

First Thessalonians 5:20

5:20 Paul commands them to receive ministerial preaching and teaching with ready minds.

1. **Prophecy.** To speak by (or as by) divine inspiration, or in the name of a deity; to speak as a prophet. *spec.* To utter predictions, to foretell future events (by inspiration, or generally). In the Apostolic churches, To interpret or expound the Scriptures, to utter divine mysteries and edifying communications (as moved by the Holy Spirit); hence in the 16th and 17th centuries, applied by the Puritans to the interpretation and expounding of Scripture and the preaching of the Gospel.
2. **Prophecy.** The action, function, or faculty of a prophet; divinely inspired utterance or discourse; *spec.* in Christian theology, utterance flowing from the revelation and impulse of the Holy Spirit.
3. Prophets under both testaments were men God inspired with messages for His people, only a small part of which were predictions of future events, which gift has ceased.
 - a. Prophesying is not only the foretelling of future events, but it is also preaching God's will and the Scriptures by extraordinary revelation from God.
 - b. Old Testament prophets certainly foretold future events, but they also preached and taught God's law (Daniel 9:10; II Kings 17:13; Ezra 9:10-12).
 - c. Prophesying included edification, exhortation, and comfort; and it was superior to tongues, for it taught the understanding (I Cor 14:1-5,18-19,24-25,29-33).
 - d. Judas and Silas were prophets who exhorted and comforted saints (Acts 15:32).
 - e. The Scriptures are called "prophecy" and "the word of prophecy," which is reference to their supernatural origin rather than their forecasts (II Pet 1:19-21).
 - f. Next to apostles, prophets had a similar role to pastors and teachers, in that they taught saints and gave them more perfect knowledge of the truth (Eph 4:11-14).
 - g. The partial gift of prophecy ended when perfect Scripture came (I Cor 13:8-10), which is taught naturally by a teaching aptitude by Spirit-filled men who study.
4. We may understand this verse with ease, and we should heed its warning with care.
 - a. Prophesying is God's men preaching God's word supernaturally or naturally, which work has been transferred from prophet to the bishop, or pastor/teacher.
 - b. **Despise.** To look down upon; to view with contempt; to think scornfully or slightly of.
 - c. The Bible uses "despise" clearly enough (I Samuel 2:30; Proverbs 23:22; Malachi 1:6; Luke 16:13; I Corinthians 11:22; Titus 2:15; Jude 1:8).
 - d. The negative is put for the positive, as in verses 17 and 19. It is not enough to simply avoid despising preaching, but we are to rather love and esteem it.
 - e. The text (5:20) can be interpreted and condensed plainly – love Bible preaching.
 - f. God has chosen preaching to communicate His message to men (I Cor 1:19-21), so treating it lightly is to despise Him and His words for our profit and salvation.
5. It is a horrible but common evil when men despise the men and message from God.
 - a. Men rejected Noah's Spirit-led preaching for many years, so God drowned them all for it with a worldwide flood of water (Genesis 6:3; I Pet 3:18-20; II Pet 2:5).
 - b. Israel many times despised His words (Numbers 14:21-24; II Chron 36:11-21; Neh 9:26,30; Ps 78:55-64; Amos 2:10-16; Zec 7:11-14; Mat 23:29-38; Ac 7:52).
 - c. It is a travesty when men will listen with intentions to disobey, but God will have the last laugh when the announced judgments surely come (Eze 33:30-33).
 - d. Prayers of those turning away from hearing the law are abominable (Prov 28:9).

- e. Paul had little patience for those who resisted his preaching (I Cor 14:36-38).
 - f. Contentions against the gospel are rejected in Christ's churches (I Cor 11:16).
 - g. So it is taught authoritatively without allowing foolish debate (Tit 2:15; 3:9-11).
 - h. What would a great King do to those who abuse His ambassadors (Matt 22:1-7)?
 - i. Despising the men is hilarious – for the words are not theirs but God's – and dangerous – for God protects and revenges harm against prophets (Ps 105:15).
 - j. Even hard, negative, critical, and condemning preaching is from God (Hos 6:5), for faithful ministers are at war with your very thoughts (II Corinthians 10:3-6).
 - k. The wicked can hear neither prophets nor those from the dead (Luke 16:29-31).
6. Paul warned of perilous times when men would resist sound doctrine (II Tim 4:3-4).
- a. He warned against an effeminate and carnal Christianity (3:1-4), preferring pleasure over God (3:4), with a form of godliness rejecting God's authority (3:5), which would prey on women with lots of false "learning" (3:6-7).
 - b. This new brand of Christianity would despise sound doctrine and substitute in its place entertainment and fables to satisfy their carnal itching ears (II Tim 4:1-4).
 - c. Strong Bible preaching is now considered an outdated and despicable religious practice, as market demand and religious compromise emphasize entertainment.
 - d. See the sermon outline for "Contemporary Christianity" to review all the substitutes used today to replace Bible preaching and sound doctrine.
 - e. The Jewish scribes had already in Jesus' day adopted an effeminate, weak, and powerless form of preaching, which He exposed for all to see (Matt 7:28-29).
 - f. Judah tried this same thing (Isaiah 30:10; Jer 5:31; 23:28-29; Ezekiel 22:23-31).
 - g. Paul exalted prophets and prophesyings far above tongues, but Charismatics flagrantly reverse the Scriptural emphasis by despising preaching without even having God's gift of tongues, but only devilish babbling (I Cor 12:28; 14:18-19).
7. Hearing the preaching of God's word is a great blessing we should cherish and desire.
- a. Israel gloriously celebrated hearing and understanding Scripture (Neh 8:1-18), which passage should be reviewed thoroughly for all the details of the event.
 - b. For there had been times when the Word of God was very precious (I Sam 3:1).
 - c. Solomon, who knew the gospel little, told us to buy it and sell it not (Pr 23:23).
 - d. We should be thankful for the privilege of hearing things unknown (Matt 13:17).
 - e. The affect it should have in our life is to gladly trade all for it (Matt 13:44-46).
 - f. The noble Bereans gave the classic example of not despising prophesyings, for they received the preached word with a ready mind (Acts 17:11).
 - g. Cornelius had the desirous spirit for instruction we all should have (Acts 10:33).
 - h. Men who preach the gospel are described as having beautiful feet (Rom 10:15).
 - i. It can be taken away by God's judgment to leave us starving (Amos 8:11-12), and/or the LORD can close up the hearts of ministers from the truth (Is 29:10).
 - j. We should be glad to go to God's house and hear preaching (Psalm 122:1).
8. For further practical instruction on how to receive preaching, see the sermon outline entitled "Noble Hearers."