THE RETURN OF THE LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT

BOOKLET NINE

PERSONAL PROPHECY, IMPARTATION, AND SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

When Does Spiritual Ministry Become Spiritual Control?



Pastor Gary Evensen

51 Centre Ave. • Secaucus, NJ 07094

pastor@njupc.org • www.njupc.org

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Foundational Scriptures: Acts 8:14–24; Acts 13:1–3; Acts 20:22–24; Acts 21:4–14; Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 1 Corinthians 14:1–40; 1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

Central Truth: The Holy Ghost gives spiritual gifts for the edification of the church. Scripture recognizes prophecy, prayer, and the laying on of hands as legitimate aspects of Christian ministry. However, these practices do not give human ministers unrestricted authority over the decisions, consciences, or spiritual lives of believers. Every spiritual claim must remain subject to the written Word of God.

INTRODUCTION — WHEN DOES SPIRITUAL MINISTRY BECOME SPIRITUAL CONTROL?

Throughout the history of Christianity, believers have sought the direction of God.

They have prayed for wisdom.

They have asked ministers to pray for them.

They have sought spiritual counsel when facing difficult decisions.

They have desired to understand God's will for their lives.

These desires are not wrong.

The Scriptures encourage prayer, spiritual discernment, and the fellowship of believers.

But what happens when a minister claims to know God's will for another person's life?

What happens when a prophecy is presented as a command that cannot be questioned?

What happens when someone is told that refusing a prophetic instruction means disobeying the Holy Ghost?

And what happens when the laying on of hands is presented as a means by which one minister can control the spiritual gifts, calling, or future of another believer?

These questions are especially important when examining the teachings associated with the New Order of the Latter Rain.

The movement that emerged in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, in 1948 placed considerable emphasis upon prophecy, the laying on of hands, and the recognition or impartation of spiritual gifts.

Some participants believed that God was restoring practices that had been neglected within Pentecostal Christianity.

Others came to associate these practices with restored apostolic and prophetic authority.

The resulting controversy was not simply about whether God could speak through spiritual gifts.

Classical Pentecostals already believed in the operation of the Holy Ghost.

The controversy concerned what authority should be attributed to prophetic utterances and to the ministers through whom they came.

That distinction remains important today.

We must not reject genuine spiritual ministry because someone has misused it.

Neither should we accept every claim of spiritual authority simply because it is accompanied by a prophecy, a supernatural experience, or the laying on of hands.

The Holy Ghost does not require us to abandon biblical discernment in order to receive spiritual ministry.

Our responsibility is to examine these practices carefully and return them to their proper place within the apostolic church.

1. THE HOLY GHOST IS THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Before discussing prophecy or impartation, we must establish where spiritual gifts originate.

1 Corinthians 12:4–6 (KJV)

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

Paul begins by emphasizing the source of spiritual gifts.

They come from God.

He continues:

1 Corinthians 12:11 (KJV)

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Notice the final words.

"As he will."

The Holy Ghost distributes spiritual gifts according to His own will.

The passage does not teach that an apostle possesses an independent supply of spiritual gifts that he may distribute whenever he chooses.

It does not teach that a prophet can create a spiritual calling through a spoken declaration.

It does not teach that a particular minister controls the operation of the Spirit.

God may use human instruments.

But the power belongs to God.

This distinction must remain foundational.

A minister may pray.

He may encourage.

He may teach.

He may lay hands upon someone in accordance with Scripture.

But he must never confuse being used by God with possessing authority over God.

The Holy Ghost is sovereign.

His gifts are not merchandise.

His power is not personal property.

And His work cannot be reduced to a system controlled by human personalities.

2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY?

The New Testament recognizes prophecy as a spiritual gift.

Paul encouraged believers to desire spiritual gifts while emphasizing their proper purpose.

1 Corinthians 14:3 (KJV)

"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

These three words are important.

- Edification.
- Exhortation.
- Comfort.

Prophecy should contribute to the spiritual strengthening of God's people.

It should not become a means of intimidation.

It should not be used to create fear of a minister.

It should not be used to establish personal dependence upon someone who claims special access to God.

Paul also explains that spiritual gifts must contribute to the edification of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:12 (KJV)

"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

The purpose of spiritual gifts is not the exaltation of the person exercising them.

It is the benefit of the body of Christ.

A genuine spiritual experience should direct attention toward God.

It should encourage faithfulness to His Word.

It should contribute to the spiritual well-being of believers.

And it must operate within the order established by Scripture.

3. PERSONAL PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Some modern teachings place considerable emphasis upon personal prophecy.

A minister may claim to reveal an individual's future calling.

Another may announce whom someone should marry.

Another may predict a person's financial success.

Still another may claim to identify where a believer should live or which congregation he should attend.

Does the New Testament provide examples of prophecy concerning individuals?

Yes.

But those examples must be examined carefully.

Agabus prophesied concerning Paul.

Prophetic statements were associated with Timothy's ministry.

The Holy Ghost directed the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul.

These passages demonstrate that spiritual revelation could concern particular people and circumstances.

However, the existence of personal prophetic revelation does not establish that every modern claim of personal prophecy is genuine.

Nor does it establish that the recipient must obey every instruction attached to such a claim.

