

THE PRIORITY OF PROPHETIC INTERCESSION



“But if they are prophets, and if the word of the Lord is with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts.” -Jeremiah 27:18

What does it really mean to *be prophetic*? What do you picture when you think of a *prophetic person*? Vivid dreams, open visions, angelic encounters, read-your-mail type words of knowledge? Sure, those things may be included in the lives of some prophetically gifted individuals, but the prophetic is far more than just the specific gifting spoken of in the New Testament. The prophetic is a way of life. Its outworking is not limited to only a few select high-profile type individuals.

Because all spiritual giftings come from God and each are unique expressions of His grace and ability the *prophetic Spirit* is the Holy Spirit Himself. You then, having received the Holy Spirit once you were born again, are prophetic by nature. In Christ, *you* are prophetic!

Often, in the world of charismatic frenzy those with particular prophetic giftings or tendencies can easily become elevated to the status of a super-saint. We often over-recognize their abilities and lavish our affections on their activities to the detriment of many others with so-called *lesser giftings*. (How often have you seen someone recognized for having the gift of *helps*?) This often creates a dangerous imbalance in the overall life of the church while at the same time perpetuating a gravitas for the next would-be prophetic superstars to stake their claim to fame and enter the public arena. This of course was precisely what the apostle Paul was dealing with in the Corinthian congregation circa the early 50s AD (see 1 Cor.12-14). However, unbridled *charismania* was not unique to the New Testament. The most striking allegations against the misuse of the prophetic anointing were uttered from the lips of the prophet Jeremiah as God wrestled to save a nation and people from destruction.

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings." -Jer.23:21-22

In the book of Revelation, a messenger speaks to an aged apostle John and informs Him that, "... *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" (Rev.19:10). In other words, the testimony of Jesus is the *essence* of prophecy. Prophecy reveals the truth about what God is thinking, feeling and doing -whether that's related to a person, city or nation. The prophetic anointing is not to be wielded like a magic wand awing the masses and padding one's ministry profile. Rather, it's intended to bear witness to the beauty of God's character, leadership and power.

In Jeremiah's day there existed a thriving prophetic ministry in the land. Political and spiritual leaders alike sought out the council of the Lord from those claiming a prophet's mantle -and correspondingly, the prophets prophesied. There was only one problem though, "*Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord.'*" (Jer.23:16). The challenge for prophets in any age is, "*Have they heard from the Lord?*" If so, let them pray.

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In the title of this article I used the phrase, *prophetic intercession*. I think, or at least, I hope, that intercession is somewhat understood here in the context of prayer. In Jeremiah 27:18 it means to

earnestly ask for something.¹ The point God is making to the prophets of the day is this. *“If you really hear my voice, press Me to do what I’ve said.” “Don’t simply declare a thing, talk to Me about it.”*

If we dial in just a bit closer the historical context tells us that in this particular instance, God’s words are related to a great judgment crisis sweeping the land of Israel. A spiritual crisis with grave natural expressions was the subject matter of the prophetic movement in the land. Because the balance of a nation was at stake, God took great care to differentiate from those who claimed to hear His word and those who actually did. He challenges the prophets who prophesied out of their own imagination, who were guilty of saying the direct opposite of what He was saying, to test their words by asking God to fulfill them. Inversely, He encouraged those that actually heard His voice to do the same thing. *“Press in and ask Me to accomplish my will in the land and in the hearts of its people.”*

Discerning the word of the Lord is perhaps a topic for a different conversation but insight is given into the nature of the true prophetic through Jeremiah’s words. Prophetic intercession involves discerning what God is saying and then speaking to Him about it in the place of intercession. The true prophetic in a land ought to have a corresponding intercessory response coupled with it. It is simply not sufficient to declare the truth regarding a nation in crisis, it is imperative that we speak to God about what He has said. Tucked within the pages of Jeremiah’s writings lies an incredible promise from the scriptures about what can happen if we pray for our nation to repent, or not. *“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.” -Jer.18:7-10*

God’s desire for prophetic intercession in the scriptures is evident.

“So, I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.” -Ezekiel 22:30

But I [Jesus] have prayed for you [Peter], that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” -Luke 22:31

¹ Brown, M. L. (2010). [Jeremiah](#). In T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (Eds.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Jeremiah–Ezekiel* (Revised Edition) (Vol. 7, p. 349). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

“Now...My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.” -Job.42:8

“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.” -I Sam.12:23

“Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live.” -Gen.20:7

“And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” So, the Lord said, ‘If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.’” -Gen.18:23-26

In our nation today the word of Lord is being claimed by countless numbers of ministry leaders and prophetic people looking to inform, encourage or even to warn. What a challenge lies before us in discerning what God is actually saying! But what really has my attention is whether or not there is a corresponding prayer initiative to go along with the trumpeting of these words.

Many times, a public, prophetic word can add a sense of accomplishment to the giver, especially if it is widely received. It can become easy to get a big head after a while as one’s reputation as a prophet grows. This is certainly not always the case but none the less, *“revelation [or knowledge] puffs up”* (1 Cor.8:1). Intercession though, requires humility. It requires the understanding that we have no ability in ourselves to accomplish anything, whether good or bad. Intercession requires embracing the tension of *what if. What if God doesn’t answer? What if nothing happens?* Intercession requires the risk of one’s soul to labor for something that may seem out of reach. It requires us to trust the character and timing of God. It requires us to demonstrate faith in God as we don’t always see or even know how God may answer us. Intercession requires that we embrace the way of weakness as we engage in what may seem such a foolish way to respond to crisis and need. But isn’t this so like God to wrap the glory of His power in what mankind would otherwise despise?

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.” -Prov.25:2

“He [Jesus] is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” -Is.53:3

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”
-1 Cor.1:25

“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” 1 Cor.2:3-5

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.” -1 Cor.1:27

While the ministry of personal prophecy will one day cease, the priestly ministry of intercession will endure perpetually throughout the ages. And it is precisely this ministry that we have been given today. When we engage in prayer with the Spirit’s revelation concerning the story that God has written for the nations, we enter into a strategic reality that provides safety for the people of God while releasing the power of God into the Earth. The global house that God is building in this hour is the house of prayer.

“For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” -Isaiah 56:7

We would do well to realize that the call to intercession is the call to embrace the mysterious way in which God perfects our whole man and through which He deals with the nations in righteousness. *Prophetic intercession* is our engagement with that brilliant plan! Through that lens then, we can begin to realize the great priority of such a divine strategy. This is an hour unlike any other hour in the history of the earth. The purposes of God are literally bursting into manifest expression all over the globe. They are both glorious and perplexing! God is raising up a people who will listen to what He has to say, enter into conversation with Him about it and faithfully declare His mercy, His righteous judgments and His purposes to a sin-filled, broken world.

Prophetic intercession isn’t just about having the right prayer strategy, it’s about having the right perspective. God has already set His King on His holy hill (Ps.2:6). He has already promised the kingdoms of this world to his Son (Dan.7:13,14; Eph.1:9-10; Rev.11:15). Prophetic intercession involves living with a spirit of revelation and having the eyes of our understanding open to see and embrace the beauty of an end-time God who is leading the nations with a surgical precision. Prophetic intercession is an agreement with all that God considers right -all of His ways, all of His attributes and every aspect of His leadership.

The priority of rightly interpreting God in this hour cannot be understated. The priority of yielding our hearts to Him in order to respond as a prayerful people is imperative. The priority of prophetic intercession is the wisdom of God for this hour.

