



Spirit of God E12: The Spirit of Prophecy in the New Testament

Official Transcript

Speakers

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Credits read by audience members Lisa, Haley, and Esther, and by BibleProject team member Joel

[Recap and Setup for New Testament Prophecy (0:00-9:25)]

[BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. We're in a series on the Spirit of God, and we're a few episodes into how the Spirit works within the community of Jesus, that is, the church. Last week, we talked about the gifts of the Spirit that empower the followers of Jesus to serve one another and the world. In this episode, we're going to zoom in on one of those gifts, the gift of prophecy.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] Prophecy was a really significant manifestation of the Spirit in those early communities and continued on for centuries to follow.

Jon: Now in the Greco-Roman world of the first century, humans speaking on behalf of God was very common. But the expectation was that these prophets could only speak for God because they were taken over, out of their minds. They were simply a channel for a god to speak.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] So for the god to truly speak and for it to be authentic, the human agent needs to kind of, like, go offline.

Jon: This was not the model of prophecy promoted in the Hebrew Bible, and it's also not what the followers of Jesus experienced when they spoke God's words to each other. Instead, what we find is that to speak God's words to each other is to remain fully yourself. Prophecy is the uniting of the human and the divine.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] The New Testament is balancing the model of prophecy that's full of joy because it's full of the life presence of God, but then also it's my mind, and I'm speaking coherently. That balance that we see in Acts is also what we see in Paul.

Jon: In First Corinthians, Paul addresses an early church community that was getting a bit chaotic in their gatherings as they experienced the power of the Spirit. And here's how Paul responds.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] He doesn't tell them to stop all this, but he says, "Listen, first of all, I want love to be the baseline of everything you do and everything you say." And what he would really want people to grow in is what he calls prophecy.

Jon: So: Practice prophecy. But what does this look like?

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] He talks about how prophecy is for encouragement, for challenging, for instructing, and for building people up in love and faith.

Jon: Speaking God's words to each other helps us become one in spirit, united in love.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] When it connects with people in very specific, poignant ways, it's really powerful, because it feels like, "*Whoa, God sees me, and he's talking to me through the fellow member of my church.*" That's the kind of stuff Paul has in mind here.

Jon: Today, Tim Mackie and I talk about prophecy in the New Testament. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical break: BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS (2:44-2:48)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hi, Jon Collins. Hello.

Jon: Hi. Okay. We're doing this.

Tim: Yeah, we are.

Jon: We've been talking about the Spirit of God and the story of the Bible together. And it began with: We all have life because of God's Spirit in us. And so we're sustained by God. We can't exist without God. So we have God's Spirit in us. So God's breath in us. That's a beautiful concept.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But then there's this complementary idea, which is then: I also have my own spirit.

[BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS, fades out]

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] I have my own thoughts and intentions and my own life-energy. And it is a gift from God, but it's on loan to me, and it's mine in some way. And it's separate from God in some way.

Tim: Yeah, maybe—I've come to appreciate the word "distinct."

Jon: Distinct.

Tim: Because to say that it's distinct doesn't mean that it's fully separated.

Jon: Ah, interesting.

Tim: It can't ever be fully separated—

Jon: That's right.

Tim: —because it's sustained by and a gift of the Spirit.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: But it's given a dependent independence. [laughs]

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: So as a human—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] —I exist within God's breath. I am sustained by God's breath. I also have my own spirit. They are distinct, but they're not separate.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So if you're going to stay alive, then you're still connected to God's Spirit in some way.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. God is actually sustaining you in your rebellion against God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] He's that generous. Mhm. So one way to think about that is: Spirit 1.0 is just what keeps us alive, but that's the spirit we got to give back one day when our bodies return to the dust. But God's purpose is to restore the life of Eden to, like, everyone and everything. That's the arc of the biblical story. And so this Spirit 2.0, the super boost, is, as it were, taking the spirit that actually has the capability because it's God's Spirit to sustain a creature forever, and to say: What if we just pour a little extra of that infinite-life Spirit into a person for a time and a place so that their life or words or actions can become a bridge to reconnect Heaven and Earth in a moment?

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: We've been calling that Spirit 2.0.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yeah. It can result in some pretty remarkable things that could look mundane but really special, like just being a really good administrator, but could also look pretty miraculous, like super strength or just super wisdom.

Tim: Yeah. So it kind of makes sense why, as we've been tracing, one of the most common synonyms for the spirit in biblical language is "power."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And power or energy, capacity, can be put to different purposes. Some of them great, aligning with God's will, and many of them not, aligning with distorted human will. But God gives the Spirit all the same.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then the story starts creating a crisis of, like: Wow, what if we had a human whose will was so one with God's will that the Spirit capacity given to them just only produced goodness and Eden?

Jon: Okay. So then we get to the New Testament, and we're introduced to Jesus as the human who's completely united with God's Spirit.

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Jesus is depicted as somebody who is already in eternal union with the will of God as the Son of God with the Father. And then the Spirit shapes a body in the womb of Mary for the Son of God to become that human.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. So we talked about how, fundamentally, in the New Testament, the Spirit of God is connected to Jesus in a [pause] umbilical way. Like— [laughs]

Jon: [laughs] Umbilical way?

Tim: Yeah, the pun intended, because we talked so much about—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: —Jesus's conception in the womb of Mary as being the work of the Spirit in the Gospel of Luke. And then the Spirit is so closely connected to the mission of Jesus and then pouring out that divine life and Spirit onto his followers that the Spirit has a Jesus-shaped identity as you go into the rest of the New Testament.

Jon: Hmm. The Spirit has a Jesus-shaped identity.

Tim: Yeah, meaning the role of the Spirit isn't, like, independent of Jesus in the New Testament.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Jesus and the Spirit are working in tandem with each other. And you know you are in touch with the Spirit of God if it's a Jesus Spirit.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so we talked about that, like in Paul's letters. For him, baseline, foundation 101 for identifying the work of the Spirit is the confession that Jesus is Lord, that all contact with the Spirit of God will be connected to that confession.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And Jesus pours out that Spirit upon his followers at Pentecost, and amazing stuff started going down. Eden popping out everywhere. But since there's so many humans, that work is going to look diverse and different. And that's what we explored in the last episode, the gifts of the Spirit.

Jon: Yeah. Mhm.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's great.

