

Prophetic intercessors in a final generation

Bryn Jones

'The great serpent has coiled himself around the globe, and who shall set the world free from him?' So said Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers. The problems that afflicted Spurgeon's generation pale in the light of the dreadful issues of our own times. We are faced with the prospect of horrors beyond the wildest imagination of his day. We are daily confronted with the mounting casualties of this secular society. A famous piece of graffiti scratched across a wall in Philadelphia says, 'Humpty Dumpty was pushed!' Many are engaged in 'blame shifting'; not wanting to take responsibility for what is happening.

The church, because it is a prophetic community, confronts our rebellious and bewildered generation with God's unchanging moral absolutes. The world, however, does not fall over itself to respond to our plea for change in lifestyle. They are blind to reality, bound in chains of materialism and secularism. It is for us, the church, through prophetic intercession, to break these chains, loosing the hold of Satan on the minds and hearts of people.

Priest & Prophet Unite

Under the Old Covenant the priests represented the needs of the people to the Lord whereas the prophets represented the interests of God to the people. In prophetic intercession the burden of prophet and priest unite at the highest level. What greater picture of prophetic intercession is there in the Old Testament than that of Moses pleading to be 'blotted out' of God's book rather than for God to write off his people? (Exodus 32:32).

Similarly, we have the heart of a prophetic intercessor in the New Testament, the apostle Paul who said, 'I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could pray that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites' (Romans 9:2-4). Paul was not feigning exaggerated grief in his letter to the church in Rome. This was the cry he carried at all times in his spirit; he prayed it without ceasing.

The hallmark of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these last days is 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy' (Acts 2:17) which in part means being a prophetic intercessor. Those who are prophetic intercessors do not merely ask that people make decisions for Christ but they embrace the bigger picture. They pray for the maturity of Christ in those who respond to his gospel, that the new society of redeemed mankind may expand and flesh out God's image 'unto the ends of the earth' (Genesis 12:3, Acts 1:8). They eagerly await and hope to hasten the return of Christ, which will not happen until every prophecy is fulfilled.

'He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.' (Acts 3:21).

Entering God's Heart of Concern

It is prophetic intercession that paves the way for the fulfilment of these prophetic promises. If this statement is valid we will find it rooted in the Word of God. Do we find it there? Indeed we do! It is in some of the greatest prophecies of Isaiah concerning the church in the end times.

'For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning. And the nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will designate.' (Isaiah 62:1-2).

This is not wishful daydreaming by Isaiah. This is the purpose of God revealed to Isaiah's heart and expressed in his prophesying. He is speaking of the prophetic intercessors of the final generation becoming persistent and passionate in faith for God's purpose and plans to be accomplished.

'On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. And you who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give him no rest until he establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' (Isaiah 62:6-7).

Through prophetic intercession, the Spirit of God pleads the covenant promises of a faithful God made to his people throughout history (Isaiah 55:11). Every unfulfilled promise is still in force and will remain so until fulfilled. Meanwhile they are being pleaded by the Spirit before God's throne.

A Prophetess Comes Forward

One of the most significant prophetic intercessors in the New Testament is the prophetess Anna. After seven years of married life, she had been suddenly widowed and thereafter devoted herself in the Temple to fasting and prayer. Now, at 84 years of age, we find her still ministering in the secret place.

There was a prophetess, Anna... a widow to the age of eighty four. And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers. And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38). In what way can she be considered a prophetess? Unlike John the Baptist, she was not the herald of the Messiah. Unlike Elijah, she was not challenging the prophets of Baal or calling down fire. Anna was a prophetess of the secret place, interceding

in keeping with the purposes of God for her generation. Her intercession was her prophetic ministry.

Undoubtedly Anna's intercessory burden for years had been for a fulfilling of God's Covenant promises to the patriarchs. She was looking for the Deliverer, the Messiah, the Hope of Israel. She was one of the prophetic intercessors God had ordained to pray through those promises of a Messiah. God's entry into every generation has been through a line of faith such as is seen in Anna.

