

INTERCESSORS

The second half of an interview with Ern Baxter and Derek Prince by John Beckett.

Q To continue our interview, I want to ask both of you a rather broad question. What do you feel are the most critical issues facing America today?

A (Ern) I'm going to answer that by making comparisons to other nations in which I have traveled recently. What we are seeing on a broad scale is that legitimate authority is breaking down in every area—the juridical area, the judicial area, the economic area, and the governmental area, in which the wrong people are getting into places of power with wrong motivation. It's almost like everything is out of adjustment, and nations are on the verge of collapse, on the verge of having to submit to violent minorities because the majority doesn't have the moral power to withstand.

From the results which I've seen in other nations—some of which have collapsed and others which are close to it—I see the same possibility in America if it is not dealt with. I would hope that here in America we can meet some of these eventualities not only by prayer, but by a ministry intelligently outlining God's order of government for people.

(Derek) I agree with what Ern is saying and I think in a certain sense it could be summed up in the phrase, "the maintenance of proper authority." I believe that in the United States, probably the greatest threat in the long run to authority is the threat to the authority in the home. One of the most desperate needs of this nation is to re-establish and maintain the authority of parents, and *primarily* the father's authority in his house.

The other area that I'm concerned about personally is the conduct of the United States towards Israel. I believe that it would be disastrous for this nation to become in any way unjust or anti-Semitic or to fail in its obligations towards Israel.

Q We encounter a great deal of fatalism in the churches today—the idea that things are destined to get progressively worse as we approach the Lord's return. How is this attitude of resignation most effectively countered among Christians?

A (Derek) I would say it's most effectively countered by more thorough teaching of what the Bible has to say about the closing period. The essence of what the Bible says can be summed up in Revelation 22:11,

"He that is unrighteous, let him be still more unrighteous; he that is wicked, let him be still more wicked. He that is righteous, let him be still more righteous. He that is holy, let him be still more holy."

In other words, we've come to the parting of the ways. The wicked are getting more wicked, but at the same time, the righteous are getting more righteous.

But to emphasize and focus on the darkness is foolishness. It is really a lack of balance and correct understanding. Such an emphasis has a very depressing and enervating effect on Christian faith and activity. I think we need to bear in mind that in the last resort, light always has pre-eminence over darkness.

(Ern) Since you're zeroing in specifically here on the churches and on Christian people, I will confine my observations to that. There are two things in the Word of God that must be kept in balance if we're going to maintain the proper attitude: the *Word* and the *Spirit*. Much of the pessimism, as Derek has said, comes from lack of teaching or unbalanced teaching.

Also, the lives of many Christians are devoid of the Spirit. Paul spoke about people who had a form of godliness but denied the power. Paul didn't say the form was wrong, but that a form without content was wrong.

It says in the Gospel of John, "The light shines in darkness, the darkness cannot resist it." The ultimate triumph of light is as inevitable as the character of God. In my experience, when these things are taught, many Christians who have been pessimistic start to emerge out of their negativism. They start to hear the Word of God's optimism. Faith cometh by hearing, hearing comes by the Word of God. God said that when we latch onto God's encouragement and also get the dynamic of His Spirit, this is the antidote to pessimism.

Q What specific counsel would you offer the Christian who is burdened for our nation and the Church and wishes to become an effective intercessor?

A (Ern) Your question carries in it something that distresses me. You say, "What is the Christian to do?" This has for so long been our context of thinking. We think of the Christian, rather than the Christian *community*. When you look in the New Testament, you find it is concerned with Christians (plural). I understand your question because I'm meeting all kinds of isolated men and women who are deeply concerned. But I think that they should try to find somebody to pray with, becoming

part of a praying community. There is something powerful about a symphony in prayer where two or three agree.

Your question raises the whole tragedy of the Church's impotence, in the fact that the redeemed community is not fulfilling one of its basic functions. When the Bible describes the church in Jerusalem in its pristine glory, in Acts 2:4, it says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship [koinonia], and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Prayer was a community thing. We've got to let the Church see that it is through their corporate community praying that they are literally going to govern world situations.

But back to your individual, I doubt if he can carry this kind of prayer burden alone. I doubt if he's intended to. God doesn't set the solitary alone, He sets them in families and surely they will find one or two others with a like mind, and together they can be the beginning of a prayer community.

Q

As a final question, what do you feel should be our priorities in prayer?

A

(Derek) I think the effective kind of prayer is that which finds out what God is saying and desiring to do, and invites Him to do it. To me, that is the model prayer. "Do as thou hast said" (1 Chron. 17:23).

In talking about God's priorities, I would say we might begin with the Church. I think we should pray for the Church to be cleansed, to be reunited, to be empowered and that the right kind of leadership be raised up.

Then we need to pray for God's Kingdom to come to the nations of the earth. One major means that God uses is to raise up the right kind of leaders and put them in

(Growing through Adversity continued from page 28)

God's character in you, accumulating an eternal weight of glory.

5. Always rejoice in the Lord.

Whenever you come into problems, rejoice in Him. You may even want to dance before the Lord. But whatever you do, embrace the suffering with joy. It's not easy, but it's scriptural to praise and rejoice in the Lord and dance in the Lord when you see affliction on the way.

In closing I'd like to share a statement by Andrew Murray about facing hardship:

First of all, God brought me here. It is by His will that I'm in this strait place. In this fact, I will rest.

Next, He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child.

Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me

the right places. With regard to the United States, I feel God has lifted His hand of judgment for the time being. We have asked Him for mercy and grace, and I believe He has granted it to us. So now I pray that His grace will turn to His glory and I pray specifically for such a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this nation that every stronghold of Satan will be broken down and Jesus Christ alone will be uplifted.

(Ern) I would only add to that the mandate of 1 Tim. 2—the apostolic command given to a redeemed community that understands its responsibility in corporate prayer. We're told to pray for all men everywhere—kings, governors, those in authority over us—that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness—for God would have all men to be saved. The prayer for all men is not for better economic conditions or better living conditions, but put in context, our prayer creates an atmosphere in which the gospel of redemption can be preached and the Lordship of Christ realized.

This prayer should not only be directed at our own sphere—the place where God has put us—but should also encompass God's world vision.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." We've got to stretch our minds to believe that God is interested in the world, praying for all men everywhere. ♣

Day of Prayer and Fasting

At the Chicago Summit Conference in September 1975, national Christian leaders established the first Friday of each month as a day of united prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

As a reminder to those who participate in this day of prayer and fasting, we want to point out that the day set aside this month is: **February 3.**

the lessons He intends me to learn and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

Last, in His good time, He will bring me out again. How and when He knows.

So, I am here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time.

I pray that all of us as God's people would be able to say with Paul, "I will not boast in anything save the cross of Christ, by which I am crucified to the world," and that the Lord Jesus Christ would give us the ability to go through tribulations with perseverance, patience and endurance, forming in us that proven character by which we will reign and rule with Him. ♣

TAPE AVAILABLE

If you would like a tape of Jim Croft's message, send \$4.95 and request "Anointing for Suffering," tape number JC-402. Use form on page 31 to order.