’ and that the more conversant one became with the book the more fluent one would be in speaking in tongues. Isn’t that pitiful? It shows the depth of error into which some people have fallen in this matter of speaking in tongues.

There is also a popular practice that has been named “speaking in tongues by faith”. The name itself is quite biblical because all Christian Spiritual matters operate by faith (Hebrews 11:6, Galatians 3:14, Mark 16: 17-18). However, in most cases, the practice called by that name deviates from biblical standards. Most people are made to understand that whenever they can produce speech that is not in English or any language they understand, then they are speaking in tongues “by faith”. To complete the idea of “faith”, they are told to focus on a mental image of whatever they desire as they speak in the tongues, then the unintelligible speech would make that desired thing come to pass. Here again we see the fruitfulness of the human mind, contrary to 1 Corinthians 14:14.

Do not speak in tongues by faith in that way. Let the Holy Spirit give you His utterance! Do not use your voice and tongue to produce certain strange and tongue-twisting sounds ‘provided they are not in English or any language that you understand’. That is not faith. You would be talking empty gibberish.

Those who keep practising that thing can end up not making any definite requests to God, nor actually adoring and thanking God for months on end – since they spend all their prayer time engaging in useless babbling (Philip. 4:6).

It is true that spiritual matters work through faith, but folks should be made to know that faith is not erroneous believism, not presumption, and not emotionalism.

I am not here advocating a 100% “mechanical” operation by the Holy Spirit in which the human being has no part to play. Rather, I wish to point out that the Christian’s part is that of yielding, and not initiating. You do your part when you whole-heartedly concentrate during your fellowship with God so that you are sensitive to the Holy Spirit when it comes upon you or wells up in you. When it reaches the

point of breaking forth, you readily yield your voice, organs and faculties. The tongues you then speak would be “as the Spirit gives the utterance”.

On the other hand, one should not try to initiate, force or work up the speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is similar to prophecy. Even though a prophet is full of the Spirit, it does not mean that everything he says is prophecy. He would be prophesying only when declaring “thus saith the Lord” as given him by the Spirit. Likewise, even though a Christian is indwelt by the Spirit, not every unintelligible speech he produces anytime is genuine speaking in tongues. He would be speaking as the Spirit gives utterance only when he gives vocal expression to the overflow of the Spirit which has sufficiently welled up in him to the point of bursting out.

How can someone be speaking in tongues and at the same time scratch his body where it itches him, or wipe perspiration from his face, or readjust her bra or length of her skirt? How can someone be speaking in tongues, then break and angrily shout at her two fighting kids and go and separate them, then return and almost immediately resume the speaking in tongues? How can someone be speaking in tongues, yet still remember that his clothes are outside on the line, then abruptly stop speaking and rush out and bring in the clothes?

The instances cited in the last paragraph are not hypothetical but really happened. It is quite obvious that the persons concerned were simply still their full selves, not overwhelmed by the Spirit enough to speak in tongues. Yet, those persons firmly believed and strongly argued that they had been correctly speaking in tongues by faith. What type of faith was that?

Beloved brethren, I am not trying to undermine or overturn your faith, but I’m trying to help you avoid erring in the exercise of your faith (1 Corinthians 14:39-40). God understands the sincerity of your hearts and will satisfy the deep longings of your souls. But sincerity alone is not enough; sincerity must be guided by knowledge of truth. I myself have been speaking in tongues when the Spirit wills, but it is appalling how speaking in tongues has these days been reduced to something people do anyhow anytime they wish, without the Holy Spirit giving the utterance.

It is highly presumptuous to impersonate the Holy Spirit; to make out that He is speaking when He is not. Doing so is no different from prophesying falsely, making out to be uttering ‘thus saith the Lord’ when God has not spoken.

Do not forget that Zedekiah and the 400 prophets spoke ‘by faith’ when they prophesied victory for Ahab (1 Kings 22:6, 11, 12). When Hananiah broke the wooden yoke from Jeremiah’s neck, he prophesied ‘by faith’ (Jeremiah 28:11-17). The Spirit had not spoken – it was presumption!

