

THE CALL OF GOD AND OUR RESPONSE



The Old Testament gives us the clearest possible indication of the way in which God calls and raises up His people to speak His word and to go forward into battle.

EZEKIEL

In the presence of a messenger from God, Ezekiel said *"I fell face down"* (Ez 1.28). God said to him *"stand up"* (2.1) Then God said *"I am sending you..."* (2.3) He assured him - *"do not be afraid"* (2.6) and said *"listen carefully"* (2.11). God confirmed His ministry - *"I have made you a watchman"* (3.16). God gave him clear instructions *"give them a warning from me"* (3.16). God made him a promise *"when I speak to you I will open your mouth and you shall say this is what the sovereign Lord says"* (3.17). Through Ezekiel God was able to warn against false prophets and was able to give hope that the dry bones in the desert would spring to life. He was also able to give hope that the scattered sheep would be gathered together in the one flock.

In exactly the same way today God raises us up, sends us out, asks us to listen to Him and places His word upon our lips. We can be instruments of renewal and unity. We can play our part in bringing the flock together. We can be used to witness against the false prophets.

JEREMIAH

Just as Ezekiel was chosen by God so Jeremiah was selected by the Lord - *"I knew you...I set you apart...I appointed you as a prophet"* (Jer 1.5). Jeremiah was conscious of his own weaknesses and shortcomings and said *"I do not know how to speak; I am only a child"* (1.6). God responded by saying *"do not be afraid of them, for I am with you"* (1.8). As with Ezekiel, Jeremiah was given a promise. God touched him and said *"I have put my word in your mouth"* (1.9). God instructed him - *"go and proclaim"* (2.1). God confirmed the power of His message - *"I will make my words in your mouth a fire"* (5.14). Jeremiah was given a deep insight into the forces of darkness which were engulfing God's people and he was able both to warn to give hope.

Today God assures us that if we are obedient to Him, He will be with us. He will give us words to speak. He will overcome all our human weaknesses.

ISAIAH

Like Jeremiah, Isaiah was aware of his own shortcomings and he said to God *"I am a man of unclean lips"* (Is 6.5). God purified his lips and we read that they were touched with *"a live coal"* (6.6). God said *"whom shall I send?"* (6.8). Isaiah responded *"here am I send me"* (6.8). God sent Isaiah out to speak His word - *"go and tell this people..."* (6.9). Isaiah was in no doubt that God was speaking to him and was guiding him - *"the Lord spoke to me, with His strong hand upon me"* (8.11). Like Jeremiah, Isaiah identified the darkness of godlessness, but pointed to the great light of God.

When we are aware of our own sinfulness God can use us. Like Isaiah we can respond today to God's command to "go and tell His people".

AMOS

Like Jeremiah and Isaiah, Amos was deeply aware of what he deemed to be his own unsuitability to speak God's word. *"I was neither a prophet or a prophet's son but I was a shepherd and I also took care of sycamore trees"* (Am 7.14). Nonetheless God confirmed that he could use him and said *"go prophesy to my people"* (7.15).

Amos went forward and spoke out for justice and righteousness to a corrupt nation. He was empowered by God to identify the forces of evil. Like him we can today be empowered by God to identify, challenge and overcome the forces of evil.

JOSHUA

Joshua after the death of Moses was told by God *“get ready”* (Jos 1.2). God came to disturb him and assured him *“no one will be able to stand up against you”* (1.5). He promised him *“I will never leave you or forsake you”* (1.5). He commanded him *“be strong and courageous”* (1.6) and pleaded with him *“do not be terrified, do not be discouraged”* (1.9). Joshua set out on a journey in faith.

Today God comes to us and asks us to prepare for the next stage of our pilgrimage. The assurances He gave to Joshua apply equally to ourselves.

GIDEON

God said to Gideon *“go”* (Judges 6.14). He was given the clearest possible direction, but like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Amos, he was aware of what he considered to be his own unsuitability - *“how can I save Israel?. My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my family”* (6.15) God reassured him *“I will be with you”* (6.16). Gideon went into battle against overwhelming odds and won.

Today God is raising up His army which may appear to be weak but when filled with His Spirit becomes a mighty force.

THE CHALLENGE

The people of God are often deafeningly silent today. The Lord is stirring up Christians to enter the battlefield and to speak out fearlessly for Him. Increasingly, as Christians we believe we are being summonsed to break the silence. We are being summoned to recognise the darkness which is engulfing our nation. Specifically, we are being called to enter into spiritual warfare.

Today we can learn much from the prophets and leaders of the Old Testament. They recognised what was happening in their country and they did not compromise or remain silent. They trusted completely in God. They listened to what He was telling them. They were obedient to His words and they spoke out irrespective of the consequences.

In the Maranatha Community we are convinced that God is speaking to us here and now through the Prophets. Just as the Prophets had a great sense of urgency, so today we have a great sense of urgency. On all sides there are signs of the consequences of a nation turning its back on God. In the midst of this there are many people crying ‘peace’ when there is no peace. There are many who are watering down the Gospel of Christ. There are many who are denying the supremacy of Jesus Christ as Saviour of the world. The spirit of the age appears to be blinding many Christians from seeing what is happening.

God is now coming to us to waken us from our slumbers, to shake us out of our complacency and to lead us into battle. He is placing His words upon our lips and He is giving us a vision of His Kingdom.

He is calling us to unmask the spirit of the age and to reveal the brightness of His face in the darkness of the world today.

A TRUMPET CALL

God is not silent He is calling Christians to speak His words and to break the deafening silence in the face of the storm clouds which are gathering over our Nation.

In the Bible the trumpet is the symbol of a God who is alive and active. The trumpet warns of danger. The trumpet summons and assembles the troops for battle. The trumpet sounds the fanfare for the coming of the King. In both the Old and New Testaments the trumpet is always a symbol of God's intervention.

Today Christians are presented with the need to sound the trumpet.

"Put the trumpet to your lips!" (Hosea 8.1)

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew a trumpet..." (Judges 6.34)

When Jerusalem was under siege the message went out *"Sound the trumpet"* (Jer 6.1)

The trumpet is a call to warfare - *"when you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets"* (Num 10.9) The assault upon the Christian faith in our land today should prompt Christians to sound the alarm.

God gives a warning - *"If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people I will hold the watchman accountable"* (Ezek 33.6).

God's people are called to sound the alarm. *"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming"* (Joel 2.1)

Leaders are needed who speak out and who mobilise the people of God - *"If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?"* (1 Cor 14.8).

Trumpets are meant to be heard! - *"Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said 'Let the Hebrews hear!' So all Israel heard the news"* (1 Sam 13.3).

Things happen when trumpets are sounded! *"When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed"* (Josh 6.20).

Now, as at the time of Moses, there is a need for a loud trumpet blast - *"On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain".* (Ex 19.16-17).

When God's people are delivered we are told - *"And in that day a great trumpet will sound"* (Is 27.13).

We are given the clearest indication that the trumpet will sound at the coming of the Lord. *"The Lord Himself will come down from heaven with the trumpet call of God"* (1Thess 4.16). *"He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect"* (Matt 24.31).

God is calling His people to sound a trumpet today to bring God's people together, to warn them and the nation of the seriousness of our situation, and to proclaim the Gospel in language which is loud and clear.