We must distinguish between a revelation, an interpretation of that revelation, and an instruction someone attempts to impose upon another person.

Those are not necessarily the same thing.

A person may accurately perceive a danger without knowing how another believer should respond.

Someone may offer sincere spiritual counsel without possessing authority to make another person's decision.

And a person may claim divine revelation while actually expressing a personal opinion.

The New Testament does not authorize us to treat these possibilities as identical.

4. AGABUS AND PAUL — A PROPHECY THAT DID NOT CONTROL THE DECISION

One of the clearest examples appears in Acts 21.

Agabus was a recognized prophet.

He had previously prophesied concerning a famine in Acts 11.

In Acts 21, he delivered a warning about Paul's approaching suffering.

Acts 21:11 (KJV)

"And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

Agabus warned that Paul would be bound and delivered into Gentile hands.

But notice what the prophecy did not explicitly say.

Agabus did not command Paul to abandon his journey.

He did not claim authority to determine Paul's future ministry.

He did not instruct the churches to remove Paul from leadership if he continued toward Jerusalem.

The believers who heard the prophecy urged Paul not to go.

Acts 21:12 (KJV)

"And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem."

Their concern was understandable.

They loved Paul.

They did not want him to suffer.

But Paul responded:

Acts 21:13 (KJV)

"Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Paul continued toward Jerusalem.

He had already testified that the Holy Ghost was warning him of coming afflictions.

Acts 20:22–23 (KJV)

"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."

The prophecy confirmed the danger.

It did not establish that Agabus possessed governing authority over Paul.

There is an interpretive question in Acts 21:4, where disciples at Tyre spoke through the Spirit concerning Paul's journey. Christians differ over whether that passage describes a direct prohibition or the disciples' response to a Spirit-given warning.

We should acknowledge that difficulty rather than pretend it does not exist.

Nevertheless, the account of Agabus demonstrates an important distinction.

Receiving a genuine prophetic warning does not automatically give the prophet authority to control the recipient's decision.

The prophecy was taken seriously.

The danger was acknowledged.

But Paul's responsibility before God was not transferred to Agabus.

5. ACTS 13 — WHEN THE HOLY GHOST DIRECTED THE CHURCH

We must also consider a passage that demonstrates genuine spiritual direction.

Acts 13:1–2 (KJV)

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Here the Holy Ghost gave direction concerning particular individuals.

The church responded.

Acts 13:3 (KJV)

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

This is an important example of spiritual ministry.

The believers were worshiping, fasting, and praying.

The Holy Ghost directed the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul.

The church prayed and laid hands upon them.

Then they were sent to the work.

We should not dismiss this passage.

It demonstrates that the Holy Ghost can direct the church in specific matters.

But we should also notice what it does not establish.

The passage does not identify one prophet as the permanent ruler over Barnabas and Saul.

It does not teach that the men who laid hands upon them thereby became their spiritual owners.

It does not establish a hierarchy through which every future missionary decision must pass.

And it does not describe a procedure for transferring unlimited authority from one minister to another.

The Holy Ghost was directing the work.

The congregation was responding in prayer and obedience.

The laying on of hands accompanied their separation for service.

The authority belonged to the Holy Ghost, not to a human system of prophetic government.

6. PROPHECY MUST BE EXAMINED

Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church provide an essential safeguard.

1 Corinthians 14:29 (KJV)

"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."

This is one of the most important verses concerning prophetic accountability.

Prophetic utterances were not to be accepted without examination.

They were to be judged.

Paul also wrote:

1 Thessalonians 5:19–21 (KJV)

"Quench not the Spirit.

Despise not prophesyings.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

Notice the balance.

- Do not quench the Spirit.
- Do not despise prophecy.
- But prove all things.

A biblical approach does not require choosing between spiritual openness and discernment.

It requires both.

A minister who claims that his prophecies must never be questioned is not following the pattern of 1 Corinthians 14.

A congregation that refuses to examine spiritual claims is neglecting an explicit apostolic instruction.

And a believer who asks whether a prophecy agrees with Scripture is not necessarily demonstrating unbelief.

He may be exercising the discernment that Scripture requires.

A genuine spiritual gift does not eliminate the responsibility to test its exercise.

7. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEST A PROPHECY?

How should believers examine a prophetic claim?

The first and most important standard is the written Word of God.

1 John 4:1 (KJV)

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

A spiritual claim should never be accepted merely because someone says, "God told me."

The claim must be examined.

- Does it agree with the doctrine of Scripture?
- Does it direct people toward Jesus Christ?
- Does it encourage obedience to God's Word?

- Does it promote truth rather than deception?
- Does it respect the moral responsibilities established in Scripture?
- Does it attempt to create dependence upon the speaker?
- Does it claim authority that the Bible does not grant?

These questions are important.

We must also distinguish between a prophetic statement that can be evaluated against an observable event and a vague statement that cannot meaningfully be tested.

A dramatic prediction is not made true simply because it is emotionally powerful.

A claim is not established by the confidence of the person delivering it.

And an individual should not be pressured to make major life decisions merely because someone claims to possess supernatural information.

Scripture provides the standard.

No minister is above that standard.

8. WHAT IS THE LAYING ON OF HANDS?

The laying on of hands is a biblical practice.

