

Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome as we explore the Word of God together.

Introduction

One of the most confusing issues for many believers—especially those new in the faith—is **how to discern genuine servants of God** from false ones. This confusion often arises when someone appears to operate in spiritual power: they cast out demons, perform healings, prophesy accurately, and speak in tongues—and yet, their **character and lifestyle are ungodly**.

Can someone really be used by God while living in sin?

The simple yet shocking biblical answer is: **Yes, they can**. But that does **not** mean they are in right standing with God.

This message will examine what the Bible says about this difficult topic and how **spiritual gifts are not proof of divine approval**.

1. Gifts vs. Fruit: The Biblical Distinction

The Bible draws a clear distinction between **spiritual gifts** (Greek: *charismata*) and **spiritual fruit** (Greek: *karpos*). Gifts are abilities given by the Holy Spirit for ministry (1 Corinthians 12), while fruit reflects the believer's internal transformation into Christlikeness (Galatians 5:22-23).

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV):

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

You can operate in gifts **without bearing fruit**, but you **cannot** please God without fruit, because fruit is the evidence of a **sanctified life**.

2. Biblical Example: The Disobedient Prophet

(1 Kings 13:1-24, summarized below — ESV)

In this story, a “man of God” from Judah delivers a prophecy to King Jeroboam, warning him of judgment. God gives him clear instructions: **Do not eat, drink, or return by the same path.** However, an **older prophet** deceives him, claiming an angel told him it was fine to eat and drink at his house.

The younger prophet disobeys—and God pronounces judgment. Shockingly, **the true prophetic word comes through the same old prophet who lied!**

1 Kings 13:20-21 (ESV):

“And as they sat at the table, the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back. And he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, ‘Thus says the Lord, Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord... your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.’”

Key Insight:

- The **older prophet** still received and delivered a **true message from God** after **lying**.
- This means **a person can speak by the Spirit of God** and yet be living in **disobedience or sin**.

This is not an isolated incident in Scripture.

3. God's Gifts Are Irrevocable

Romans 11:29 (ESV):

“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

This principle means that once God gives a spiritual gift or calling, He doesn't automatically take it away—even when someone sins. That person can continue to function in the gift for a time, even while **spiritually disconnected** from God.

This explains why some ministers or prophets who fall into sin still perform miracles or prophesy accurately. But this doesn't mean God endorses their behavior.

4. Jesus' Warning: Gifts Without Relationship

Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV):

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Key Insight:

- These people **performed miracles, cast out demons, and prophesied**—all in **Jesus’ name**.
- But Jesus calls them “**workers of lawlessness**” (*Greek: anomia* — living without God’s law).
- Their **gifts were real**, but their lives were **unsubmitted** to God’s will.

This is the same principle we see with the old prophet in 1 Kings 13.

5. Old Testament Example: Balaam

Balaam was a prophet who genuinely heard from God. He even **blessed**

Israel when asked to curse them (Numbers 22-24). But later, we find out that Balaam led Israel into sin for personal gain.

2 Peter 2:15 (ESV):

“Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing.”

Revelation 2:14 (ESV):

“...Balaam... taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel...”

Even though Balaam spoke with God and gave true prophecies, he was later judged as a **false prophet** because of his unrighteous motivations.

6. What Truly Matters: Holiness

Hebrews 12:14 (ESV):

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

Holiness is not optional. No matter how gifted someone is, without holiness and obedience to God’s Word, they will not see Him.

Gifts are for **ministry**. Holiness is for **eternal life**.

7. Don’t Judge by Gifts—Judge by Fruit

Matthew 7:16 (ESV):

“You will recognize them by their fruits.”

We are not told to recognize true or false servants by their gifts—but by their **fruit**, meaning their **character, obedience, and lifestyle**.

- Gifts can be counterfeited or misused.

- Fruit cannot be faked for long—it reveals the true condition of the heart.

Conclusion: Examine Yourself

Dear believer, don't rely on the presence of spiritual gifts—yours or others'—as evidence that someone is walking with God. Instead, ask:

- Am I doing the will of God?
- Am I walking in holiness?
- Is my character being transformed into Christlikeness?

You may sing beautifully, teach powerfully, speak in tongues, or receive prophetic visions—but **if your heart is far from God**, none of that will save you.

Let your prayer be:

“Lord, make me holy. Let me not just be gifted, but righteous.”

Final Encouragement

If spiritual gifts are present in your life—**praise God!** But seek **holiness first**, because **only holiness** guarantees fellowship with God both now and for eternity.

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