Be careful, and don’t err. As you are speaking those tongues, remember the question in Job 26:4, “*with whose help have you uttered words, and whose spirit has come forth from you?*” (RSV).

Has the Holy Spirit overwhelmed you, and is using your speech organs to say what **He** wants, when you did not intend it? Or are they your own productions ‘by faith’, and spoken whenever **you** wish?

Some people get so experienced and skilful in this art of production that they become convinced that they are so FULL and gifted of the Spirit that each and every time they open their mouths to pray, sing or preach, the speaking of some strange phrases must unfailingly feature in it! Some people even believe that without some phrases spoken in tongues, a prayer is not really effective!

Some people also wrongly infer from 1 Corinthians 14:2 that any unintelligible speech they can produce confuses and frightens demons. Let it be known that even when one is speaking genuine Holy Spirit utterance, if it is the tongues of men (1 Corinthians 13:1), that is, a certain language spoken at some place on this globe, demons can and may understand what the speaker does not understand. Only when it is the tongues of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1) would demons not understand.

Also, it is not the mystery of a speech that frightens demons but their sensing of the presence of the Holy Spirit. No matter how complicated your tongue, if it is not Holy Spirit’s utterance, the demons would surely know and would jeer at, and be entertained by, your sport. By such acts, you are opening

the way, and they may come in and possess you if they consider you a promising vessel for the achievement of their purposes.*

One night, a neighbouring woman was blaring out tongues over a loudspeaker. I was praying and I saw in vision that some jet black goblins were going into each house in the neighbourhood and robbing occupants at gunpoint, and they were also approaching my residence. I asked what was happening, and the Lord told me that the tongues the woman was speaking were demonic, and that all houses in the neighborhood which were not covered by the blood of Jesus would be robbed by the demons which were being mobilized by her commands.

The Lord said I should leave the topic I was praying about, and address that ugly development. I stood up and prayed authoritatively and bound the demons and cancelled every demonic command and operation.

After about three minutes, I heard her cough repeatedly; then she stopped praying and tried to raise some choruses. Then the generator that was supplying electric power to her equipment ceased to function. Within the next 15 minutes, she closed that her night programme prematurely.

I don't normally narrate any of my visions and spiritual experiences in my books, so that readers would not feel that the truths I express are based on personal visions. Rather, I always give many Bible references as the bases of truth, because doctrines and teachings should always be based on the Word of God. However, I feel compelled to narrate the above experience to help readers

Footnote

* See also:

*Uzorma, Iyke N. (1999): "Mental Power" and "Emotional Power",
In Behold I Give Unto You Power
Lagos: Iyke Nations Outreach*

fully realize that these Spiritual matters are not things to be played with, lest you fall prey to powers that you may not know.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14:16 that during genuine speaking in tongues nobody in the gathering would know when to say “Amen”. Therefore, consider someone who is praying in tongues and anytime he wants the gathering to say “amen” he utters in English: “In Jesus name”. Then after the response of “amen”, he switches back to the tongue, and the process goes on like that. This is a sure indication of false speaking in tongues. The person is still very much in control, his human mind is still very fruitful.

The questions that arise are: Does the phrase “in Jesus’ name” not have its equivalent in that other tongue? Does the Holy Spirit not know that equivalent?

For example, if the Holy Spirit is using an Englishman to speak Efik language in London and wants to say “in the name of the Lord Jesus”, He would say: “ ke enying Obong Jesus”. He, the Holy Spirit, would not revert to English, and people in the London gathering would not know to respond “amen”.