It appears in several contexts throughout Scripture.

Jesus laid hands upon people in blessing and healing.

The apostles laid hands upon believers in connection with the reception of the Holy Ghost.

Church leaders laid hands upon individuals being set apart for service.

The practice is therefore not inherently suspicious.

But its purpose must be understood according to the passage in which it appears.

For example:

- Acts 6:6 describes prayer and the laying on of hands upon men selected for a particular responsibility.
- Acts 13:3 describes the laying on of hands upon Barnabas and Saul before their missionary journey.
- Acts 8:17 records the apostles laying hands upon believers who then received the Holy Ghost.
- Acts 19:6 records a similar event involving Paul.

These passages do not all describe precisely the same circumstances.

Some concern prayer and blessing.

Others concern healing or the reception of the Holy Ghost.

Others concern recognition and commissioning for ministry.

We must not assume that every occurrence establishes the same doctrine of impartation.

The laying on of hands is a biblical practice.

But Scripture does not teach that the act gives one person unrestricted control over the spiritual life of another.

9. THE SAMARITANS AND THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY GHOST

Acts 8 records Philip preaching the gospel in Samaria.

Many believed and were baptized.

Peter and John later came from Jerusalem and prayed for the believers.

Acts 8:17 (KJV)

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

This passage demonstrates that God worked through the prayers and laying on of hands of the apostles.

As Oneness Pentecostals, we affirm the biblical importance of receiving the Holy Ghost.

We also recognize that the book of Acts records different circumstances surrounding the reception of the Spirit.

- In Acts 2, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon those gathered in Jerusalem.
- In Acts 10, the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and those hearing Peter's preaching before water baptism, without the account recording the laying on of hands.
- In Acts 19, Paul laid hands upon the believers, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, the laying on of hands cannot be presented as an absolutely necessary human mechanism through which the Holy Ghost must always be received.

God is the giver.

The minister is His servant.

The distinction becomes even clearer when we examine Simon.

10. SIMON THE SORCERER — THE DANGER OF TRYING TO POSSESS SPIRITUAL POWER

Simon had previously practiced sorcery in Samaria.

When he observed the ministry of Peter and John, he became interested in the power associated with the laying on of hands.

Acts 8:18–19 (KJV)

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."

Simon wanted the ability to exercise spiritual power.

Peter immediately rebuked him.

Acts 8:20 (KJV)

"But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

The issue was not simply the exchange of money.

It concerned Simon's attitude toward the gift of God.

He wanted to possess and exercise spiritual power as though it were something under human control.

Peter rejected that attitude.

This account provides an important warning.

Spiritual gifts are not commodities.

The Holy Ghost is not a possession that ministers can distribute according to their personal ambitions.

No one should be led to believe that paying a minister, joining a particular network, or submitting to a religious personality guarantees the reception of spiritual power.

The gifts of God must never become instruments of personal profit, prestige, or control.

11. TIMOTHY AND THE GIFT ASSOCIATED WITH PROPHECY

One of the most frequently cited passages concerning impartation is 1 Timothy 4:14.

1 Timothy 4:14 (KJV)

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

This verse deserves careful examination.

Paul refers to a gift associated with prophecy and the laying on of hands.

The term *presbytery* refers to a body or gathering of elders.

The passage indicates that Timothy's ministry was connected with prophetic recognition and the participation of church leadership.

We should not deny what the verse says.

However, we should also avoid adding details it does not provide.

- It does not describe the exact nature of the gift.
- It does not identify the words spoken in the prophecy.
- It does not establish that every believer must receive a personal prophecy before entering ministry.
- It does not state that the elders could manufacture spiritual gifts independently of the Holy Ghost.

And it does not establish that those elders possessed permanent governmental authority over Timothy because they laid hands upon him.

The passage demonstrates a relationship between spiritual gifting, prophecy, and ministerial recognition.

The precise manner in which these elements were related has been understood differently by biblical interpreters.

We should acknowledge that uncertainty.

The existence of a biblical practice does not authorize us to invent an entire system around details the passage does not explain.

12. PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO STIR UP THE GIFT

A related passage appears in Paul's second letter to Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:6 (KJV)

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

Here Paul refers to the laying on of his own hands.

Some understand this passage and 1 Timothy 4:14 as describing the same occasion, with Paul participating alongside other elders.

Others recognize that Scripture does not provide enough detail to establish the exact circumstances with certainty.

But Paul's instruction is clear.

Timothy was to stir up the gift of God.

The gift was not presented as something Timothy could neglect without responsibility.

He was to exercise it faithfully.

Paul continues:

2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV)

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Notice the emphasis upon power, love, and a sound mind.

Timothy was not instructed to depend continually upon the person who had laid hands upon him.

He was instructed to fulfill his ministry.

The passage does not establish that Paul could transfer spiritual gifts to anyone at will.

It establishes that Timothy possessed a gift from God and was responsible to exercise it faithfully.

13. DOES IMPARTATION MEAN A MINISTER CAN TRANSFER HIS ANOINTING?

The word *impartation* is frequently used in modern charismatic teaching.

Sometimes it simply refers to prayer for someone to receive spiritual blessing.