Tim: Here we are. What I want to do in this episode is actually stay on the gifts of the Spirit but just highlight one or two particular gifts that are really the focus in the book of Acts and in the letters of Paul, specifically—a couple letters of Paul. [chuckles] And these have been at the center of a lot of—hmm—unity and controversy throughout church history.

[“Faithful” by Lofi Sunday feat. Marc Vanparla fades in]

Tim: So I thought we would just take an episode to talk about the role of the Spirit in helping people speak Eden-like words to each other—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —life-giving, divine words to each other. We call this prophecy. Or actually, Paul—
[laughs]

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —and Luke in the New Testament call it prophecy.

Jon: Okay, let's look at that.

Tim: So let's think about prophecy and the Spirit.

[Musical break: “Faithful” by Lofi Sunday feat. Marc Vanparla (8:53-9:25)]

[Prophecy at Pentecost and in Greco-Roman World (9:25-30:32)]

Tim: So if you survey the book of Acts and the letters of Paul, one thing that you start to see is that the culture and the environment of these early Jesus communities—they were not perfect. Full of problems because they're full of people. But on their good days —

["Faithful" by Lofi Sunday feat. Marc Vanparla fades out]

Tim: —there was something so beautiful to these early Jesus communities filled up with the Spirit. So I'm just going to use the language of surveying a bunch of passages here and just put the picture together. So Acts chapter 2: These are communities where people were devoting themselves to learning the Apostles' teaching, to just hanging out together, *koinonia*—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] —like, hanging out together and sharing. Eating meals together. People felt a sense of wonder when they got together. In fact, signs and wonders [laughs] were taking place. People were sharing all their stuff. People were selling, like, you know, big-ticket possessions to make sure everybody had enough food, clothing, and shelter. They were praising God and had favor with their neighbors. They —Acts chapter 4—they were unified. People would look at them and be like, "*Whoa, they're, like, one heart and soul*" —in Acts chapter 4. "Abundant grace was on all of them." This is from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians—he's describing what it was like when he first came there and planted the church there. He said, "Our Good News came to you in power with the Holy Spirit with full conviction. The joy of the Holy Spirit filled these communities." And at the end of the letter, he says, "Man, you guys keep on rejoicing always. Just never stop praying." [laughs]

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: "Don't"—ooh—"Don't extinguish the *pneuma*." "Don't"—the Spirit.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Like, the Spirit's like a fire just raging in your midst.

Jon: Mmm. Keep it raging. Yeah.

Tim: "Don't put it out. Let it burn." So "Don't extinguish the Spirit and don't despise utterances of the prophets."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So notice, he highlights—of—out of all the things—like: “Don’t stop sharing with each other. Don’t stop singing. Don’t stop praying.” And: “Don’t stop letting people speak God’s words to each other.”

Jon: Prophecy.

Tim: Prophecy, yes. So prophecy was a really significant manifestation of the Spirit in those early communities and continued on centuries to follow.

Jon: Hmm. And what would that have looked like if I was hanging out next to one of these people?

Tim: Yeah, well, we have the writing prophets—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —of the Hebrew Bible to know. And what we talked about there and discovered there—what, like, a Micah of Jerusalem, was it didn’t look like him losing consciousness —

Jon: Right.

Tim: —and falling on the ground and his eyes rolling back and uttering gibberish. Or—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He was in full possession of his faculties. [laughs]

Jon: Writing some really beautiful poetry.

Tim: Beautiful poetry. And sometimes, the poetry is written in the first-person speech of God. Other times, it’s written in Micah’s own speech about Israel from God’s perspective, as it were. And Micah’s calling was to be a—what we would call, like, a social critic—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —social commentator. [laughs]

Jon: Right. Very critical.

Tim: Political commentator.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. And that’s the role—that’s what prophecy looked like, you know, for him.

Jon: That’s my general sense of prophecy is that it’s critique.

Tim: Yeah. And warning.

Jon: And warning. Hmm.

Tim: Yeah. Or challenge.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Warning, like, *“Hey, here’s where these decisions are going.”*

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: *“Our community’s headed this direction.”*

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then sometimes, just seeing something down the line of a disaster that’s coming. But other times, prophets spoke words of comfort. Isaiah 40 opens up with words of comfort and forgiveness and hope to people who were in the Babylonian exile.

Jon: Hmm. When you say the prophets are uttering wisdom—

Tim: Yeah, I mean, so much of what the Hebrew prophets are doing is trying to help Israelites in their day see the events of their time and place in a bigger story within the larger covenant story of God and Israel and then the larger covenant story of God and all creation and the nations. And what else is that except offering wisdom? Like: *“Here’s what’s going on. Here’s the problem, and here’s a set of solutions.”*

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: That’s wisdom, I think—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —knowing the difference between good and bad. So what’s interesting—when we move into the New Testament, in the book of Acts, people speaking the words of God to each other—it’s a big theme. It starts with Pentecost, with people speaking in all of these other languages these people didn’t know.

Jon: Mhm. But they’re real languages.

Tim: They’re real languages. And specifically, this is Acts 2, verse 4: “They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak with other languages as the Spirit was giving them the words.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So that’s pretty remarkable.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So what are we supposed to be imagining?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Like, is it that I'm talking to you, and I'm talking in English in my mind, but, like, what you're hearing is Spanish?

Jon: Right.

Tim: That seems to be, like, the—

Jon: Mmm. What's happening.

Tim: The scene here. Because what the people hearing them say—they were, first of all, amazed and astonished. “Aren't these all Galileans, these people talking right now?” Meaning, they speak Galilean Aramaic. Like, “*That's what I should be hearing.*” “How is it that each of us hear in our own”—and it's the Greek word—“*dialektos*?”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Dialect. “All these different dialects in which we're born? We hear them”—and then you get a list of all the cultures and languages. “We hear them in our own language speaking of the mighty acts, the mighty deeds of God.” And so people start making fun of them, going, “They're full of sweet wine.”

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: But usually, when people are full of sweet wine— [chuckles]

Jon: [chuckles] Is that the, like, literal translation, “sweet wine”?

Tim: Yeah. That—

Jon: Well you've used it before, and I just—I never can get that—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —sketch out of my mind.

Tim: Oh, it's—uh—

Jon: Sweet berry wine.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: [jokingly] Sweet berry wine.

[Tim laughs]

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [pause] Ohhh. This is fantastic. It's the word "glucose."