Also, preaching is something meant to be understood by hearers. Can the Holy Spirit then utter phrases in un-interpreted tongue to listeners during a sermon? (1 Corinthians 14:19, 6). It is possible, though, that when one is preaching the Spirit can on rare occasions come upon him to the extent that he speaks in tongues AND interprets it immediately. He would then be saying things in his sermon that he never planned to say. Indeed, it would mean a short spell of prophecy featured in the sermon. This will be *rare* because though the same speaker can interpret his/her tongue (1Corinthians 14:13), the standard pattern is that the speaking and interpreting should involve two or at most three persons (1Corinthians 14:27-28). God uses this pattern so as to demonstrate the supernaturalness of it and as a safeguard against an individual human’s will and fakery. Hence, if a preacher keeps saying things he had prepared to say in his sermon but keeps interspersing that with unknown tongues, it would no longer

be supernatural but a deliberate human device to spice up and garnish the sermon and impress it upon listeners that the sermon is ‘Spirit-filled’.

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, but Peter no longer spoke anything in strange language when he preached that Spirit-filled sermon by which 3000 souls repented! That sermon, whose contents are narrated in Acts 2:14-40, was intelligible all through.

Likewise for his sermon narrated in Acts 10:34-44 by which the household of Cornelius repented and received the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, let us never fake or mimic the gifts of the Spirit. Beware! God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7).

Let us now consider some examples.

After the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), the next person that spoke in tongues in the Bible was an animal – an ass! The Holy Spirit took over the speech organs of Balaam’s ass and made the animal hold a conversation in human language with the stubborn, greedy prophet (Numbers 22:28-31).

Did the ass speak in human tongue by saying anything provided it was not in ass language? No! The Bible says “the Lord opened the mouth of the ass” (verse 28). The Holy Spirit gave it utterance.

When Saul and his soldiers “prophesied” in 1 Samuel 19:20-24, GNB says they were “dancing and shouting” unintentionally. Saul even lay down naked. This confirms the temporary loss of self-control and the fact that they knew not whatever they were saying. This could mean that their “prophecy” was **possibly** that of making “ecstatic utterances” and interpreting them. (Notice that I am saying “possibly”, since the Bible does not openly declare so).

In 1 Samuel 1:12-16, Hannah persevered in earnestly pouring out her heart to God, to the point where she broke into stammering lips. If she had yielded her voice at that point, she would have been speaking in tongues. She was, instead, speaking silently to herself and God (1 Corinthians 14:28). Or, she

was praying in groanings that cannot be uttered ordinarily by humans, but only by the Spirit when it gives the utterance (Romans 8:26). The onlooker, Eli, noticed her changed countenance, stammering lips, possible shaking or swaying, and concluded that she was drunk.

You see, some folks may pray to that point where they feel a thirst, a dryness of throat, a loss of words with which to adequately express their hearts' burden and fullness to God. This is where the Holy Spirit usually comes and helps us in our infirmities as we pray, so that we can speak to God fully as we ought to (Romans. 8:26-27).

When, under the Spirit, we pray with stammering lips like Hannah did, we are whispering to God in groans that our own words cannot express. Some folks, out of ignorance, end their prayer at this point. If they had known to yield their voice, heart and time, the Holy Spirit would then have used them to pray in tongues, as explained by the famous American preacher Rev. Branham.*

One could then continue like that, lost in Spiritual ecstasy, for as long as the Spirit likes (which could even last for hours), as explained by Kenneth Hagin in his book 'The Art of Intercession'.

An excellent modern-day example of speaking in tongues (or, better still, direct interpretation of tongues) was manifested as Rev. William M. Branham of USA was ministering in Beaumont in 1961. A young Spanish lady with a serious health problem came before the platform to be prayed for. Rev. Branham spoke to her through an interpreter on the need for her to open her heart to the Lord, believe and accept the Lord Jesus, and exercise faith in Him for her healing.

As he spoke these, the Holy Spirit took over and he saw a vision and said: "I see you as a little girl sitting by an old-fashioned fireplace and a big kettle

Footnote

* Branham, W. M. (1991 Edition): *Conduct, Order, Doctrine of the Church*
Vol. 2 pp 521 – 532 & 617 – 622. Indiana: Voice of God Recordings.

swinging out, full of ears of yellow corn. You over-ate that corn. And when you did, you fell violently ill and your mother put you on a bed and you started with epileptic fits. You've had them ever since"

Before the interpreter could relay the vision to her in Spanish, she told him with great surprise: "I thought the Reverend couldn't speak Spanish!"

