
PRAYER IN ISAIAH

BY

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JESUS INTERCEDES FOR TRANSGRESSORS ON THE CROSS ISA.CH.53

In Ch.53 Isaiah concludes the chapter about the Suffering Servant with a further reference to prayer, *“he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, **and made intercession** for the transgressors”* (v12). Jesus is our model of intercession. A further reference to prayer is found in chapter 59 which begins with unanswered prayer; put another way, it means that God says “no.” God’s ear is not deaf that it cannot hear, nor His hand shortened that it cannot save, but Israel’s sin has meant that God cannot save them, nor can he answer their prayers. God is amazed when He saw that there was no intercessor in Israel, *“And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him”* (Isa.59:16). This verse is paralleled in a later chapter, *“And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me”* (63:5). Man’s lethargy in prayer spurs God to independent action. When men are not right with God prayer is farthest from their reach.

INTERCESSORS PRAY IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD ISA.CH.56

We find Jesus taking the words of Isaiah and applying them to Himself and fixing their meaning. Commencing His last week of ministry in Jerusalem He takes up residence in the temple and proclaims, *“It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer”* (Mat.21:13) which is taken from Isa.56:7. Jesus not only applies these prophecies of Isaiah to Himself but at the same time He is authenticating Scripture, which is an important consideration when teaching on the subject of Biblical inspiration. The Isaiah reference adds *“a house of prayer **for all nations.**”* In this small section (vv6-8) Isaiah promises blessing to those who join Israel from outside and embrace the terms of the covenant; these proselytes are promised, *“joyfulness in My house of prayer”* (Isa.56:7).

You may be unfamiliar with biblical words like intercessor and watchman but words like these are the lingua franca of communicating spiritual ideas into our vernacular language of English. Sometimes biblical words are incorporated into our language but they require

their biblical context to give them their true meaning. The children of God are not ashamed of the sacred language of Scripture despite how archaic it may sound because the world's words cannot easily convey to us the spiritual content of God's words. However, we must always keep before us Paul's maxim that intelligibility is the foremost intention in our conversations with unbelievers, he says we must speak "*words easily understood*" (1Cor.14:9). Great preachers like Charles Finney would go out into the fields to talk to the farmers to familiarize themselves with their vocabulary and to appreciate their daily concerns and needs. Of course there were many pastors and ministers who said he was demeaning the pulpit by preaching in the common language of the people. George Whitefield grew up in an Inn and was thoroughly conversant with the vocabulary of ordinary people. He was the greatest evangelist of all time. One cannot overestimate the impact of Christianity and particularly the Bible on our English language.

THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF INTERCESSORS IN ISRAEL ISA.CH.59:16-17

Against the backdrop of Israel's apostasy which was fully known by the LORD (vv15b-16a), the LORD acts to bring salvation with His own arm, "*And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation to him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak*" (59:16-17). How often has the Lord saved a godless nation in response to the prayers of intercessors? Surely Isaiah must be considered as a godly intercessor? There are many examples in Scripture of men who strategically endeavoured to save a nation or a city from divine destruction. Consider Abraham's intercessions for Sodom (Gen.Ch.18), Elijah's intercessions for Israel (1Kings Ch.18:24) and Jesus' prayers over Jerusalem (Mat.23:37). I recommend the biography of Rees Howells of Wales by Norman Grubb as an example of strategic praying that impacted a nation and resulted in God intervening miraculously on an international level.

THE ANOINTED INTERCESSOR AND THE APPOINTMENT OF "WATCHMEN" ISA.CH.62

(a) A New Vision For Prayer (v1) Gathering up the references to prayer that I have given to you already chapter sixty two begins with the single intercessor's prayer for Zion (v1-3)

and is followed by an interceding company who are called “watchmen.” Jesus Christ, the Anointed One (61:1) is the lone intercessor. He always prayed alone although often others were present (Lk.9:18; 22:41). In contrast the prayers of the early church are always corporate prayers. Here the lone intercessor is followed by the company of intercessors called watchmen. He calls for silence, “*Keep silent*” which means to be still and to cease from activity and conversation. The Anointed One will in contrast give Himself to ceaseless conversation in prayer and ceaseless action. The focus of prayer is for Zion to possess the blessings of righteousness and salvation.