In that general sense, Christians may use the expression without intending anything unusual.

But other teachings attach a more specific meaning to it.

Some suggest that a minister possesses a spiritual anointing that can be transferred to another person through physical contact.

Others describe receiving the spiritual mantle of a prominent minister.

Still others suggest that a particular gift can be obtained through a conference, an impartation service, or the touch of someone considered especially anointed.

We must examine these claims carefully.

Romans 1:11 records Paul expressing a desire to impart some spiritual gift to strengthen the Roman believers.

But the passage does not explain a mechanical process for transferring anointing.

Likewise, 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 connect spiritual gifting with prophecy and the laying on of hands.

But they do not establish that ministers control the distribution of spiritual gifts.

The clearest general principle remains 1 Corinthians 12:11.

The Spirit distributes gifts according to His will.

God may work through prayer and the laying on of hands.

But the minister is never the independent source of the gift.

A person should not be encouraged to seek another minister's spiritual reputation as though it were a transferable possession.

The goal is not to become a copy of a famous preacher.

The goal is to become a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

14. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RECOGNIZING A CALLING AND CREATING ONE

Churches have a responsibility to recognize qualified ministers.

Paul instructed Timothy concerning the qualifications of church leadership.

He also warned against acting hastily in the laying on of hands.

1 Timothy 5:22 (KJV)

"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."

The immediate context concerns responsibility in church leadership and conduct.

Whatever the precise application of the laying on of hands in this verse, it clearly warns against carelessness.

Recognizing a ministerial calling is a serious matter.

- Character matters.
- Doctrine matters.
- Faithfulness matters.
- Spiritual maturity matters.

A dramatic prophecy cannot substitute for these qualifications.

A person who has not demonstrated Christian character should not be placed in leadership merely because someone announced that he would become a great apostle or prophet.

The church must examine the individual.

A calling should be consistent with Scripture.

The person's life should demonstrate appropriate qualifications.

The congregation should recognize evidence of faithful service.

Human recognition does not create the calling.

But it should not be given without discernment.

15. THE PRESBYTERY AND THE 1948 LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT

The laying on of hands by the presbytery became an important emphasis within the New Order of the Latter Rain.

Participants looked particularly to 1 Timothy 4:14 as a biblical pattern.

Accounts associated with the early North Battleford revival describe prayer, the laying on of hands, and prophetic declarations concerning individuals and their future ministries.

These practices became prominent features of the movement.

Some participants believed that spiritual gifts and callings were being identified or imparted through the ministry of recognized leaders.

The historical record should be approached carefully.

Not every participant understood these practices in precisely the same way.

Not every prophecy was necessarily presented as an unquestionable command.

And not every believer associated with the revival accepted the same teachings about apostolic or prophetic government.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on prophecy and the laying on of hands became one of the movement's defining characteristics.

This is important because the controversy was not simply about the existence of spiritual gifts.

It concerned the authority being attributed to particular practices.

When prophecy becomes the means of assigning another person's calling, determining his future, or directing his personal decisions, questions arise concerning the limits of ministerial authority.

When the laying on of hands is treated as the necessary means of receiving particular gifts, questions arise concerning the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost.

And when those practices are connected to restored apostolic government, the implications extend beyond individual spiritual experiences into the organization of the church.

These were among the concerns raised by Pentecostal leaders in 1949.

16. THE 1949 ASSEMBLIES OF GOD RESOLUTION

In September 1949, the General Council of the Assemblies of God adopted a resolution addressing the New Order of the Latter Rain.

The resolution did not reject the operation of spiritual gifts.

- It did not deny the biblical practice of laying on of hands.
- It did not teach that God could no longer guide His people.

Instead, it objected to particular teachings and practices that leaders considered excessive or unsupported by Scripture.

Among the concerns were the emphasis upon identifying, bestowing, or confirming gifts through prophecy and the laying on of hands.

The resolution also objected to the teaching that the church was built upon present-day apostles and prophets.

Another objection concerned the practice of imposing personal direction through prophetic utterances.

These concerns are directly relevant to the subject of this booklet.

The leaders recognized a difference between the biblical operation of spiritual gifts and claims that those gifts authorized particular forms of human control.

We should not assume that the resolution settled every theological question.

It represents the official judgment of a particular Pentecostal fellowship at a particular moment in history.

But it is significant historical evidence.

It demonstrates that concerns about personal prophecy, impartation, and spiritual authority were present during the original Latter Rain controversy.

They are not objections invented by modern critics.

The same basic questions remain relevant whenever a minister claims authority to direct another believer's life through prophecy.

17. PERSONAL PROPHECY AND MAJOR LIFE DECISIONS

Consider some practical examples.

- A young believer is told that God has revealed whom she must marry.
- A minister announces that someone must leave his employment and enter full-time ministry.
- A prophet tells a family that they must move to another state.
- A church member is warned that leaving a particular congregation will result in divine judgment.
- A pastor is told that he must submit to a certain apostolic network because a prophet has declared it.

How should such claims be examined?

The first question is whether the instruction can be established from Scripture.

The Bible provides moral commands and principles for Christian living.

- It teaches believers to seek wisdom.
- It teaches the importance of prayer.
- It encourages godly counsel.