The interpreter turned to Branham and said, "You didn't speak Spanish, did you?" Branham answered, "No".

Hence, the tape recorders were stopped and replayed and it was absolutely English!

The interpreter then asked the girl: "Okay, you tell me what the Reverend had said".

And she narrated, in Spanish, the very same thing Branham had said, and the interpreter relayed it back in English to Branham.

Of course, she was instantly **healed**.

You see, she heard Branham in her own language wherein she was born, and Branham was speaking English. She heard it in Spanish.

Wasn't that a wonderful repetition of Acts 2:8 – "How hear we every man in our own language wherein we were born?"

Notice that Rev. Branham had not worked himself up into a frenzy so as to utter some strange phrases. When he was explaining faith in Christ to her, he was still his full normal self, and an interpreter was needed. Branham would still have gone ahead and prayed for her and she would have been healed.

It was the Holy Spirit himself who decided to take over, show him the vision, and make her hear him directly in her native tongue.

The vision seen was accurate, the tongue heard was accurate, the lady was cured of epilepsy, and she gave her life to Christ.

Such are the wonderful works of God!



Therefore, brethren, let us sincerely desire the real and true thing that is given by God. It is my prayer that God would use this short piece to help us escape erroneous ideas and practices concerning dreams, visions, prophecy and speaking in tongues. We ought to be very careful, for our Bible says:

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”. – Hebrews 10:31.

“For our God is a consuming fire”. – Hebrews 12:29.

“Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” – Matthew 7: 22-23.

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”. – 1 Corinthians 3:13.



PART TWO

***BUILD ON
THE ROCK***



PART TWO**BUILD ON THE ROCK**

This sermon is based on a beautiful song with the above title written by

Colin Sterne, and which can be found in Redemption Songs No. 912:

1. *What are you building, brother, so busily day by day?
Is it a mighty castle of stone? Is it a house of clay?
Whose is the plan you build on? What are the stones and lime?
Is it based on the Rock of eternity, Or the sands of the shores of time?*

*Then build on the Rock, the Rock that ever stands,
O build on the Rock, and not upon the sands;
You need not fear the storm or the earthquake shock,
You're safe forevermore if you build on the Rock.*

2. *What are building, brother? You work at it everyday;
Something is added, something is changed, something is cast away.
Is it a house of pleasure? Is it a house of sin?
Or a temple divine for the Light of lights to descend and abide within?*
3. *Brother, a time is coming when all shall be tried by fire;
Storms of the world shall beat on your house, winds of a fierce desire.
Then, if you based it wrongly, great will the ruin be;
But if built on the firm and unchanging Rock it will stand for eternity.*
4. *Build on the Rock, then, brother, How grandly it towers above!
Piercing the clouds and the starry skies, lost in the heights of love!
Heaven and earth shall perish, Grow like a garment old;
But the Rock is the same, and it shall not fail, thro' the ages of time
untold.*

The building meant is not the raising of a physical structure but our **life-work**, and, of course, borrows from the allegory made in the following scriptures:

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” – Matthew 7:24 – 27.

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he had built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” 1 Corinthians 3: 10 – 15.

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish.” Luke 14:27 – 30.

Indeed, God himself is also building us Christians, individually and collectively, as temples for his habitation, as expressed in 1 Corinthians 3: 9 and Ephesians 2: 19 – 22.

What are you building, brother? You work at it busily everyday. Morning, afternoon, evening and night are all filled with activities, programmes, boisterousness and planning.

Know that no day passes without heaven recording something about you. What has been recorded about you today?

In your course of building, something is added, something is changed, and something is cast away. What virtues have you added and what vices have you cast out of your life? Experience and circumstances cause you to make modifications. What changes have you made? When you were a child, you built as a child. But now that you've grown, are you building as a man? Are you building a mighty castle of stone or a puny house of clay?

