

## **At the Word of a Prophet**

‘A man’s plane crashed in the heart of the darkest jungle of [an unexplored island]. He pried himself from the wreckage and began to work his way through the dense jungle. As he entered a clearing, he found himself face-to-face with what looked like a hunting party of cannibals. His response was immediate: “I’m a dead man now!” And then he heard a voice saying, “You’re not a dead man. There is a spear at your feet. Pick it up and thrust it through the heart of the chief”. The man did as he was told. He looked down at the ground, and indeed, there was a spear. He picked it up and thrust it through the heart of the chief. The voice spoke to him once more: “*Now you’re a dead man!*”

That man probably wished he hadn’t listened to that voice. To whom could that voice belong! Could it have been another marooned man hiding from the cannibals, and now, with the tribe properly distracted with killing and consuming that new victim, he could now make his escape? If so, it was a self-serving voice indeed. But who needs a disembodied voice giving us guidance, anyway? Well, just about everybody. Who of you never turns on the news, the internet, social media, etc., to find out what’s going on in the world? Why do you? Most things don’t seem to affect us directly right immediately, do they? Oh, but they actually do!

But why do we care? Maybe some don't. Maybe some of us are so self-centered that we couldn't care less what happens to other people, especially if they're thousands of miles away. So what if some other people are being imprisoned, tortured, even killed? Doesn't affect me, does it? What about our brothers and sisters in the faith? They're suffering and dying for their faith. On average about 30 per day pay the ultimate price for honoring the name of our Lord Jesus. Do we care? Should we? What about those of us who are incarcerated and tormented, in solitary confinement, with inadequate, moldy food, just because they peacefully followed in the footsteps of other into the Capitol in Washington, D.C. on January 6, 2021? Still awaiting trial, these fellow American citizens, and many fellow Christians, are left by our corrupt, evil Department of Justice to rot in jail until they either recant or die. Do we care? Should we?

Of course we should care! If we don't care, we are no Christians. For our Lord Christ didn't die just for us. He died for them, too. And He has specifically ordered us to care for not only each other, but even to love our enemies. And even if we personally don't have any enemies, we are to so love one another that the outside world sits up and takes notice, that we are different from the world. We are people who really love one another, with a love totally unnatural and far more perfect than any love the world can offer. As John 13:35 says: "By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another".

In Acts 11 we read today how the Church had begun to attract people who were not Jews. And lo and behold, God welcomed these Gentile pagan barbarians as much as He did the Jews. So much so that the other churches were hearing about these unclean, uncouth barbarians coming in to the “Christian” synagogues! This just would not do. And so arises the very first church fight! As famous and well-respected as Peter was, he was roundly criticized for abrogating Jewish purity regulations by entering the homes of these smelly, heathen, immoral Gentiles. And not only that, he even ate with them! Unbelievable!! What had possessed Peter to do such a thing? Well, it turns out it was none other than Holy Spirit Himself. And if so, then who could argue with Holy Spirit? God always has the last and final word!

Turns out that Peter was not only listening to a voice, he was listening to the most authoritative Voice there is—Holy Spirit. In these early days of the Church, our brothers and sisters especially needed God’s guidance, for the Church was growing by leaps and bounds, and only God knew how to proceed. Holy Spirit was speaking to the apostles, and as He baptized more and more believers, usually with the accompanying sign of them speaking and praying in tongues, it was crystal clear that a new day had dawned for God’s people on earth, those who’d met the Risen Lord Jesus and invited His Holy Spirit to live with them! Prior to the conception and birth of John and Baptist, and just months later the Infant Christ Jesus, there had been a “famine” of the Word

of God. For four hundred years, there'd been no word from God. There were no new prophets. It had seemed as if God had forever turned His back on His people. But it wasn't that so much, that among His people, nobody wanted to hear from Him! And if nobody wants to hear you, would you waste your breathe to speak?

But now, a whole new age was about to dawn. And suddenly God began speaking again. Angels appeared, speaking to Zechariah and Mary and Joseph, and to Simeon and Anna, and far and away more importantly, through Christ Jesus Himself. And now that Lord Jesus had ascended back into Heaven, and He had personally commissioned Holy Spirit to actually dwell in all the new disciples, the Word of God was literally exploding on the earth. Prophets were back. Many of them. One specifically is mentioned by name, twice, Agabus. And people listened to the words he was given by Holy Spirit to speak. We just read in Acts 11:28 that he prophesied "that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world". Reporter Luke parenthetically adds here that this famine came during the reign of the Emperor Claudius. So when the believers heard this prophecy from God, what did they do? They took heed of it. They prepared. Verse 29 says, "the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could". So you see, having been warned that a time of great need was coming upon the Roman world, these believers in Antioch prepared, and sent relief to their fellow believers in Christ living in

Judea where they would have far more difficulties in dealing with the famine. And so, just as loving Holy Spirit intended, part of the Body of Christ in Antioch assisted another part of the Body of Christ in Judea, and so all were taken care of during their time of need. They displayed Christian love for one another, and unity.

And so we too, motivated by love of Christ Who first loved us, we love our fellow believers even though we'll never meet in person during this earthly life, but will in eternity. We help by giving food and funds, but most importantly, by joining with them in prayer in their time of need. Our Body of Christ is in great need in many places of the world, even in America. But while few here are in danger of losing their lives, that is certainly not the case in Ukraine. Which is why we must not let up our prayers for them until both they and our Russian brethren are delivered from evil.

Who among us even six months ago would have predicted that there would now be a major war raging in Eastern Europe? None of us. But God knew. Holy Spirit informed a few of the modern prophets. And He had already placed many of His people in places in Ukraine and in surrounding nations in major ministries that are only now seeing the real purposes which God had put them there so many years ago! Truly, when we look at the news each day, we don't have a clue as to what's going to happen next. So we absolutely need as much guidance from God as possible. We can ill afford to postulate and speculate what we think is going to happen, all in efforts mainly to protect ourselves and our own

wellbeing. We're not put on this earth to *worry* about protecting our wellbeing and cushy lifestyles. We're here to both enjoy living with God, serving Him as He guides us to serve each other and the world He so desperately loves!

We need His words of guidance and prophecy to live effectively, proactively and joyfully. He has once again raised up many prophets among us to proclaim His word for the issues and situations we find threatening us and the whole Body of Christ. We need to pay attention to them. Not least of which for our own good! We need to discern who the real prophets are, and who are the counterfeits, the "fake news" prophets the devil has sprinkled all around to confuse and distract us from what really needs our attention. It's so distressing to hear some Christians spout forth what's really nonsense about so many issues of our current day. To hear how judgemental many brethren have become, with almost knee-jerk reactions to leftist voices in our society that some almost become a parody and caricature of "clueless, hateful Christians". Sadly there are so many of them that it gives ammunition to those who want to silence all Christian voices.

So listen to Holy Spirit yourself. Pray, read the Bible, follow the schedule, and pray again. And then seek out the words of the trusted prophets of today for God's more specific directions for such times as these end times as we're living in now. Seek trusted prophets like Agabus was back then. We're strongest when we're all in unity. So always level with one another in His love.