But Scripture does not establish that a modern prophet possesses the right to make every personal decision for another believer.

A person may receive counsel and still remain responsible before God for his decisions.

A believer may respectfully question a prophetic claim.

- He may seek further counsel.
- He may examine the circumstances.
- He may compare the instruction with Scripture.

And he may decline to follow a personal prophetic direction that he does not believe has been established as the will of God.

That does not automatically make him rebellious.

No minister should use a claim of divine revelation to bypass another believer's responsibility to exercise biblical discernment.

18. SPIRITUAL COUNSEL IS NOT THE SAME AS SPIRITUAL CONTROL

Pastors have a responsibility to provide spiritual counsel.

That responsibility is biblical.

A pastor may warn someone about a dangerous relationship.

- He may counsel a believer concerning marriage, finances, family responsibilities, or spiritual commitments.
- He may identify conduct that violates Scripture.
- He may encourage repentance.
- He may help a person consider the consequences of a decision.

But pastoral counsel and spiritual control are not the same thing.

There is a difference between saying, "Scripture teaches that this conduct is wrong," and saying, "God has told me that you must make this personal decision because I am your spiritual authority."

The first statement can be examined against the Word of God.

The second requires careful discernment, especially when it concerns a matter Scripture has not directly commanded.

Pastoral leadership must not become personal ownership.

A minister is responsible to shepherd God's people.

He is not authorized to replace their conscience with his own preferences.

He should help believers become mature enough to understand and obey Scripture.

He should not deliberately keep them dependent upon his personal approval for every decision.

19. WHAT DOES BIBLICAL SUBMISSION REQUIRE?

The New Testament teaches respect for faithful spiritual leadership.

Hebrews 13:17 (KJV)

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

This passage should not be ignored.

Pastors bear real responsibility.

Believers should not treat pastoral counsel lightly.

Congregational order matters.

But we must understand an important distinction.

Submission does not necessarily mean agreement.

If we agree with every decision a leader makes, cooperation requires very little sacrifice.

The real test of submission often comes when a leader makes a decision differently from the way we would have made it.

Within the legitimate responsibilities of church leadership, believers should be willing to cooperate with pastoral decisions even when their personal preferences differ.

A pastor may establish service schedules, organize ministries, determine how church activities will be conducted, assign responsibilities, and make decisions concerning the administration and direction of the congregation.

Not every member will agree with every decision.

Some may have different ideas.

Others may believe another approach would be more effective.

There is nothing inherently wrong with respectfully expressing those opinions.

Wise pastors should be willing to listen to counsel and consider the perspectives of others.

But after a decision has been made, members should not undermine the pastor simply because their preferred approach was not adopted.

If every individual insists upon doing things his own way, congregational order becomes impossible.

1 Corinthians 14:40 (KJV)

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

This principle applies to the practical life of the church as well as its worship.

Leadership involves responsibility, and responsibility requires a reasonable measure of authority.

A pastor cannot be held accountable for the direction of a congregation while being denied the ability to lead it.

However, this authority has biblical boundaries.

A pastor's responsibility to lead the church does not give him unlimited authority over every aspect of a believer's private life.

There is a difference between directing the affairs of a congregation and attempting to control personal decisions that Scripture leaves to individual responsibility.

A pastor may establish expectations for those serving in church ministries.

He may require that ministry participants cooperate with the congregation's biblical standards and established procedures.

He may correct conduct that disrupts the church or contradicts sound doctrine.

But he must not confuse his personal preferences with the commandments of God.

Nor should he demand obedience to instructions that contradict Scripture.

Peter addressed the responsibility of elders.

1 Peter 5:2–3 (KJV)

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

Notice the balance.

Pastoral oversight is commanded.

Personal domination is prohibited.

These are not contradictory principles.

A pastor can exercise genuine authority without becoming domineering.

And a believer can practice genuine submission without agreeing with every pastoral decision.

Biblical submission requires humility, cooperation, and respect for legitimate leadership.

Biblical leadership requires humility, accountability, and a willingness to serve God's people.

The pastor must remember that the congregation belongs to Jesus Christ.

The congregation must recognize that Christ has entrusted pastors with real responsibilities.

Neither side should use Scripture to escape its obligations.

Pastors must not use biblical submission as an excuse for personal domination.

And believers must not use the possibility of pastoral abuse as an excuse to reject legitimate leadership whenever they disagree with a decision.

The biblical pattern is not leadership without authority, nor authority without accountability. It is faithful leadership exercised under Jesus Christ, and willing cooperation from believers who recognize the responsibility God has placed upon their pastor.

20. WHEN QUESTIONING A PROPHECY IS CALLED REBELLION

One of the most troubling developments in spiritual authority systems occurs when questions are treated as rebellion.

A believer may ask whether a prophecy agrees with Scripture.

- He may ask why a particular instruction is necessary.
- He may request time to pray.
- He may seek counsel from another faithful minister.

Instead of receiving a biblical explanation, he may be accused of resisting the Holy Ghost.

This creates a serious problem.

Scripture commands believers to examine spiritual claims.

If a minister forbids that examination, he places his own authority above an apostolic instruction.

A person should not be threatened with divine punishment merely for requesting biblical evidence.