Can you say you are progressing or you have been retrogressing? Is your fellowship with Christ now deeper, stronger and holier? Or, are you disenchanted, tired of many things and weaker? Have you changed for the better or for the worse?

Brother, time goes quickly by and waits for nobody. Very soon you may find yourself already fifty, and you would be asking yourself serious questions like: "What have I been doing all these years and where am I now? What have I done with my life, with time, and with opportunity?"

Is your building **based on the Rock of eternity, or on the sands of the shores of time?**

As Christians, we always sing that we're standing on Jesus the solid Rock that never fails. But what constitutes building on the rock? Matthew 7:24 – 27 tells us that it is DOING the word of God.

Notice that both the wise man and the foolish heard the words of Christ quite well, but the difference between them lay in doing (or not doing) the word that they had heard.

You can hear the word, know it thoroughly, preach it very well, but if you don't do it, you lose.

The bible says: *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”* (James 1:22-25).

The blessing lies in doing! Jesus said: *“not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven”.* (Mathew 7:21).

Even though you are a Christian, any time you walk in disobedience and out of God's will, know that you are not standing on the Rock and you have no guarantee of victory or success on that occasion. You can fail woefully and suffer harm in that particular matter, even though you are still a child of God.

And, if you keep practising disobedience, don't be surprised that you may finally cross the Rubicon and fall away altogether.

Jesus Christ is the Rock on which His Church is built. All other ground is sinking sand. He is the only possible foundation. The Bible says no other foundations can exist (1 Corinth. 3:11).

If any man builds upon something else that he has employed and considers to be a foundation, he deceives himself. Men may admire him for putting up an impressive edifice, but, alas, God can reveal that the edifice is spiritually a rickety thatch house with seriously eroded base, in imminent danger of collapsing upon the worshippers therein.

It is only the Rock that is unchanging and never fails (Hebrews 13: 8); but times change, human opinions are shifting sands, worldly standards and trends keep changing. (1 John 2:16–17). Heaven and earth shall grow old like a garment and perish (Hebrews 1:10 – 12; 1 Peter 1:24 – 25).

If you are building on the sands of the shores of time, you'll be tossed to and fro by every wind of change in your bid to be of worldly relevance (Ephesians 4:14). You would teach one thing today and tomorrow teach the exact opposite to suit tomorrow's opinions, tastes and trends. And, you would be among those ever learning, but not rooted in the knowledge of the Truth, and can never get to the fullness of Christ (2 Timothy 3: 5, 7; Colossians 2:6-8, Ephesians 3: 16 – 19, Ephesians 4: 13).

God's nature, standards and words never change. What God disliked, He still dislikes and will ever dislike!

Jesus said a building on shifting sands is based wrongly, and great will its ruin be.

Whose is the plan you build on? Is it God's plan or yours?

Has God called you, or is it your personal choice of career? Is it that you have completed Bible College and hence must set up something and start your practice? Is it just a means of survival? Are you driven by human ambition for achievement and acclaim?

Who directs your activities, pulls the strings, sets your targets and has the final say? God? Yourself? Some President or Board or Committee? Or, some evil spirit which you had consulted and which is the actual power operating in the Ministry?

But "*as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*". (Romans 8:14). Do you know (or care) about the existence of such guidance? Can you hear the Spirit? Or, are you building your house by copying the plan and pattern of others (especially popular Americans), such that every mistake in America is copied as a style in your house?

Do you know (or care) about something called God's perfect will and God's timing? Jesus said, "*Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21).

Brother, whom are you serving? Is it yourself and your aspirations?

What are the stones and lime you are using for your building? What materials and methods? Are you doing God's work in God's own way clearly specified in His Word? Or, in the name of "applying wisdom", are you making various manners of unrighteous compromise?

In your determination to make it at all costs, are you resorting to extortion, threats, false prophecy, blackmail and diabolic powers to work miracles and to draw crowds and keep them bound and under control?