Some of the greatest intercessors of our time have been women. Their sensitivity of spirit, their deep feeling for the heart of God, the readiness with which they yield their soul to plead his cause, all commend them to prophetic intercession. Many examples of such women are seen in the New Testament. It was a woman who anointed Christ prophetically beforehand for his burial (Mark 14:3). The women remained at the cross when the disciples fled (Mark 15:40-41). They were the first to the tomb on resurrection morning (Mark 16:1-3). They were the first to announce his resurrection (Mark 16:9-11).

Most historical records of spiritual awakenings have emphasised the role of men in prophetic intercession, men such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, David Brainard, Seth Joshua, Evan Roberts, Rees Howells and others. I wonder if that picture is wholly accurate. There are more than a few hints in the history of revivals of considerable numbers of interceding women. Perhaps eternity will show a spiritual record different from our own historical one.

A Covenant Basis

To engage in prophetic intercession is to commit to praying through God's prophetic purposes. It is a privilege of the highest order, that of entering into intercession with, and in, Christ. This total yielding to his purpose enables Christ to function in his High Priestly ministry, in its fullest sense, before the Father. In this ministry you become a labourer together with God, you enter into partnership with the Almighty.

The burden of prophetic intercession is the result of a growing conviction of the purposes of God for our time. Whether it is preached, prayed, or prophesied, a thing is only prophetic if it brings us into a knowledge of the heart and mind of God for our time. It might be an increasing inner conviction of his will or a sudden revelation by his word. It may be hearing the condition of something that triggers the prophetic spirit as was the case with Nehemiah. Nehemiah heard the condition of Jerusalem and the distress of the remaining Jews who had survived the captivity and was moved to fast and pray. He entered into a season of intense intercession. The basis of his plea is very important for us.

'I beseech thee O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant... let thine ear now be attentive and thine eyes open to hear the prayer of thy servant which I am praying before thee now, day and

night, on behalf of the sons of Israel thy servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against thee; I and my Father's house have sinned.' (Nehemiah 1:5-6).

Nehemiah's plea cannot find its root of hope in any merit on Israel's part, for he confesses their sin and treats it as his own. Neither is it based on sentiment, for his heart is scandalised by Israel's departure from God. Nehemiah's prophetic prayer base was the covenant of God with Israel. All prophetic intercession is rooted in God's covenant.

Nehemiah did not ignore the condition of Israel, the tragedy that had stripped her of her land, city, temple and glory. Nevertheless, he found his hope in his knowledge of God as a covenant-keeping God. Despite what the church today appears to be, the prophetic intercessor does not base his praying on either good or bad conditions, but rather on the covenant of God.

Coming to the birth

In all prophetic intercession there is the feeling of something struggling to be born. The spirit of the intercessor is the womb in which God's prophetic purposes are brought to their fullness. It is also through intercession that the church overcomes in the conflict that surrounds all prophetic fulfilments, the clash between new beliefs and old traditions.

The prophetic intercessor conspires with God to bring forth his glory in the church. The word 'conspire' literally means 'to breathe together'. It expresses the most intimate joining of life. When God created man from the dust of the earth, he 'breathed' into him and he became a living soul. The Hebrew word here translated 'breathed' is literally 'to breathe violently'. This suggests the intensity of God's action in the fulfilling of his intention. It was experienced again at Pentecost when there was the sound of a violent wind filling the house as God sent his Spirit into the new corporate man of the church.

Prophetic intercession is our conspiring together with God, breathing violently into situations through prayer in order to bring life.

When any community of God's people has the spirit of supplication (prayer) poured out upon them, they share a sense of divine possibility and become excited with the prospect of what God will do. The old limits to their expectation in asking are rapidly overrun. Their praying embraces new possibilities. They are suddenly liberated from considering the condition of things from a human perspective, and see from the perspective of the Holy Spirit. Their intercession assumes a prophetic dimension. It gathers up the promises God has willed for their generation and boldly stakes claim to them in the courts of heaven.

Jesus said, 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent enter it by force' (Matthew 11:12). Such will be the prophetic intercessors of the end time. Will you be among them? Anything less than such selfless, passionate urgent praying will simply be less than what is required for such a time as this.

'On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. And you who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give him no rest until he establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth' (Isaiah 62:6-7).