Nor should a minister claim that every disagreement with his personal judgment is rebellion against God.

There are genuine forms of rebellion.

Scripture warns against pride, disorder, and resistance to legitimate authority.

But disagreement and rebellion are not automatically the same thing.

A mature minister should be willing to explain his teaching from Scripture.

He should recognize the difference between God's commandments and his own judgments.

And he should be humble enough to admit when he does not know God's specific will for another person's circumstances.

Spiritual authority becomes dangerous when the leader's words can no longer be examined by the Word of God.

21. THE DANGER OF FEAR-BASED PROPHECY

Another concern is the use of fear.

- A person may be told that disaster will follow if he does not obey a particular prophecy.
- A family may be warned that sickness or financial loss will result from leaving a ministry.
- A believer may be told that questioning an apostle or prophet will cause him to lose God's protection.

These statements can exert tremendous pressure.

We must distinguish between legitimate biblical warnings and attempts to control people through fear.

Scripture certainly contains warnings about disobedience.

God calls His people to repentance.

But a minister must not invent threats in order to secure personal loyalty.

A prophetic claim should never be used to excuse intimidation or coercion.

Paul reminded Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV)

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

This verse does not mean that believers will never experience fear.

Nor does it eliminate the seriousness of biblical warnings.

But it reminds us that God's work is not dependent upon manipulating people into submission through terror.

Faithful ministry should cultivate reverence for God, confidence in His Word, and spiritual maturity.

It should not cultivate unhealthy dependence upon a minister's threats.

22. THE DANGER OF FINANCIAL MANIPULATION

Spiritual authority can also be misused in matters of money.

- A minister may promise a special impartation in exchange for a financial gift.
- A prophecy may be used to pressure someone into giving beyond his ability.
- A believer may be told that a particular offering is necessary to release his spiritual destiny.

Such claims should be examined carefully.

The New Testament teaches generosity.

It teaches the importance of supporting legitimate ministry.

It also warns against greed and the misuse of religion for personal gain.

Simon's attempt to purchase spiritual power in Acts 8 provides an especially serious warning.

The gifts of God are not merchandise.

No minister can guarantee a spiritual gift in exchange for money.

No one should claim that God's blessing can be purchased through a particular financial transaction.

Giving should arise from faith, love, and obedience to biblical principles.

It should not be extracted through fabricated prophetic threats or promises.

23. CONFESSION, DELIVERANCE, AND HUMAN AUTHORITY

The 1949 controversy also involved concerns about confession and deliverance.

The New Testament teaches believers to confess their sins and seek forgiveness from God.

It also encourages appropriate confession, prayer, and mutual accountability among Christians.

James 5:16 (KJV)

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

This passage recognizes the value of confession and prayer.

But it does not establish that every believer must reveal all private sins to a particular prophet or apostle.

Nor does it grant a minister the right to demand intimate information as a condition of receiving God's forgiveness.

Jesus Christ is the Savior.

He is the One who forgives sins.

Ministers may preach repentance.

They may pray for people.

They may provide pastoral counsel.

But they must not claim prerogatives that belong to Jesus Christ alone.

Likewise, ministry to those struggling with spiritual oppression must remain subject to Scripture.

No person should be subjected to humiliation, coercion, or dangerous practices under the claim that a minister possesses special deliverance authority.

The church must exercise compassion, wisdom, and biblical responsibility.

24. HOW SPIRITUAL CONTROL CAN DEVELOP

Spiritual control does not always begin with an obviously abusive intention.

A minister may sincerely believe he is helping someone.

He may have experienced genuine answers to prayer.

He may have previously given counsel that proved beneficial.

Others may begin to depend upon his judgment.

Over time, that dependence can become unhealthy.

The minister may begin to expect unquestioning obedience.

The believer may become afraid to make decisions without permission.

A personal opinion may gradually be presented as divine revelation.

The leader may become less willing to receive correction.

Eventually, the relationship may cease to function as pastoral care and begin to function as personal control.

This possibility should concern every minister.

We must regularly examine our own attitudes.

Are we helping believers grow?

Or are we making them dependent upon us?

Are we teaching them to understand Scripture?

Or are we teaching them to accept our conclusions without examination?

Are we encouraging spiritual maturity?

Or are we treating disagreement as disloyalty?

These questions are not attacks upon pastoral ministry.

They are safeguards for its integrity.

25. THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ provides the highest example of spiritual leadership.

He taught with authority.

He called people to repentance.

He corrected error.

He warned of judgment.

He required obedience to God's will.

But He also demonstrated humility and sacrificial service.

Mark 10:43–45 (KJV)

"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Jesus rejected the pursuit of greatness through domination.

He taught His disciples to serve.

A minister should never become so impressed with his spiritual gifts that he forgets the character of Jesus Christ.

Prophecy without love is not the measure of spiritual maturity.

A prominent title is not the measure of spiritual maturity.

The ability to attract followers is not the measure of spiritual maturity.

Faithfulness to Jesus Christ is the measure.

The more responsibility a minister receives, the more carefully he should guard against pride.

26. HOW SHOULD A BELIEVER RESPOND TO A PERSONAL PROPHECY?

Suppose a believer receives a personal prophetic message.

What should he do?