In your bid to achieve relevance, church growth and success, are you applying other means to 'help' build, promote, and advance God's kingdom? And do you think God accepts that? Please read Matthew 7:22 – 23.

Are you resorting to what is usually employed in worldly theatres, movies, rock concerts and disco halls, namely the creating of certain psychological feelings through the use of special background sounds and lighting effects? Why resort to that substitute? Is the Holy Spirit no longer able to exert its influence and do its work? Resorting to that simply proves the **absence** of the true Holy Spirit power! That substitute does produce results – it can make people become so emotional that they weep; crowds can get so excited and hysterical that they feel they are receiving the Holy Spirit. But can psychological effects deliver a soul from the clutches of the flesh, the world and the Devil? Will the special effects created by various background sounds and light and other manipulations wash away a man's sins and register him in the Lamb's Book of Life? Only the real Holy Spirit can effect **genuine** salvation of a soul!

The world accepts that ‘the end justifies the means’. Have you bought that philosophy? With God it is not so! God’s things must be done in his own correct way. God’s battles must be fought using God’s weapons and armor (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, Ephesians 6:12-18). No matter how grand your achievement and result, God is concerned about HOW you made it. If it was made through crooked and unrighteous methods, it stands marred, condemned and rejected before God. Please read 2 Timothy 2:5. The means must be just for the end to be just.

What are you building, brother? **Is it a house of pleasure? Is it a house of sin? Or, a temple divine for the Light of lights to descend and abide within?**

Remember, he that liveth for pleasure is dead while he liveth (1 Timothy 5:6). Such carnal mind is enmity against God, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:5-8, James 4:4, Matthew 6:21). And, we are not debtors to the flesh to satisfy its desires, rather we are debtors to Christ to live for Him who died for us and rose again (Romans 8:12-13; 2 Corinth 5:15).

Is your life one that pleases Christ and makes it comfortable and enjoyable to His Spirit to abide in your temple? Or do your ways grieve him and keep driving him away?

Some people even decide to use alcohol and drugs to drive the Spirit’s restraint from their hearts and embolden themselves to do what they wish. Please read 1Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 4:30, and 1Corinthians 3:17.

How is your church? Are you building a ‘Do-As-You-Like’ church where nothing is said that would ‘embarrass’ the ‘respectable’ congregation; but you teach only what their itching ears desire to hear?

Have you ‘metamorphosed’ from a preacher of repentance and the kingdom of God, to a success motivational speaker?

Are you worshipping the new god ‘Destiny’? Not that it is new –it has been around all along. Only it has now assumed centre stage. Many people now

name their churches, Christian groups, businesses and children after Destiny! When you attend a religious program, are you going there to worship God and have a sweet fellowship with the Holy Spirit, or are you going there to keep “a date with Destiny” or have an “encounter with Destiny”?

Are people granted liberty to dress immorally, based on the idea that “God does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart”? I would have you know that that idea, instead of excusing the people, condemns them the more.

When God judges the condition of the heart, many outward things that were innocent and praiseworthy usually become condemned and rejected! For example, Jesus said that even if you don’t commit actual adultery but lust for it, then you are an adulterer. Even if you don’t murder but hate very bitterly, then you are essentially a murderer (Matthew 5:27-28, 21-22).

When God looks at the heart, what will He see as the true ultimate motive for your choice and desire to wear that particular dress? What will God see as your innermost reason for arguing vehemently or even choosing to quarrel with family and friends or withdraw from a church, over the use of that item of fashion? Will He see a heart filled with the fear of God and undivided love for God such that it can accept to forgo its “rights” and “privileges” just because of God? (1Corinthians 10:23, and 6:12).

Paul said that even though eating food is okay, yet he would forgo it if eating would cause someone to stumble somehow (1 Corinthians 8:13, 9). Is that the type of attitude God would see in you and your actions? Or, would He see a heart of pride that cherishes admiration? Won’t He find ulterior motives? God cannot be deceived (Hebrews 4:12-13, Luke 16:15).

Is the church a house of pleasure, a house of sin where amorous Valentine’s Day parties, beauty contests, macho competitions and other carryings-on are organized?