Jon: Oh, really? [laughs]

Tim: The Greek word is *gleukos*. [laughs]

Jon: *Gleukos*.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: [chuckles] And it means what? Sugary?

Tim: Uh, sweet wine.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah, sweet wine. Very drinkable.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: So the balance beam Luke is walking is he wants to say: These people were filled up with something that was more than just themselves, and it wasn't just wine. They were filled with the agency and the power of another agent, like, a divine agent.

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: So in that sense, it's God, not them.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But in another sense, he's also really highlighting that what they are speaking is fully comprehensible because—he says, "They're speaking in other languages, but it's the Spirit giving them utterance. They're speaking the mighty deeds of God." So they're actually speaking coherently.

Jon: Yeah. Mhm.

Tim: And—

Jon: They're telling the stories.

Tim: They're telling a story. "The mighty deeds of God" is a phrase that comes from—

Jon: Yeah. From Exodus?

Tim: From Exodus, from a handful of Psalms, but it's a way of saying, "*I'm going to tell you the story of what Yahweh has done in the world through his people.*" And you tell

the story of the Exodus, of the wilderness wanderings, and of going into the land. And now you add the life, death, [chuckles] and resurrection of Jesus.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So by talking about “full of wine,” there’s fire hovering over their heads, [laughs] but they’re also speaking coherently and comprehensively, Luke’s walking a balance beam. And I want to—there’s some cool stuff I learned that helped me appreciate the balance beam that Luke is walking here. Because in the first-century Greek and Roman world, people becoming the mediums of a divine voice—that was, like, a—a thing. It wasn’t just unique to Israel or Jewish people. This was a thing that was well known in the ancient world. And the most famous, you would say, like, celebrity-status institution in ancient Greece and then on into the first century of humans becoming the vehicle of an oracle of a divine word was a famous temple and shrine dedicated to the deity Apollo in the Greek city of Delphi, which is right in central Greece.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And it’s a remarkable place. Like, the ruins are still there, really well preserved. It’s super cool. It’s in this mountain valley. You could spend a whole day there.

Jon: Have you been there?

Tim: I have been. Yeah, I spent a whole afternoon—

Jon: Nice.

Tim: —with—yeah, [chuckles] it was Jessica and I. It was super cool. So there’s a Roman historian named Pliny the Elder who talks about: There’s this strange geographical, like, feature there. There was a big crack in the Earth that emitted vapors. And people would go and [chuckles] inhale these vapors— [chuckles]

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: —and experience a—

Jon: They’d get a little high.

Tim: Powerful experience, yeah. [laughs]

Jon: What kind of vapors are coming out of this?

Tim: Uh, you know—it’s not happening anymore.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: But there’s accounts of it—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: —of these cracks and the vapors. And so people speculate. I think—I have in my notes here somebody did a study and hypothesized it was maybe ethylene gas. But I—I don't know what that means.

Jon: Okay.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So Pliny the Elder gives an account of how a whole shrine developed there, a temple to the god Apollo, and there was a priesthood, but it was women. There were priestesses.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And Apollo—oh, Apollo was the dragon slayer of Greek mythology.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: So we've done a whole series on dragon-slaying mythology in ancient—

Jon: So he's the sky god?

Tim: And Apollo's that guy in the Greek pantheon.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the serpent that he slays is named the Python, from which we get "python." And so the temple was there, and this was a priesthood of priestesses who served Apollo. So they were known as the *puthonoj*, the pythons. [laughs]

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: And they would inhale the gas, Pliny says, and then you could pay them—you could basically pay them to go inhale the gas—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: —and then they would come talk to you—

Jon: [chuckles] Okay.

Tim: —and tell you what Apollo has to say.

Jon: Oh, okay.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It was like a thing. And it became so influential that, like, politicians would come—

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: —and celebrities and, you know, official—

Jon: This is the place—

Tim: This is the place.

Jon: —to find out what the gods want.

Tim: Yes. So we know this was popular because there's so many accounts strewn across Greek and Roman literature—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —of people going to visit the priestesses at Delphi and hearing the oracles.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And so there's lots of descriptions of what people witnessed when these priestesses— [laughs]

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Would come out—

Tim: [laughs] —would— [laughs] yes.

Jon: —just high on the Earth—

Tim: [laughs] Yes. I just—I just want to read you some of these.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: They're really fascinating.

Jon: Oh, interesting.

Tim: So there's a Roman historian named Strabo who calls the pythia—they would sit on these tripod seats after having inhaled the gas from the crack. And Strabo called them “filled up with a enthusiastic spirit,” a “*pneuma enthousiastikon*.”

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: So our word Greek “enthusiasm”—

Jon: Yeah, comes from that.

Tim: Yeah, comes from that.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yep. There's a guy named Iamblichus who called it "a spirit of fire," a fiery *pneuma* —mhm—that arises up out of the ground to surround the priestess.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So surrounded with fire. That's interesting. And the language of filling up, being filled up with this spirit comes from a Roman historian, Dio Chrysostom. But the most extensive account comes from a guy named Plutarch, and this is super interesting. So in Plutarch's account, he describes how "The god himself, like the manner of a ventriloquist, would enter into the body of these prophets and prompt their utterances, employing their mouths and voices like a musical instrument."

Jon: Hmm. Takes—

Tim: There's—

Jon: Takes over them.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Yeah. So there's a vision here that: For the god to truly speak and for it to be authentic, the human agent needs to kind of, like, go offline.

Jon: Just be a—become a puppet.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. So he uses ventriloquism or "like a musical instrument."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm. And elsewhere in Plutarch's account, he calls it a "prophetic current and breath that's most divine and holy." "Current," meaning like the current of a stream. "For when it's instilled into the body, it creates in their soul an unaccustomed and unusual temperament"— [chuckles]

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —"the peculiarity of which it is hard to describe exactly."

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: So they become like a riverbed through which flows something that's not them, like another. Okay. So this conception, then, of spirit-filling and prophecy—

Jon: Mmm. That's the most popular way to be spirit-filled.