He should not automatically reject it simply because it is personal.

The New Testament provides examples of prophetic ministry concerning individuals.

But neither should he automatically accept it as a binding command.

- He should examine the message in light of Scripture.
- He should consider whether it is consistent with sound doctrine.
- He should distinguish between what was actually said and the interpretation someone has attached to it.
- He should seek wise counsel when appropriate.
- He should avoid making major decisions under emotional pressure.
- He should remember that a sincere minister can still misunderstand a situation.
- He should not surrender his moral responsibility to another person.

And he should never obey an instruction that contradicts the Word of God.

A minister who delivers a prophecy should likewise exercise humility.

- He should not claim greater certainty than the circumstances justify.
- He should welcome biblical examination.
- He should avoid using spiritual language to pressure someone into obedience.

And he should recognize that the Holy Ghost remains sovereign over His own work.

27. WHAT SHOULD A HEALTHY CHURCH PRACTICE?

A healthy apostolic congregation should welcome genuine spiritual ministry.

- It should pray for the sick.
- It should seek the operation of the Holy Ghost.
- It should encourage spiritual gifts in biblical order.
- It should recognize qualified ministers.
- It should provide pastoral care and spiritual counsel.
- It should support missionary work.
- It should teach believers to seek the will of God.

But it must also establish clear biblical safeguards.

Its teaching should remain subject to Scripture.

Prophetic utterances should be examined.

Ministerial qualifications should not be replaced by dramatic experiences.

Personal decisions should not be controlled through threats.

The laying on of hands should not become a commercial transaction.

Believers should not be required to accept every personal prophecy as a command.

Pastors should remain accountable.

And no minister should claim that his spiritual gifts place him beyond correction.

The church does not need to choose between the power of the Holy Ghost and the authority of Scripture.

The same God who gives spiritual gifts has given His Word.

His church should honor both.

28. THE LATTER RAIN QUESTION FOR THE CHURCH TODAY

The controversy surrounding the New Order of the Latter Rain raises a question that remains relevant.

How do we distinguish genuine spiritual restoration from the introduction of teachings that go beyond Scripture?

A movement may emphasize prayer.

- It may encourage fasting.
- It may preach holiness.
- It may report healings.
- It may produce sincere testimonies.

These things deserve appropriate consideration.

But they do not automatically establish the truth of every doctrine associated with the movement.

The same principle applies today.

A minister may be effective in evangelism while holding an incorrect view of church government.

A congregation may experience genuine spiritual blessings while accepting an unsupported teaching about impartation.

A person may sincerely desire God's will while relying too heavily upon personal prophecy.

We must evaluate each teaching according to Scripture.

We should not confuse spiritual experiences with doctrinal infallibility.

And we should not assume that every modern ministry using prophetic language has a direct organizational connection to North Battleford.

The historical New Order of the Latter Rain and later movements associated with the New Apostolic Reformation were not identical organizations.

Nevertheless, teachings concerning restored apostles, prophetic direction, and impartation can be compared wherever they appear.

The question is not simply whether a teaching is old or new.

The question is whether it is biblical.

29. RETURNING SPIRITUAL MINISTRY TO THE APOSTOLIC PATTERN

What, then, should we preserve?

- We should preserve prayer.
- We should preserve the laying on of hands where Scripture supports it.
- We should preserve the operation of spiritual gifts.
- We should preserve the ministry of prophecy in biblical order.
- We should preserve pastoral leadership.
- We should preserve spiritual counsel.
- We should preserve accountability.

And we should preserve the responsibility of every believer to examine the Word of God.

What should we reject?

- We should reject claims that spiritual gifts can be purchased.
- We should reject the use of prophecy to impose unbiblical personal requirements.
- We should reject the idea that ministers possess independent control over the Holy Ghost.
- We should reject spiritual threats used to secure personal loyalty.
- We should reject the elevation of human authority above Scripture.

And we should reject any teaching that makes believers dependent upon a religious personality instead of directing them toward Jesus Christ.

The apostolic church did not need a new foundation.

It needed faithfulness to the foundation already laid.

The church today needs the same thing.

Genuine spiritual ministry should bring believers closer to Jesus Christ, establish them more firmly in His Word, and help them grow in spiritual maturity.

It should never become a substitute for the authority of Christ Himself.

CONCLUSION — THE HOLY GHOST GUIDES, BUT HUMAN AUTHORITY HAS LIMITS

Personal prophecy, the laying on of hands, and spiritual gifts are subjects that deserve careful biblical examination.

The New Testament does not teach us to despise spiritual gifts.

It does not instruct us to reject every prophetic utterance.

It does not forbid ministers from praying for believers and laying hands upon them.

And it does not deny that the Holy Ghost can provide direction for particular circumstances.

But neither does Scripture establish that a prophet possesses unlimited authority over another person's decisions.

It does not teach that spiritual gifts can be manufactured by human ministers.

It does not authorize a system in which personal prophecy replaces biblical discernment.

And it does not allow a minister to demand unquestioning obedience merely because he claims to speak for God.

Agabus accurately warned Paul of coming suffering.

But the prophecy did not establish Agabus as Paul's governing authority.

The Holy Ghost directed the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul.