Is its attraction not really the power of God, but rather the abundance of beauties, entertainment, the pride of life and the forging of connections with the elite?

Are you earnestly intent on, and faithfully striving to, present unto Christ a chaste virgin as bride? (2 Corinthians 11:2). Or, you don't care whether she is a sophisticated, worldly-wise, Laodicean daughter of Jezebel? (Revelation 3:17-18). Will Christ receive that as His wife?

Are you building a house of merchandising, an 'Investment Church Limited' – a financial empire complete with private jets, banks, supermarkets, lotteries, scams, exploitation and profiteering?

In the things you do, is worldly gain thy goal? Are you scrambling for what has now been nicely christened "Kingdom Wealth"? Read Matthew 6:19-21.

Jesus said that one CANNOT serve God and Mammon (Luke 16:13-15). Are you demonstrating that you can achieve what Jesus said was impossible? Could Jesus have been wrong? I prefer to believe that Jesus was right and that you have strayed.

A Nigerian gospel minister once declared over the air that his church is not for the poor and that a poor man will not enter the kingdom of heaven! Preposterous!! Please read 1 Timothy 6:5-11. His church, in one issue of its monthly *Digest*, wrote that "the bloom season of life (Age 21-35) and the peak season of life (Age 36-70) are for accumulation of wealth and fulfillment of material well-being while age 70 and above is the season of service to humanity and God"!! Can you beat that? However, what do Ecclesiastes 12:1, John 21:17-18, Jeremiah 1:7; 1 Samuel 2:18 say? How is one even sure of living up to 70? If one does not, then one would die without having served humanity and God at all! In fact, it also means that that minister himself is not serving God because he is not yet 70! He is putting across that his very ministry is merely his chosen way to accumulate wealth.

Brother, a time is coming when all shall be tried by fire. (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Not tried by blind, credulous, impressionable and faulty humans; but by the consuming FIRE of He who judges rightly.

Great would then be the ruin of many an impressive empire that grew on wrong bases. At that time, some who had been highly respected, worshipped, acclaimed and emulated would suffer loss and everlasting contempt when the King on the throne would disclose that they had been working iniquity (Matthew 7:23).

There will be no hiding place. Only works done in accordance with the will of the Father and done through His power would survive that fire.

Notice that some of those whose foundation is Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12) can still suffer loss (1 Corinthians 3:15) depending on HOW they build, although they themselves, through God's mercy, would not be lost simply because they were of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12).

But those who have other so-called 'foundations' while calling the name of Christ will perish with their works, for Christ will tell them openly: "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:22-23, Matthew 25:41).

Build on the rock, then, brother. He will never fail you. He has never failed anyone who stood on His word.

Elijah built on Him and He did not fail him. There was wholesale severe backsliding in Israel. Jezebel had introduced a new 'God', a 'modern' way of worship. The Jezebel way of worshipping God was sensual, unrestricting and convenient for the flesh. The Jezebel fashion and cosmetics were so appealing to the women and attractive to lustful eyes. The prophets who took to that 'modern' way of worshipping God ate at Jezebel's table, were prosperous and enjoyed high respect, recognition and connections.

The masses followed. It actually got to the point where people were thoroughly convinced that Baal was the real God and that the 'modern' Jezebel

way of worship was the correct way to worship God. They really believed that the old-time Mosaic way of worship was fraught with laws, restrictions, difficulty and suffering because of its 'limited' knowledge of 'the things of God', and because of not properly comprehending how 'God is love'. The people felt they then had a fuller revelation of truth and better teachings on faith and could better exercise their liberty in God and realize their God-given destinies.

In fact, true worshippers of God in the old-time narrow way were then considered ignorant, were pitied, mocked, despised, intimidated, persecuted; and had to go into hiding.