Tim: Yes. Exactly.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's not you, it's the deity.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And we know that this influenced some Jewish people then to imagine spirit-filling in the Hebrew Bible in a similar way.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So there's a Jewish philosopher and scholar, Bible nerd, named Philo of Alexandria. He lived in the first century AD, like around the same time as, like, Paul and Jesus and the apostles. And he was a Bible nerd. He wrote commentaries on biblical books. He was a Greek speaker. People debate whether he knew Hebrew or not. But he wrote tons, Philo of Alexandria. It's super interesting. And when he retells biblical stories, he often does so, but translated for, like, a Greek audience with a philosophical twist. So there's an example of this where he's retelling the story of Abraham in Genesis 15, and it's the story where Abraham wonders, like, "Hey, where is this big family and all these kids you promised?" And God takes him out to show him the stars. And then God puts "a deep sleep on him." In Hebrew, it's the *tardemah*, which is the same word as the deep sleep that God causes to fall on the human when he—

Jon: On Adam, okay.

Tim: Yep. When he turns the one into two. So the Septuagint translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek and Philo understands that deep sleep as what he calls *ekstasis*, ecstasy, literally "to stand outside yourself," or we would call it, like, "a trance." And here's how he describes it. He says, "A trance which proceeds from inspiration"—that's being filled with the Spirit—"takes violent hold. Madness seizes because when the divine light sets, this other light rises and shines. The mind that is inside of us gets removed from its place at the arrival of the divine Spirit. But it's again restored to its previous habitation when the spirit departs because it is contrary to holy law for what is mortal to dwell with what is immortal."

Jon: Hmm. Okay, and you've been saying the exact opposite this whole time.

Tim: I know. Exactly.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So what we're watching is a Jewish person who's fully reinterpreted the Hebrew Bible in light of this Greek conception—

Jon: I see.

Tim: —of Spirit inspiration. For it to be the speech of God speaking through a human, it can't at all be the human speaking.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Like, they need to—

Jon: The mortal and immortal cannot dwell together.

Tim: Yes. Yeah, and what's great is Philo just names it. He says, "Here's the basic assumption I hold about God and humans. They are so opposite each other one can never dwell in the other fully, like, as one. It's contrary to God's law for the immortal to be one with the mortal."

Jon: But you've been showing me, even in the Hebrew Bible, the point is for the mortal and immortal to dwell together.

Tim: Yeah, I think this is a point where Philo of Alexandria has actually abandoned what the Hebrew Bible was trying to say about God's purpose to be one with humans.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And he's reinterpreted the vision of the Hebrew Bible in light of his Greek cultural environment.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So then the question then is: Well, Jesus and the apostles inhabited the same cultural environment as Philo, so do they hold more this Greek view of Holy Spirit inspiration, or are they preserving this more Hebrew-Bible view?" And I'm not trying to draw a wedge between, like, Greek thought and Hebrew thought. I'm just saying there are two cultural conceptions, though, of how God and humans work together.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And the Hebrew Bible has much more a vision of partnership between a human mind and a divine mind.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: The whole thrust of the storyline [chuckles] of the Hebrew Bible is for God's purpose set out in the Eden ideal to come to its fulfillment. It has to be fully God and fully human as one. It has to be.

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: That's—

Jon: But that's the hope. And that's the hope of Jesus.

Tim: That's the hope. And that is the basic claim of the incarnation, what we looked at in Luke, and then of what Pentecost is.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: The Spirit comes on them, and people think that they're intoxicated, and there's fire —

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: [chuckles] —right?—and you're like, "*Whoa, I know that vibe.*"

Jon: I see.

Tim: So Luke's trying to say, like, "*Yeah*" —

Jon: That's the paradigm that they're used to.

Tim: *But* they are speaking coherently, and they're telling a story. And the story that they're telling is the story of how the God of Israel has raised the Messiah from the dead as Lord of the world, and we can be liberated from sin and death.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And people hear them speaking coherently, but also he's balancing what you could say is a model of prophecy that's both ecstatic, ecstasy — [chuckles]

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: —but essentially combined with understanding and a sound mind. [laughs]

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: But a mind that's just full of joy because it's full of the life presence of God.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah, supercharged.

Tim: Yeah. So it's both. It's ecstasy and understanding. This is a phrase I got from the New Testament scholar John Levison, his book *Filled by the Spirit*.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: He was the one who really helped me appreciate the balance beam that Luke was walking —

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —and introduced me to how significant the oracle at Delphi was. In fact, Luke, in Acts chapter 16, when Paul and Silas go into this village on one of their missionary journeys, they meet this young girl who's a slave, and she has—in Greek, she has the *pneuma* of a python. She has—

Jon: Mmm. The spirit of—

Tim: —the spirit of the python.

Jon: —the python.

Tim: Which—this is an explicit reference to the oracle at Delphi.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: So we know Luke has the oracle at Delphi on the brain.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And his description of Pentecost is trying to incorporate elements of that cultural understanding but then reshape it. So this is exactly the portrait of Holy Spirit inspiration and prophecy that we find in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Jon: What's exactly?

Tim: This balance.

Jon: This balance.

[“The Kingdom” by Lofi Sunday feat. Marc Vanparla fades in]

Tim: This balance of mind-blowing, category-shattering, there's definitely someone else in my mind right now. [laughs] But then also: It's my mind, and I'm speaking coherently and meaningfully.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: That balance that we see in Acts is also what we see in Paul. So let's go there—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —to talk about Paul's description of prophecy in the Spirit.

[Musical break: “The Kingdom” by Lofi Sunday feat. Marc Vanparla (30:00-30:32)]

[Tongues and Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14 (30:32-45:22)]

Tim: Okay, so again, Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that we call First Corinthians is actually his second letter. [chuckles] And what was happening in their Sunday gatherings or their house church gatherings was pretty wild—

[“The Kingdom” by Lofi Sunday feat. Marc Vanparla fades out]

Tim: —compared to maybe most people’s church-going experience these days. Although it depends on what kind of church you go to. [laughs]

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] But you know, he talks about: “Hey, when you get together, and after you eat the Lord’s Supper together, one of you has a song, one of you wants to read some Scripture, one of you has a prophetic oracle to offer the community or someone, and one of you might start talking in a language nobody knows and nobody’s ever heard before”—and he describes it as often chaotic and getting pretty out of control, and people talking over one another. I’m just summarizing the problem he’s addressing in First Corinthians 12 and 14. And so as he addresses this and tries to give wisdom, what’s so fascinating is he doesn’t tell them to stop all this.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: What he tries to give is wisdom to help them appreciate what they’re really doing when they feel the urge to speak in God’s name to each other and then speak in these tongues. So first, let’s just say Paul lists the desire and passion to speak prophecy, God’s words, to each other and to speak in other kinds of tongues or languages—he describes this as part of the gifts of the Spirit that we talked about in the last episode, alongside healing and signs and wonders and helping people and administrating the church office.