(b). A new Vision For 24/7 Watchman Prayer (vv6-7) In the second major section we are introduced by God to His appointed intercessors who will,

- Intercede ***ceaselessly*** (lit.) “all the day and all the night” until the complete work of salvation and righteousness is accomplished. These chosen prayers are engaged in prayer with watchful urgency night and day, which we call 24/7 prayer. Prior to the advent of the Christ Child there were such intercessors in Israel and so there will be such intercessors prior to His Second Advent (Lk.2:36-38; Mat.24:42; 25:13; MK.13:33-37; Lk.21:36).
- They will pray ***aloud***, vocalizing the need, *never be silent*” (cf. v1a).
- They will pray ***effectively***, “*you who call on the Name of the Lord.*”
- Prayer is also ***diligent*** and ***disciplined***, “*give Him no rest.*” Many prayers at this point of persistency fail because they do not know how to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit and they are not experienced in this kind of praying.
- It is (5) ***urgent*** and ***pressing***, many prayers in the Bible illustrate this kind of praying e. g. the prayer of Jacob in Gen.32:26, “*I will not let you go until you bless me.*” Charles Finney in his “Lectures on Revival” devotes three chapters of teaching to intercessory prayer and giving examples from revivals. If you go to my website you will be able to access these chapters on the internet. If you have any problems consult Graham Gordon: GraJackGor@aol.com

- Finally, prayer is (6) **sustained**, intercessors keep on praying until their prayers are answered. Prayer brings tangible and specific results. The work of salvation and righteousness particularly were the focus for prayer and the restoration of Zion. God answers prayer, but part of that process is knowing His will. Prayer restores the church; Jerusalem is made “*the praise of the earth.*” When the church is restored the world is impacted.¹

Moses introduced 24/7 ministering to the Lord in the Tabernacle (Ps 134:1-2; see also 1Chron.9:33). A further chapter in this 24/7 movement of prayer was initiated in Germany in 1727 in the Christian Community at Herrnhut under Count Zinzendorf. This prayer meeting began a few days after a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Community and continued for 100 years resulting in the first great missionary movement of the church in Europe. One in three of their congregation prepared for missionary service.

Today 24/7 praying is a challenge to the church and prayer Houses are being set up in cities worldwide. One of the most famous is the International House of prayer in Kansas (IHOP). In many countries Prayer Mountains are employed by the church for watchmen prayers. Isaiah says to the watchmen, “*ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*” (v6, 7). Notice that they are given instructions and a clear objective before them. Persevering prayer must have a clear objective and definite promises to lay hold of; only then can the prayer of faith prevail.

An example of unceasing prayer is found in the early church on the occasion of Peter’s imprisonment, we read that “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 10:5). It was during the night that Peter was released by an angel from the prison; just suppose that the church had called off the prayer meeting until the next morning, would Peter have still been released from prison? Here 24/7 prayer was effective and accomplished its purpose. Isaiah exhorts the watchmen to give God no rest until Israel is restored and renewed. When the church is

¹ These points on prayer are adapted from Alec Motyer, “The Prophecy of Isaiah” p507.

full of the glory of the Lord blessings will flow out from the church touching the nations of the world.

ISAIAH CRIES TO GOD FOR A FURTHER MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER AS AT SINAI ISA. CH. 64

Ch.64 begins with a heart rending cry from the prophet for God to return to His people and to do His mighty works among them. Many intercessors have understood these verses to have a particular application to revival. I can recall Duncan Campbell, God's instrument in the Hebrides revival of 1949 preaching on this text. The great heart of the prophet cries out in strong groanings for God to come down in His awesome power among His people. Duncan Campbell talked about God taking the field and men exchanging the affairs of earth for the affairs of heaven. Revival is the answer to this kind of praying. Duncan describes an occasion in a house in the early hours of the morning when the Holy Spirit came down, the crockery on the dresser shook as the house was shaken by the power of God. When those men went outside it was till dark but they could hear the groanings of people who were prostrated on the ground groaning and crying to God under deep conviction of sin.