The people were asking: "If the old-time way of worship is okay and sufficient, why is Elijah who sticks to it always suffering? Why doesn't he pull crowd? Why doesn't he prosper but goes about begging food from poor widows? Why does he keep staying with people and cannot afford a property of his own? Why is he always running from brook to cave? Why doesn't he enjoy popularity, government recognition and respect like Zedekiah and others?"

The prophets themselves were saying of Elijah: "Well, he thinks he is tough. Let him continue; after some years of experience he will realize that to compromise is necessary, and he'll see the need to apply wisdom. Now he's not even a member of our Israeli Association of Prophets. Every time, he keeps embarrassing people with what he claims to be 'thus saith the Lord'. He thinks he has monopoly of knowledge. Doesn't he know that God speaks to others also?"

That was why on that great day on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16-40), Elijah had to pray: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel and that I am thy servant."

Yes, God had to show that He is the true God and that Elijah was serving that true God. God had to do something great to turn the thoroughly backslidden

masses from their 'modern' form of godliness back to the proper worship of God.

Elijah also prayed God to "make it known that I have done all these things at thy word". That is, "God please show that I don't usually come up with ideas of my own which I feel are words from you. Show that I am not just trying to be tough or non-conformist or holier-than-thou or controversial or too clever or seeking publicity by being anti-establishmentarian". "I always act or speak in obedience to your will".

God answered him. Oh, hallelujah! God vindicated Himself, Elijah and the truth. The people saw it, bowed down, worshipped and proclaimed: "The LORD – he is God! The LORD – he is God!" The numerous prophets of Baal and the Asherah were ashamed and met their doom. Elijah had built upon the Rock, and He did not fail him!

Brother, build on the Rock and He will never fail you. Take your firm stand for the truth, and abide in His word. For his sake fear not to lose men's favour, fear not to be centre of religious controversy. Don't fear to go against the tide of popular opinion or accepted trends. Be like Elijah or Micaiah, stand alone if need be. Dare to be a Daniel, a Shadrach, a Meshach and an Abednego. Dare to have a purpose true, and dare to make it known! Don't be like the 7000 in Israel who hadn't bowed the knee to Baal, but who couldn't speak out. Rouse! Christian, rouse ere it be too late! Yes, God can use **YOU** to effect many changes. Rise to the challenge. Dare to struggle! You have not yet resisted unto blood in your strife against sin (Hebrews 12:3-4). Be a hero in the strife. Fight the good fight, walk the narrow path, run a good race to the very end (2 Timothy 4:7, Matthew 24:11-13).

Christ is thy might, and Christ thy right. He is thy sure foundation, thy anchor that holds secure. Be strong and of a good courage, for He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Build on the solid rock of obeying his words and doing his perfect will. Only then would you be acting wisely. Failure to do so is foolishness and would only lead to ruin and everlasting loss (Matthew 7:24-27).

*Then build on the Rock, the Rock that ever stands,
O build on the Rock, and not upon the sands;
You need not fear storm or the earthquake shock,
You're safe forevermore if you build on the Rock.*

GOD BLESS YOU!

Dear friend, if this book has been a blessing to you, then own a copy for reference; and please do the good work of helping your friends and others get copies of this liberating truth. May God bless you.

About the author:

The author, an erstwhile university lecturer in Mathematics and Statistics, has been a full-time gospel minister for the past two and a half decades, and is now a bishop in Mount Olive Church of Christ, Nigeria – a full gospel evangelical and deliverance ministry. He is married to Maddie, a co-minister, and they have five children.

Note to the publishers

The cover design or illustration is by the author. The concept is that the Holy Spirit (white dove) has departed, and the man's hyped up activity comes rather from the influence of a false spirit (black dragon). You may improve upon the design as you wish. The cover should be laminated or glossy, with some or all of its letters or figures embossed.

The book itself could be about 19cm by 14.5cm, and should not be too voluminous; nor should the prints be too small or too compacted, so as not to discourage the average reader. The binding should NOT be by simply stapling. These are my amateur suggestions.

However, I request that you employ your professional expertise and experience to make the book attractive and easy to read.

Thank you.

Bishop Raymond Ofonmbuk
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