But the account did not establish a permanent hierarchy of prophetic control.

Timothy received a gift associated with prophecy and the laying on of hands.

But Scripture does not teach that the ministers involved possessed independent control over spiritual gifts.

The apostles laid hands upon believers who received the Holy Ghost.

But Simon was rebuked when he attempted to acquire spiritual power as a possession.

These passages must be considered together.

The 1949 Assemblies of God resolution demonstrates that concerns about impartation, personal prophetic direction, and ministerial authority were central to the original Latter Rain controversy.

Those concerns remain relevant wherever similar teachings appear.

We should welcome genuine spiritual ministry.

We should respect faithful pastors.

We should seek the operation of the Holy Ghost.

But we must never abandon the authority of Scripture.

The purpose of spiritual ministry is to strengthen believers in Jesus Christ, not to place their lives under the unrestricted control of another human being.

The church belongs to Jesus Christ.

He is its head.

His Word is its authority.

His Spirit is its source of power.

And every minister must remain His servant.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the gift of the Holy Ghost and for the spiritual gifts You have given to Your church.

We thank You that You still hear prayer, strengthen believers, and provide wisdom for those who seek Your will.

Help us to remain open to Your genuine work without abandoning the discernment taught in Your Word.

Protect us from deception.

Protect us from pride.

Protect us from the misuse of spiritual authority.

Give pastors wisdom to shepherd Your people faithfully.

Give ministers humility to recognize the limits of their responsibility.

Help those who exercise spiritual gifts to do so in love, truth, and biblical order.

Teach us never to use Your name to control another person's life.

Help us distinguish between spiritual counsel and personal manipulation.

Give believers courage to examine every teaching according to Scripture.

Help those who have experienced spiritual mistreatment to find healing, wisdom, and renewed confidence in Your faithfulness.

May our congregations be places where truth is preached, love is demonstrated, spiritual gifts are exercised properly, and every believer is encouraged to grow.

Let us never become more impressed with a minister than with the Savior he is called to serve.

Keep us faithful to the apostles' doctrine.

Keep us grounded in Your Word.

And help us to serve You with humility until Your coming.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

HISTORICAL SOURCES AND FURTHER STUDY

1. **The Holy Bible, King James Version.** Acts 8:14–24; Acts 13:1–3; Acts 20:22–24; Acts 21:4–14; 1 Corinthians 12–14; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22. The primary authority for evaluating prophecy, spiritual gifts, and the laying on of hands.
2. **The General Council of the Assemblies of God.** *Minutes of the Twenty-Third General Council*, Seattle, Washington, September 1949. Resolution No. 7, *The New Order of the Latter Rain*. Primary historical documentation of objections to particular teachings concerning impartation, present-day apostolic foundations, and personal prophetic direction.
3. **Assemblies of God News / Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.** "This Week in AG History — Oct. 15, 1949," published October 2025. A denominational historical discussion of the 1949 resolution and its concerns.
4. **Richard M. Riss.** *Latter Rain: The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Evangelical Awakening*. Historical examination of the movement and its wider influence.
5. **The Sharon Star.** Issues published during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Contemporary accounts of the North Battleford revival, prophecy, the laying on of hands, and restorationist teaching.
6. **Ernest Hawtin.** "How This Revival Began," *The Sharon Star*, August 1, 1949. A participant's account of the beginnings of the 1948 revival.
7. **C. Peter Wagner.** *Apostles Today*. A source for examining later interpretations of contemporary apostolic authority and restored ministry.
8. **C. Peter Wagner, editor.** *The New Apostolic Churches*. A source for examining contemporary apostolic networks and their understanding of church government.
9. **Daniel C. Arichea and Howard A. Hatton.** *A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to Timothy*. United Bible Societies, 1995. Translation and exegetical discussion relevant to 1 Timothy 4:14.

10. **Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.** Historical archives and Pentecostal publications relating to the New Order of the Latter Rain and twentieth-century doctrinal controversies.

Historical clarification: The New Order of the Latter Rain of 1948 and later movements associated with the New Apostolic Reformation were not identical organizations. Similarities in teachings concerning prophecy, impartation, or apostolic authority do not automatically establish direct organizational continuity. Likewise, not every minister who practices the laying on of hands or believes in personal prophecy advocates spiritual control.

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Source and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; Romans 12:3–8; Ephesians 4:7–16.

Prophecy and Its Proper Operation: 1 Corinthians 14:1–40; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1–6.

Agabus and Paul's Journey: Acts 11:27–30; Acts 20:22–24; Acts 21:4–14.

The Holy Ghost Directing Ministry: Acts 13:1–4; Acts 16:6–10.

The Laying on of Hands: Acts 6:1–7; Acts 8:14–24; Acts 13:1–3; Acts 19:1–6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6.

The Reception of the Holy Ghost: Acts 2:1–4, 38–39; Acts 8:14–17; Acts 10:44–48; Acts 19:1–6.

Ministerial Qualifications and Accountability: Acts 20:17–32; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

Biblical Submission and Servant Leadership: Mark 10:42–45; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

Warnings Against False Teaching and Spiritual Deception: Matthew 7:15–23; Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24; 2 Corinthians 11:3–15; 2 Peter 2:1–3; Jude 3–4.