

The Ministry of the Watchman

by Chip Brogden

The ministry of the watchman is a prophetic and intercessory ministry that involves bringing the Word of God to the Body of Christ, with a focus on revelation, intercession, proclamation, and restoration.

Scripture: Galatians 3:29

Topics: "Prophetic Ministry", "Spiritual Intercession"

Description

Chip Brogden delves into the ministry of the watchman, emphasizing the roles of prophet and intercessor in delivering God's Word to His people. He highlights the importance of receiving revelation from God, engaging in intercession, proclaiming the message with proper timing, and focusing on restoration and rebuilding. The prophet is called to warn and edify the Body of Christ, not the world at large, and must rely on God's timing and methods for delivering His message.

Transcript

Let us take up the topic of the ministry of the watchman with a text from Ezekiel 33:7

7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

The watchman is a prophet and intercessor called to bring the Word of God to Israel, the Body of Christ. We use the term watchman to include both roles of prophet and intercessor.

Most people liken the prophetic ministry to prophesying and speaking of visions and dreams from God. This definition is too narrow and opens us up to misunderstanding. The function of the prophetic intercessor, or watchman, is best defined as taking place in the course of four stages: Revelation, Intercession, Proclamation, and Restoration. We will discuss these areas more particularly in a moment.

We must use the Scriptures as our sole authority for defining and determining the job description of the prophet. Whatever the popular thought or current practice may be, we are not interested in mans notions of what a prophet should be or what everyone else is doing. Taking the passage from Ezekiel as a springboard, we make the following observations:

- 1) "I have set thee a watchman." Prophets are not self-anointed. Prophets are not called by a denomination or installed by men. Prophets do not receive a prophetic ministry through the laying on of hands by another prophet (but it certainly may be confirmed by another prophet; that is not the same

thing). One does not decide to become a prophet, neither may one volunteer their services to be a prophet.

God reserves the right to set His own watchmen, and this He will do according to His will, and according to His timing. We do not know why He chooses the ones He chooses. It is a work of grace. Many prophets are selected from birth or from childhood. John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit within his mothers womb. We dare not intrude into this holy work by setting up our own prophets or stepping into a place that God has not put us. It is Gods Hand, and no other.

2) "Unto the house of Israel." The prophet speaks primarily to Gods people, the house of Israel. The New Testament church is the spiritual Israel of God (Galatians 3:39; 4:21-31). Watchmen do not speak to the world writ large, casting their pearls before swine. They are called to exhort, edify, rebuke, and build the Church of God, building upon the foundation that is laid already in Christ.

The prophet does not usually bring a one size fits all generic sort of message that speaks to the universe. It is typically a surgical strike, directed and honed to penetrate a particular thing in the Body of Christ, with Spirit-led precision that cuts through the formalities and niceties to get to the guts of the task at hand. The very nature of the of message cuts to the quick and makes some gnash their teeth. Even so, God has set Watchman in the Church for its own edification, comfort, and protection.

3) "Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." Why doesnt God speak directly to His people? Why speak indirectly through a prophet? The prophet is called to speak warning. It presupposes that the house of Israel has sunk to such a low degree that God may no longer speak directly to the nation. He must use a man to speak to men.

We may argue that we are all priests and the Lord may speak to us just as He speaks to prophets. This is the spirit behind Korahs Rebellion:

Numbers 16:2,3

2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: 3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

Let us not quibble about through whom the Word comes. The watchman is on the wall and is looking at things from a different vantage point. He sees things you cannot or will not see. Since God has set him there, it would be a mistake to ignore the warning he brings. If God can use a donkey to rebuke the madness of Balaam, certainly we should pay particular attention to one who comes to us in the name of the Lord.

Let us receive the prophet in faith and judge the message he brings with righteous judgment, not murmuring because God chooses to warn us through someone else and not directly. Usually it is because God cannot get through to us directly that He is compelled to send a prophet to arrest our attention. Prophets are a last resort, not a primary expression for God or the preferable vessel God would use. If we will not obey the written Word, God will send a prophet to speak the Word to our face. Thus it is that if they will not hear the LAW and the PROPHETS, they will not believe even if Christ should rise from the dead

and tell them directly (Luke 16:29-31). To reject the one that is sent is to reject the One who sends (Luke 10:16).

This in a nutshell is the ministry of the watchman. The discharge of the burden of the Lord through the watchman may be properly classified as falling into four areas, in chronological order.

First, there is revelation. True ministry must be based upon God-given revelation, not theological degrees of head-knowledge. We may speak from knowledge but knowledge alone does not impart life. If it did only educated people would be saved. Christ says the Spirit quickeneth; the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). That quickening is the operation of the Spirit to impart revelation to us. That, coupled with knowledge, is sufficient.

Prophets do not bring new truth. Revelation is simply a revealing of what is already true and bringing it to bear upon our heart and soul. Revelation is based upon insight into the written Word of God, not into visions and dreams and prophecies. These other things are simply tools for expressing the Word, they are not the Word; no more than the water hose is water, it simply delivers the water.