[Jon and Tim chuckle]

Tim: Like, it's all part of one thing.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But then he goes on, and he says, "Listen, the body's diverse, right? So not everybody is an apostolic church planter, are they?"

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: "Nope, that's pretty" —

Jon: Self-evident.

Tim: — "a pretty unique crew. Not everybody's a prophet. Not everybody's a teacher. Not everybody has the gift of healing. Not everybody speaks in other languages, do they?" So it's diverse. Different people do different things. And then apparently, speaking in tongues and prophecy were part of the chaos of their gatherings. And he says, "Listen, first of all, I want love to be the baseline of everything you do and everything you say."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So: Am I prioritizing the well-being of the other in how I think about this experience of prophecy and tongues? If I'm not, I'm probably not imitating the way of Jesus. That's baseline.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So then in One Corinthians 14, Paul really gets into the issue, and he begins by saying, you know, "Pursue love." That's what chapter 13, the poem, was all about.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And he says—so okay, speaking in tongues—what you're doing when you're expressing that gift is, he describes it, as not speaking to other people, but to God. And nobody else can understand it. And then he says, "In the Spirit, that person is speaking *musterion*." [laughs] Mysteries.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So what's so fascinating is: The thing that he's describing that is happening in the Corinthian church—which he says later, like, "I do it too, and I love it, and I wish all of you did it." He says it's—it's directly *to* God. It's not to other people. And so one thing that's a puzzle here is this seems related to what Luke is describing at Pentecost—you know? —

Jon: Right.

Tim: —but also different. It's distinct.

Jon: Yeah, because in Pentecost, it was for other people to hear and understand.

Tim: That was the whole point.

Jon: That was the point.

Tim: Yeah, exactly.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. So that's a longstanding puzzle. And it's the same vocabulary: "speaking," "tongue," "language." So apparently there's—speaking in tongues was a kind of a diverse phenomenon in early Christianity.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So what Paul is zeroing in on is a practice of somebody speaking in a language, the people around don't know it, and it's not even addressed to them. It's addressed directly to God.

Jon: It's not addressed to the other people?

Tim: It's not addressed to the other people.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah, exactly. The other thing that kind of makes what Paul is describing here distinct from, you know, what Luke was describing at Pentecost is he talks about how, when you're speaking in tongues, he's describing a phenomenon that we might call praise or thanksgiving from a person to God. It's in a [chuckles] language other people can't recognize. And he has this fascinating distinction where he says, down in verse 14—he says, "Praying in a tongue in this way"—he says: "my spirit is praying, but my mind is not making fruit."

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: [chuckles] It's unfruitful.

Jon: Interesting. So it's a way to pray kind of bypassing your mind in a way.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. So think—you know, [exhales] our minds, specifically where language works—I'm not a brain scientist—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —though I've enjoyed learning about brain science in the last few years, especially from a neuroscientist named Iain McGilchrist—

Jon: Yeah, you talk about him a lot.

Tim: Uh—

Jon: To me.

Tim: —to you, yeah.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: [laughs] Yeah. Totally.

Jon: [laughs] Not on the podcast.

Tim: Yeah, his book, *Master and His Emissary*, just blew my sense of reality in the best way possible. His section on language and the right and left hemispheres and the prefrontal cortex—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: It's so fascinating. What Paul's describing is something that you don't need to be a neuroscientist to understand—

Jon: Sure.

Tim: That, when we're using language to express feeling or thought, there's a sorting process, like, a filtering process going on.

Jon: Like a categorizing process.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yeah, language is a way to define really clearly what something is and is not and bring order and structure to the things around us and our thoughts and our emotions.

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that is speaking with your mind. And that's great. That's a gift of God—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [chuckles] —that we can do that. But there's another mode of expression I think to each other, and here, Paul's describing "to God," that is—as it were, it bypasses the filter. And it's a way of tuning in and connecting to God that speaks a more primal kind of language, that he calls praying in a tongue. What—it is also so fascinating: In verse 15, he links it to music.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: He calls it “singing in the Spirit.” And he says, “You can sing in the Spirit, and you can sing with the mind.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: He says, “You can pray in the Spirit and pray with your mind.”

Jon: Huh.

Tim: So you can talk, pray, and sing—

Jon: In two different modes.

Tim: —in two modes. One is filtering, choosing the words.

Jon: Mmm. Okay.

Tim: Another one is another form of Spirit expression. [chuckles] And what’s so fascinating is back in First Corinthians 13, he also said, you know, “Listen, we can talk to each other in the tongue of humans and in the tongue of angels.” [laughs]

Jon: He calls it the tongue of angels?

Tim: Well, he just references that.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: And it seems like it maybe is related to what he’s talking about here.

Jon: Oh, okay. Interesting. The way angels talk.

Tim: Yeah. So I was really helped by a New Testament scholar, Anthony Thiselton, in his commentary on One Corinthians. And he just drew attention to—this is just an analogy. This is not exact, but it kind of opened my mind to like, “*Oh, that’s—I think that’s true.*” Most languages have vocabulary words that allow us to have that kind of raw expression, a feeling that bypasses the mind. They’re also really hard to spell.

Jon: Oh. [chuckles]

Tim: You know, like, uhm—like: “Whoa,” or—

Jon: Like, “*Whoa!*”

Tim: “*Whoa!*” “Agh.”

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: Or is it “ah”—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —you know?—like, is it the silent GH? In other words, we all know what it's like to be at a loss for words. That's even a phrase we have.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: But we can still communicate—

Jon: But we can still—mmm.

Tim: —with sound when we're at a loss for words. So that's one analogy. Another analogy, and it's the one that Paul brings up, is music.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Like, music—man, if you watch, like, a virtuoso violin player or guitar player—

Jon: Yeah. Or like a jazz musician.

Tim: Oh, totally, yes. And they're, like, in the zone or in—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They're in the flow.

Jon: [chuckles] Right.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] And they *are* communicating. One hundred percent. They're communicating something of their soul, and they don't need words. The sounds are the words. So those are just analogies—the music, I think, is probably the more helpful one—where Paul has this category that: You can be so unified—in union with God in a moment of either prayer or in the worship gathering of the community where you start talking to God in the language of the soul, or you could say in the language of Heaven or the language of angels. [laughs]

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: And for people, you know, that I have talked to that have had this experience, it's not meaningless. What's coming out of their mouth is not meaningless.

