

Prophetic Compassion

By: Rich Harris

Several years ago a well known prophetic minister spoke a word to me concerning my gift and calling. I was stunned because it was not the same word that the Lord had spoken to me privately in June of 1986. I knew the Lord called me to prophetic ministry and that was the end of it. Little did I know that He had additional plans for me in teaching and equipping prophetic people. Now some 19 years later I understand that this minister's word was vital to my call.

The prophet's word to me was, that *he saw me as a man of much compassion*. In that he perceived a pastoral anointing. The revelation was true but the interpretation was true only in part. Wounded and confused, my spirit did not bear witness with this word. This word seemed to move me off the given course I believed God was leading me. God called me to the prophetic and no one was going to convince me otherwise.

This incident occurred during our first week at a ministry where the Lord had clearly sent us. As I staggered in personal alarm, the Lord began to deal with deep rooted issues that were hindering my life and ministry. These were not issues about growing in the prophetic, but about my character. The Lord revealed that I needed to deal with personal rejection and fear of man. It became clear that in order for me to grow in my prophetic call as *a man of compassion*, healing had to come to these areas of my life. The following three and one half years proved fruitful to my growth in prophetic ministry, character, and compassion. In the process, the Lord revealed diverse anointings in prophetic ministry and in the diversity, He revealed my ministry. I am now passionately equipping people to move with love and compassion in their prophetic gifts.

The Problem

God does not call us in the maturity of our gifting but in our immaturity. So often our understanding of the prophetic gift comes from the misconceptions in the church. Tradition has duped us into believing that all prophets are nasty, sharp tongued individuals called to bring correction to the church. This is far from the truth even with the Old Covenant prophets of whom we often erroneously model ourselves. We can learn much about prophetic ministry from the Old Covenant types, but should not model ourselves after them. They represented God's Old Covenant and we represent the New.

A man or a woman called of God, will walk in some degree of God's compassion. God is a Spirit, and the God of holiness, love, compassion, truth, righteous judgement, and of wrath. These are characteristics of God's person all bathed in His compassion.

Having discovered my problem with the idea of prophetic compassion I had only one recourse and that was to seek the counsel of God. I began seeking Him daily in prayer, having thoughts that either this prophet had deceived me about the call to prophetic ministry or I misinterpreted God's voice myself. A short time later while walking in the woods of South Carolina, the Lord spoke a very profound word to me. He reminded me of His ministry gifts to the church as written in Ephesians 4:8,11,12. These gifts were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers all given to equip the church to do the related work of those ministries. Then he spoke as clearly as I have ever heard Him, and said, *"These five ministry gifts come out*

from Me to bring maturity to My church. I Am the God of compassion and My compassion is in all these gifts, not just the pastoral.” His word impacted me with clarity that my life and ministry could proceed without any further hindrance.

What About Elijah?

The ministry of Elijah called for a great deal of compassion. God’s compassion is demonstrated in Elijah’s unlikely act of mercy to the widow woman and her son. In that ministration, compassion was evident because God’s Spirit was with him. Had Elijah been the hardhearted, sharp tongued man so often portrayed, God could not have used him to raise the widow’s son. No man can muster such compassion without the intervention of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Kings 17:14-24). This is true of anyone in a prophetic ministry. Compassion is the active flow of God’s love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit for any God given situation.

We often assume that Elijah’s prophetic words wounded the Israelites, but instead it cut and pierced their hearts. The prophet’s word did not wound them but surgically repaired their breaking of God’s covenant. “*For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*”(Heb 4:12 KJ). The prophetic word of correction comes from the compassionate heart of God for His people. God does not intend to wound us, but to circumcise our hearts *bringing forth the intent of His heart that changes the intent of ours*. We must filter all prophetic speaking with compassion immersed in the blood of His Son.

The Wrong Interpretation

Through the word given to me in South Carolina, we cannot discern the function of the ministry gifts according to their compassion. Compassion does not make anyone pastoral, it makes them Christ- like which is the purpose of all equipping ministries. The prophet’s word to me was correct but the interpretation was wrong because of the assumption that only the pastoral gift is compassionate.

Jesus had compassion for the woman at the well when he revealed the secrets of her heart. A word of knowledge about her marital situation flowed from the merciful heart of God in Jesus. Compassion toward the women’s sinful life was the authority of God to bring the needed change. This is an indicator to the prophetic church that a more terse word would not have carried the same result. The outcome of God’s mercy in the word spoken brought recognition of the prophetic ministry of Jesus. The very first words out of her mouth were, “*Sir I perceive that You are a prophet.*” It is the prophetic ministry of Jesus that preceded the evangelistic message of how God desires worship. In this incident Jesus the Messiah was exalted and revealed in both the prophetic and evangelistic ministry gifts. (see John 4:9-39) Prophetic compassion is the eye of God that reveals the heart of man. The fruit of prophetic evangelism caused many from her city in Samaria to know Him and be saved. Clearly, Jesus is the New Covenant prophet upon which all prophetic speaking is modeled. We cannot accept the substitutes of past traditions in the church.

The Ingredient of Character

Compassion or the lack thereof is not a pastoral issue. It is an issue of our character. The Hebrew word for compassion is ***racham*** - meaning *to love deeply, to have mercy, have tender affection as coming from one's bowels*. Compassion comes from God and is measured out by Him. Some will show it more than others but all who are in Him have it. Jesus is the embodiment of the Fathers' compassion and it is to His image that we are conformed. Whether we are called to apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, or teaching ministries we must function in compassion or just be noise makers. The Lord, and the people of God are no longer interested in our sharp edged speaking and our glaring prophetic stares. They are looking for the heart of God that demonstrates power to change them through His compassion for them.

Finally, compassion is the ingredient that builds character in the prophetically gifted person. It is the key that unlocks the door to power and authority in ministry. Prophetic compassion wears the mantle of humility that brings us to full manhood, to the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection in our ministry to His body and the world.