I am sure you have experienced revelation in the course of your Bible study. A passage may be read for years without making an impression upon us. One day the light of God shines upon the passage and we understand the meaning; we know the intent; we enter into the Spirit of the Word and it becomes exceedingly precious, meaningful, and real to us. This is revelation.

If it were simply a matter of study we could just say study your Bible more. But it is not more study that we have need of; it is prayerfully pondering and meditating upon the Word day and night until the Spirit bears witness with our Spirit and we discern the meaning by way of revelation. Christ spoke the Word, yes; but without the quickening Spirit mixed with faith in the hearers, it will not save. Hence, the prophet (and every minister of the Gospel) must have revelation into the Word to speak with authority and impart life to the hearers.

Let us only speak what God reveals to us by way of revelation. We will surely speak less, but our words will be all the more weighty and full of life. If an individual cannot wait upon the Lord and receive fresh insight into the Word and experience the quickening of the Spirit upon that Word, they cannot minister in any capacity and bear lasting fruit.

Once the prophet has received revelation, he must enter into intercession. We must pray for many reasons. For one thing, the revelation is known to the inner man but the mind is unable to express it. It is yet in an embryonic state and must be drawn out from the spirit. Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out (Proverbs 20:5). As we wait before the Lord He will begin to give us understanding and words to express what we have seen. This process cannot be hurried. It may take days, weeks, months, and sometimes years to give expression to what we have seen.

Perhaps you have risen to speak or share something God has shown you. You know what you are trying to say, it is near and real to your heart; but after two or three sentences you seem to hit a brick wall. You find yourself talking in circles and take your seat more burdened than ever. There seems to be no liberty in your ability to relate what you know. This occurs when we have not lingered in prayer and received from God words and understanding with which to properly express what He has shown us.

And, we must pray not only for the proper words, but for the proper timing. He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him (Proverbs 27:14). We must wait for Gods timing in giving the Word. Many prophets assume that when we have a Word from the Lord we may then take it and shout it from the housetops. This is not usually the case. Most of the time we are simply called to pray and intercede. If the Lord sends us to speak, well; if not, we will pray. You may pray and pray and pray without outward change. Then one day the Lord tells you to arise, gird up your loins, and get thee to Zeraphath. Then let us make haste. Until then, we will wait for His timing as well as His method of expression.

When the timing is right, then the prophet moves into the third stage of action, which is proclamation. Some think proclamation means prefacing things with Thus saith the Lord and speaking out in an authoritative voice. While this does happen it is not the only way, and probably not the best way.

Here is the situation. God has planted a word in our heart. We will be uncomfortable until we find release through prayer or through proclamation or both. Let me explain. If you are burdened of the Lord to intercede for an individual, your spirit will give you no rest until you have prayed through (some of you older folks knows what it means to pray through). Praying through is nothing more than making intercession until the Lord lifts that burden and heaviness off our heart. If we try to neglect or ignore the burden to pray it simply becomes unbearable. We must pray through to obtain release, just as opening the valve of a pressure cooker releases the steam and reduces the pressure.

The same is true of revelation. The prophets of the Old Testament referred to this as the burden of the Lord. Until we effectively discharge the burden we will be most uncomfortable. Jeremiah referred to it: Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay (Jeremiah 20:9).

How do we discharge the burden of the Lord? After we have received revelation, and made intercession, we will know the best course. Sometimes we will find release through writing, such as Isaiah. On other occasions we may compose a song, as David. Or we may write poems and verse, as Jeremiah. We may act out the word dramatically, as Ezekiel. Or we may thunderously speak the Word as Moses, Elijah, or John the Baptist. We may speak in parables as the Lord Jesus. The tools, methods, and ways are different, but the underlying principle is the same. God will give different expression to the proclamation of the Word, and He will be pleased to use the prophets differently in accordance with their unique gifts and personalities.

But the work is not finished when the word is proclaimed. For the prophet is not merely interested in proclamation, but in the fourth stage of his ministry: restoration. Our mandate is to tear down, destroy, and level; afterwards we must rebuild and raise again. We must pray in the promises of God and keep watch over Gods people, encouraging them to full and complete obedience, standing in the gap to avert the very judgment we may have just pronounced upon them.

We should readily see that the ministry of the watchman is primarily one of hidden, secret prayer and fasting. The true test of the watchman is in the prayers that he utters privately, not the prophecies that he utters publicly. Let him fail or make a fool of himself in public and God will still use Him; let him fail in the prayer closet and he will be discarded as a prophet. Those who think the prophetic ministry is all about visions, dreams, prophecy and spiritual gifts had better rethink their position. It is self-denying, thankless,

often unseen and unappreciated labor in secret prayer.

In summary, we conclude that if the Lord was pleased to set watchmen over Israel of old, He is certainly pleased to set watchmen over the Church today. But as we have seen, the ministry of the watchman is more likely to be found in the prayer closet than the pulpit.

May God give us grace and increase the ministry and operation of the watchman!

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