Jon: Right.

Tim: It's full of meaning. But it's a kind of meaning that's so intimate between the person and God that the other people around don't know the content. You can maybe pick up the general vibe.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [chuckles] You know, like, “*Whoa, they’re having a moment with God right now. That’s super cool.*” But—and Paul’s take on this is that: “Man, if you get three or five people doing that all at the same time”—

Jon: And you get someone new coming—

Tim: [excited] Yes. Oh, yes. Good.

Jon: —who’s like, “*I want to check this out. What’s going on?*”

Tim: Yeah. He mentions later in the chapter that: What if somebody who’s not a follower of Jesus comes into the gathering at that moment?

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: And he says, “He might think you all are out of your minds.” [laughs] He uses this Greek word *mainomai*, which—where we get, like, manic or crazy. But—and it’s not crazy. It’s somebody praying in tongues to God. It’s, like, beautiful.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But it can be—

Jon: It could appear that way.

Tim: It could appear that way. His whole point—he’s not trying to shut down praying in tongues in this way. What he goes on to say is—he says, “If you want to pray in a tongue to God, pray that you could interpret it.” That is, “Pray that you could be given the words with your mind to then begin to share with others”—

Jon: “*Here’s what’s going on.*”

Tim: —“Here’s what I’m telling God.” Paul says “so that they can get built up.” It’s an architectural metaphor for, like, a building. Edification is for the building up.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: So he’s walking a fine line, because he says at the end—first, he says, “I would rather speak five words to y’all with my mind to give you”—this is in verse 19—“so that I can instruct you rather than praying 10,000 words in a tongue.” So his point is, like, “When we’re together as a group”—

Jon: “*Let’s use our minds*”? [chuckles]

Tim: “I want to build you up more than just me getting my personal experience.”

Jon: Ah. I see. I see. For him, it's the difference between: There's a beautiful personal experience I can have, but when we're together, I want to prioritize what's going to communally benefit us all.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And he doesn't shut down speaking in tongues. What he says is, "If you're going to do that, pray that you could have—find the words to talk to the people around you or pray that somebody else might, that somebody else could have insight from the Spirit to explain to others around what it is that you're saying to God." It's so fascinating. What I love about this is that what Paul's describing is a very—mmm—personal—I hate the—I don't necessarily want to use the word "subjective"—you know?—"experience."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But there is a personal, intimate subjectivity between me and—every person and God that Paul's honoring. And this—the gift—having the gift of being able to communicate to God this way is a gift, and it's good. But like any good gift, it can, you know, be misused or have an unfortunate result that he's trying to mitigate here.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So Jon, a second ago, you brought up, you know: What would happen if somebody wandered into the church gathering? [chuckles]

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: You know? And Paul names that.

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: He says they'll think you're all out of your minds. And he says this really important qualification in verse 32. He says that the Spirit of the prophet is subject or subordinated to that prophet.

Jon: Okay, so prophecy as a different gift than tongues?

Tim: Just—

Jon: As a different mode—

Tim: A different mode.

Jon: —than tongues?

Tim: Yeah, exactly right. Yeah.

Jon: Prophecy, being then—

Tim: It's to other people—

Jon: To other people.

Tim: —from God.

Jon: Where this instance of tongues is about me to God.

Tim: Yep, that's right.

Jon: So he says the Spirit of prophets are subject to prophets.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: The Spirits of prophets.

Tim: Yeah, so in other words, it's fundamentally different than Philo of Alexandria—
[chuckles]

Jon: Oh, right.

Tim: —or these, you know—or the oracles at Delphi—

Jon: Oh, where they're like—come out, and they have no control of what they're saying.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: They're just a—like a funnel for the divine word.

Tim: Yeah. Exactly right. They've lost all personal agency in their minds. And in Paul's mind, when the Spirit of God and when the Spirit of Jesus gets a hold of a person, they don't become less of themselves. They become more of themselves and more like God at the same time. So for the Spirit of the prophet to be subordinated to the prophet—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —means that there's a mingling—

Jon: They're still connected.

Tim: —of my mind and agency and God's agency and mind—

Jon: Oh. Yeah.

Tim: —in and through the Spirit. It's a genuine partnership—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —of a divine and human word. And that's prophecy. And again, Paul's not—he's not saying speaking in tongues directly to God in a more primal, heavenly language is wrong. It's just that: When we are together, I'd rather prioritize these moments where we really—

["Pleasant Places" by Lofi Sunday feat. Yoni Charis fades in]

Tim: —can hear God speaking to all of us and to each other in a way we can understand.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And that's the model: that God's mind and my mind become one together in love, and that we can speak to each other in that way. That's really remarkable if you—
[laughs] if you think about it.

Jon: Yeah.

[Musical break: "Pleasant Places" by Lofi Sunday feat. Yoni Charis (44:53-45:22)]

[Prophecy as Divine Perspective and Loving Discernment (45:22-1:01:21)]

Jon: One thing that we didn't state from the very beginning, which maybe we'll just state now, is I think the common definition of prophecy is predicting the future or telling the future.

Tim: Oh. Oh, I see. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Like that's what a prophecy is.

Tim: Yeah, in popular imagination.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yep.

[“Pleasant Places” by Lofi Sunday feat. Yoni Charis fades out]

Jon: Like if I got a, like, a prophecy newsletter from a church, I’d probably get a bunch of stuff of, like—

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Jon: —“*Here’s what’s going to happen with Israel, and here’s what’s going to happen with*” —

Tim: End times and—

Jon: End—yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And it’s predicting the future for me.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: The way you’ve been talking about prophecy from the very beginning feels like a different category.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Not that it doesn’t have future implications—right?—like wisdom for someone or encouragement for someone or—it’s going to affect the future.