This happened in Acts Ch.4 when the house in which the intercessors were praying was shaken by the power of God. I spoke to a missionary I met in Kazakhstan who was teaching at the same Bible College and he had seen a tribe of head hunters turn to Jesus Christ in Papua New Guinea. A movement of the Holy Spirit began during their first baptisms when several were healed. On one occasion their church building shook by the power of God and they leapt out of the windows wondering what was happening! The missionary who told me this was not a Charismatic or Pentecostal but from the Dutch Reformed tradition. Similar happenings took place during the ministry of George Fox.

Isaiah has this in mind when he described God coming down, *"When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the **mountains shook** at Your presence"* (v3). The intense presence of God resulting from revival praying caused men and women at that moment of God's outpouring to bow before God and to groan over their sinfulness. Isaiah battled throughout his ministry against apostasy and this is the climax

to it. There is only one answer to lukewarmness in the church and that is heart rending prayer as shown by Isaiah the intercessor,

“Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your presence, as when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!

The coming of God among His people is also described by Isaiah, *“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what he has prepared for him that waits for Him”* (v4). When God suddenly comes to His temple in revival power men are always surprised, suddenness is one of the marks of the Spirit’s coming; see my Module on Renewal Movements in the context of Church History which you will get from the website, <http://derrickharrisonchristianresources.web.officelive.com/default.aspx>

GOD ANTICIPATES OUR PRAYERS AND ANSWERS THEM BEFORE WE ASK HIM ISA.CH.66

The final reference to prayer is found in Ch.66 and has been interpreted in the context of revival praying. The imagery employed by Isaiah is that of a woman who brought forth her child *before* she travailed in pain. She brought forth a man child which links directly with Rev.12:5 and refers to Christ. The church travails in birth to bring forth the man child. The sparsity and scarcity of spiritual births in our churches shows the lack of genuine intercessors. Men of God like Spurgeon and Finney utilized intercessors who accompanied their ministry. While they preached their intercessors prayed for fruit to crown their labours. The following verse says, *“Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion **travailed**, she brought forth her children”* (66:8-9). The word “travail” has been correctly associated with Paul’s reference to travail in prayer, *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Rom.8:26). These unutterable groanings are only uttered by the travail of the Holy Spirit in intercession. Hannah experienced such praying and God

answered her prayer by giving her the child she had prayed for. Prayer unlocks the power of God that directly impacts the lives of those who are not yet the children of God.

The awareness of dire need must not detract from the positive declaration that before Zion travailed she brought forth a man child. In seasons of spiritual awakening the Lord dramatically saves souls in answer to prayer. In the great prayer revival of 1859 when the city of New York was engaged in prayer at the noon hour unconverted men and women would appear in the prayer meeting to hear their loved partner praying for them resulting in multitudes of men and women coming to the Lord Jesus.

The young Duncan Campbell who was later used in the Hebrides revival of 1949 was dancing to the music "Over the Hills and far Away" when he suddenly stopped because he heard the sound of nails being hammered into wood and he realized that he was hearing the Roman soldiers hammering nails into the wrists and ankles of Jesus as they nailed Him to the cross. He could not continue and left the dance and with a heavy heart to make his way down the road for home. On passing the little Mission Hall his parents attended he saw the light on and entered, seating himself on the back bench and lifting his head saw his father praying. He left for home deeply convicted of his sorry state without Christ. Arriving at his home the light was on and his mother was praying. He told her what had happened and she told him to go out into the barn and meet with God. There he gave his life to the Lord Jesus. This story of Duncan Campbell is a wonderful example of answered prayer. Isaiah gives a promise with regards to God's eagerness to answer our prayers, *"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"* (Isa.65:11).

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