Tim: Yeah, in Paul’s mind, it’s the model of prophecy that’s from the Hebrew Scriptures, which is giving a divine perspective on a human situation or events.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It’s just—divine perspective. It’s a word that communicates God’s perspective about X situation—

Jon: That’s helpful.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] —in a person’s life or a community’s life. So you know, what Paul’s imagining here is like—uhm—and I guess it’s hard for me not to separate now this from my own experiences in following Jesus and in the church communities I’ve been a part of. So you know, there’s something that happened. It’s really painful. It’s really difficult. Maybe at work, maybe in my family. Someone comes

up to me at church and says, *“I don’t know why this came into my mind, but I felt like I’m supposed to come talk to you and say, ‘If you’ve experienced something painful in the recent past, God wants you to know that he sees you, and here’s this Bible verse that came into my mind.’ And, uh, if that’s encouraging to you, that’s cool. If it doesn’t match anything happening in your life, sorry. Maybe I had too much pizza too late last night [laughs] and that’s what’s”—*you know, like, whatever. But if it’s from God, then cool, let that be. Like, that’s how I’ve experienced this in a local church community. And more often than not, it actually has been meaningful. And I’ve watched or heard people tell me stories. It’s pretty remarkable. Like, we have this phrase, “You’re reading my mail.” “Somebody’s read my mail.”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: That kind of thing. And that stuff happens. And when it happens and connects with people in very specific, poignant ways, it’s really powerful because it feels like, *“Whoa, God sees me, and he is talking to me through the fellow member of my church.”* That’s the kind of stuff Paul has in mind here.

Jon: [pause] Maybe. [pause] I mean—

Tim: Edifying, encouraging, comforting, teaching—

Jon: Yes. But there’s a much more direct version of that. That’s a very hedged version.

Tim: Oh, I see. I see.

Jon: *“I just have this thing. I don’t know. It’s for someone here, and maybe not.”*

Tim: Yeah, yeah. Mhm.

Jon: I mean, that’s super hedged.

Tim: That is super hedged. You’re right. Okay. So there’s—

Jon: There’s a version of, like, *“You know what? We’re in relationship, and we’ve been living life together, and I know your life to a pretty good degree. And I was having some time with God, and God just made this really clear to me about what’s going on with you.”* That’s super direct.

Tim: Mmm. That’s true. That’s very direct.

Jon: And maybe that’s also what Paul has in mind.

Tim: Yeah. I think so. It’s a great point. You can see examples of that in Acts.

Jon: Mmm. Here’s the thing I have with the hedge thing.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I love it. I've experienced it a lot.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] And I think it's really cool. And what I think is beautiful about it is it just creates this environment and opportunity to say, "*Hey, I want to connect with you, and I want the Spirit to do something through us, but I don't want to go too far and I want this to be a safe environment. And you can create meaning out of it in a way that maybe I don't even appreciate.*" And it just creates this cool, fertile environment for us to start loving each other and for—for us to then connect in a deeper way. So I really appreciate that. But, uh—not a "but"—

Tim: Hmm. Well, maybe you're saying: But there might also be times where you or a person might have more clarity and conviction behind what they feel like they're supposed to share.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: And so they're going to come in with a little more confidence—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —that what they're sharing is from God for the other person. Mhm.

Jon: There might be that.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And that's a little more charged.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: And it's—that—

Tim: A little more high stakes.

Jon: A little more high stakes.

Tim: You can, uh—you can—

Jon: A lot more high stakes. Maybe you need a certain level of confidence there.

Tim: Yeah. And experience.

Jon: Mhm. And experience. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. I think with the hedged version, what I appreciate is I think it's trying to honor Paul's basic conviction—

Jon: Oh, which is love.

Tim: Which is love—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Definitely. I guess—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —so a double conviction: Love and then this line in First Corinthians 14:32: “The Spirits of the prophets are subordinate to the prophets.” Meaning: Whatever it is that’s going to come from God through you, it’s fully filtered through you. You have control over it. You can not say it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You could say it. Or you can moderate how it is you say it. And that moderation of how you say it—

Jon: Ahhh.

Tim: —combined with love, I think, will more often come with humility—

Jon: Ah.

Tim: —than with confidence or potential overconfidence—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —because the potential to do damage—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —coming in hot— [chuckles]

[Jon laughs]

Tim: [chuckles] —and confident is pretty—like the odds are pretty high that you’re going to make some wrong calls and bulldoze some people in the process. And you know, we’re talking about this as if it’s purely hypothetical.

Jon: No. Right, yeah.

Tim: This stuff happens all the time.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that’s maybe the liability or the potential for it to go awry. Which is so amazing why the love chapter, First Corinthians 13, is at the center of these three chapters [laughs] talking about tongues and prophecy.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] But I appreciate what you're saying. I can think of a couple people in my life who I really trust who have a lot of experience in this kind of prophetic speech. And if they came to me with some conviction and confidence, I would take it real seriously, and I would trust them.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But I wouldn't treat it as if I'm hearing, like, a bullhorn from the sky. [laughs] You know?

Jon: Seems like then—yeah, you're drawing attention to this filtering on the other side, which is—

Tim: Mmm. Yes, okay. So that's also an element in First Corinthians 14. We should have just read the whole chapter. [laughs]

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: But he talks about weighing—testing and weighing what is spoken.

Jon: Mmm. Oh, okay. Okay.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] And John references this in the letter of 1 John 2 [Oops, the instruction about testing the spirits comes in 1 John 4:1–3], testing the spirits, discerning the spirits. And that goes all the way back to his baseline, which is to say that the confession of Jesus is Lord is by the Spirit—

Jon: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] —and if it's not in basic sync with that or if it's not in sync with the way of love, then I'm going to be a little hesitant to receive what you have to say. Maybe what it's good to name that: What we're talking here is about—there's a subjective element to all of this, by nature, because contrary to Philo's basic assumption about reality, the biblical story is one where God is becoming one with his creatures, not losing God's self and us not losing ourselves, but true partnership and union. And we're all so different that it makes sense that this would be a really subjective, experiential kind of potentially a hot mess of a situation. But also, think in human relationships, you know, emotional passion and connection and subjectivity and connecting with other people—like, that's the stuff of real life, man.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, these are the most meaningful experiences we have—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —are the—hard to put into words and more felt in relationship than you can write down, you know, afterwards.

Jon: Yes. Mmm. [pause] So I grew up in a tradition that said: “This doesn’t happen.” And so—

Tim: “*Prophecy and tongues aren’t part of how God’s working today*”?

Jon: Right. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] So just: “Don’t do it.” In fact, it’s just kind of fraudulent. That’s what I grew up in. And I am a very skeptical person— [laughs]

Tim: Mmm. Mhm.

Jon: —right? Just in general.

Tim: Yeah. And cognitive forward—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: [laughs] And cognitive forward.

Tim: [chuckles] —as they say.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, and me too. You and I both are. Yeah, I think it’s why we get along so well. [chuckles] Yeah.

Jon: And so my journey with this and having people then do this to me—for me—“*I have a word for you*”—and me going on a journey of being just kind of frustrated by it, maybe kind of my first few interactions with it. And then also just dismissing it as: We’re just doing—this is cold reading.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: That’s all this is.

Tim: Sure. Sure.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like secular people can do this.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You can, like, just put out a general statement out there, get someone to latch onto it, and create their own meaning out of it, and then convince *them* that you understood that already.

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jon: This is just a version of now doing that, and saying, “*Oh, yeah, that’s the word that God has for you.*”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay, so that’s me being super skeptical—

Tim: [encouraging] Yeah.

Jon: —and cold to the whole thing.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But then I had this moment of experiencing it within a church community where I was like—I just saw the beauty of how it was crafting them together. Like what you were describing—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] —like it was allowing them to begin to know each other and to approach each other and to understand each other in such a deep, wonderful way that usually we’re closed off to. And it really opened them up. And then I realized, like, “Oh, yeah, God is really working through this. This is God’s Spirit, like, doing this.”

Tim: Mmm. Mhm. Kind of knitting these people together.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like, then that skepticism melting away. So that’s been my journey with it. And there’s still that part of me though that I wrestle with, which goes: Man, it would be really clear if it was just this very direct, future-predicting thing.

Tim: Sure. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: I come, and I say, “*This is what’s going to happen, thus says the Lord.*” Then it happens. It’s like, “*Okay, well that was from God.*”

Tim: That’s right.

Jon: And—

Tim: Or Philo of Alexandria's version is pretty clean, too. It's like: If it's God speaking, it's not you.

Jon: Ah. Yes. And that's—and that's the clean—

Tim: And I watch your eyes roll back—

Jon: Yes. That's the clean version.

Tim: It's cleaner. It's cleaner—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Yes. But it also is a loss in that it doesn't involve a true union of Heaven and Earth and divine and human.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And in a way, the liability or risk in something like this is a version of the liability and risk that God's taking in creating images of God and commissioning them to rule the world on God's behalf—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —right?—in Genesis one.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's just a—relationships are a huge risk.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And I guess if your vision of God is—well, I'll just flip it. I'll just say: The view of God as an eternal communion of Father, Son, and Spirit is saying that relationship is the center of the universe. Like, God is relationship.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And to be human is to exist in relationship to that one and to each other.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yeah. And for me to have a sense of: There's something for you that God's given to me, and I want to put it out there so that we can both interact with it. We're engaging with God's breath—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: —together. That's what we're doing.

Tim: Yeah, totally. It's a thing in between us that we both have but that I wouldn't have seen or heard unless you went out there and shared it. Mhm. In a way, what's the history of this project except you and I talking and learning stuff together—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —and often I bring stuff for you—

Jon: Breathing in the same room together. [laughs]

Tim: Yeah— [laughs]

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —totally. [chuckles] Yeah. So prophecy becomes so broad in this description of Paul.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Right? I mean, it's quite broad. So our church traditions have found it difficult throughout church history to [exhales] provide parameters for this and environments and—it's easier to draw boundaries—right?—say “this doesn't happen” or “only these ways does this kind of thing happen, and that's how our church does it.” And maybe, I guess—in coming to these passages in Acts and Paul, I'm just being challenged to be open-minded but then also not have a directionless mind.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, there are some—

Jon: There's order.

Tim: There's order.

Jon: Paul wants order.

Tim: And there's clear focus points. It's a Jesus-centered Spirit, the way of love. But at the same time, there's probably a lot more to following Jesus and being one with my fellow body members than I've ever imagined. And that's what prophecy—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —in the early church seems to have been and has been throughout church history.

Jon: Hmm. That's cool.

Tim: [exhales] Hmm.

Jon: Thank you.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Uhm, I think next we should take our cues again from Acts and Paul, mmm, and Peter, and talk about the Spirit of resurrection, the deep connection between the resurrection of Jesus—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —and the Spirit—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —and our resurrection and the Spirit, and how it is that Paul can say that you have already been raised and are seated in Heaven right now—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —in the power of the Spirit.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: What does it mean to say a thing like that?

Jon: Oh, you're going to help me understand that?

Tim: Uh, well, I don't know.

[BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS]

Tim: Maybe Paul can help us understand it—

Jon: [laughs] Okay.

Tim: —and we'll talk about it together.

Jon: [chuckles] All right. Sweet.

Tim: Anyway. That's what we'll do next.

[Musical break: BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS (59:07-59:11)]

Jon: Thanks for listening to BibleProject podcast. Next week, we're going to look at the Spirit's role in resurrection and how the hope of resurrection can empower us now.

Tim: [audio clips from Spirit of God E13: The Spirit of Resurrection] Loving God and loving neighbor is resurrection life. And so learning how to reset all my life habits and my ways of thinking and living to be directed towards love, that's the way of life that displays the reality of the resurrection.

Jon: BibleProject is a crowdfunded nonprofit, and we exist to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. Everything that we create is free because of the generous support of thousands of people just like you. Thank you so much for being a part of this with us.

[Phone beep]

Lisa: Hi, my name is Lisa.

Haley: My name is Haley.

Esther: And I'm Esther Kruse, and I am from Salem, Oregon.

Lisa: I first heard about the BibleProject from church.

Haley: I use the BibleProject for teaching my fifth-grade class about the Bible.

Esther: My favorite thing about the BibleProject is that they bring people of all ages and from all walks of life.

Lisa: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Haley: BibleProject is a nonprofit funded by people like me.

Esther: Find free videos, articles, podcasts, classes, and more on the BibleProject app and at BibleProject.com.

[Phone beep]

Joel: Hi, my name is Joel, and I live in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and I support and lead the product organization at BibleProject. So I've been doing this work for almost thirty years now. Found my way into a software company here in Portland. A couple months later, I came out here, and I hope that what we're doing is helping foster this

idea for people that God has made the world with enough, and we can trust him for the things we need. There's a whole team of us who help make the podcast happen every week. For a full list of everyone involved, check out the show notes wherever you stream the podcast and on our app.

[BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS, fades out]

[BibleProject sonic logo]