

WHY INTERCESSORY PRAYER?

Saturday, December 27, 2014

Lk 22:31-34

Why is intercessory prayer so important? (And why is it so ignored by Christians today?)

Do we need to pray because God is stubborn? Because He needs a push from us to do something? Is God lethargic? Unconcerned? If so, then prayer makes us better than God morally. Never! Why???

WHEN YOU PRAY FOR EACH OTHER YOU PARTAKE OF THE MEDIATORIAL MINISTRY OF CHRIST HIMSELF.

Jesus entire ministry Is One of advocacy -

- Intercessor - language of legal practice (parakletos). This is the language of the courts applied to everyday activity of praying in someone else' behalf.
- Peri/huper > **Technical language of the cross and Substitutionary Atonement.**

On Earth –

Luke 22:31-34 "Simon, Simon, behold, **Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.** And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." ³³ Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."³⁴ Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

(deomai= intercessory prayer - "edeathan peri sou" "I have prayed intercessory prayer in your behalf". In order that "ma eklipa" = fail, come to an end, give out. Reason Peter didn't totally deny Christ was prayer. Not Peter's good sense, morals, etc. Still denied, but temporary! Without this prayer how different history would be.

In Heaven –

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, **we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

John encourages us with the knowledge that we have an Advocate in Heaven. Christ is presently our advocate. When this was written by John, the Cross, the resurrection and the Ascension were past. Present reality is the Advocate.

God's way to deal with sinners. There is no other way. Jesus entire ministry was one of advocacy. (Parakletos=one called alongside.)

This is what Jesus does. He remains committed to your spiritual well-being. This is how you come to Christ, how you stay in Christ, how you grow in Christ. He is interceding for you. So there is no absence of commitment on God's part to pray for and answer prayers.

So we don't pray because we are trying to twist God's arm, to get Him to act. We pray because He has ordained that progress is made through the means of prayer.

Intercessory prayer makes you most like Jesus -

To become like Jesus is the goal of the Believer, it is your goal:

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Becoming like Jesus Involves intercession:

Through intercession, we are involving ourselves directly in God's way of dealing with sinners. In this kind of prayer we become participants with Him as human mediators, redeemed intercessors. This is plainly the realm of Divine Sovereign actions meeting human action. In this kind of prayer we step into the place of Christ and that touches God's heart. In that place God is active.

We become as Jesus incarnate in this world, because the Spirit in us is showing Jesus to the world.

- **Entugchanew = Meet or Approach someone with a petition, turn to, appeal, intercede either for or against someone, the language of the kingdom and law.**
 - **Jos. Ant. 16:170** an official letter from Agrippa is sent "huper ton Ioudion" to magistrates of Ephesus and Cyrene. Ultimate appeal is made to Caesar's authority itself. This is an official petition.
 - In place of intercession and appeal, Paul calls upon the name of Caesar: **Acts 25:9-10, 24** is similar kind of situation.

Paul moves on in a few verses to tell us into whose Image we are Conforming. Why does this involve intercession?

Because...

Christ Intercedes –

Romans 8:33-35 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? **Christ Jesus is the one who died--** more than that, who was raised-- **who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding ἐντυγχάνει for us.** ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Hebrews 7:21-25 but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "**The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'**" ²² **This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.** ²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ **but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.** ²⁵ **Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.**

Significant part of Mediatorial rule of Christ. Along with this rule as Lord at God's right hand is **our participation with him in prayer as a co-rule with Christ.** Extreme privilege to participate with God's actions through prayer. He who prays little tells God he wants no parts of ruling with Christ.

The Spirit Intercedes –

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the **Spirit** helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the **Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Christians Intercede –

Take the Apostle Paul for example...

Romans 9:1-5 I am speaking the truth in Christ-- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- ² **that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.** ³ **For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers,** my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race,

according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.
Amen.

Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

- **This is one of the most stunning statements of scripture. Emphases of "I myself"...**
- **Wish = more than desire. Actually the common term for prayer itself. I'm praying this specifically...**
- **Ananthama**
- **Away from Christ – cut away...**

I'm asking a real question. Who in this room would be willing to give up their relationship to Christ, to be cursed forever, for someone who is their opponent? Who in the right mind would pray such a thing? Would you? Why or why not?

How can this be? What would create such a deep longing and prayer of the heart for such a thing?

Something transformational happens when a person chooses to see the face of faces before seeing the faces of man. Getting alone with God leads to a change of desires and actions. This isn't normal people!

- **John Knox "Give me Scotland or I die!"**

A man who followed the footsteps of Knox wrote:

One of Knox's influences, George Wishart was a priest who preached for reform of the Roman church and died a martyr's death for his convictions. According to one story, Wishart's executioner asked forgiveness before the act, and Wishart kissed him saying, "Do thy duty." It is also reported that Wishart's former body guard, watching at a distance, prayed, "Lord, make me like that man." The claymore wielding guard was none other than John Knox, who was later captured by Mary de Guise and sentenced to row as a galley slave aboard a British ship. Knox rowed for nineteen months praying: "God give me Scotland or I'll die."

Another author writes:

Perhaps more than anything else, John Knox is known for his prayer "Give me Scotland, or I die." **Knox's prayer was not an arrogant demand, but the passionate plea of a man willing to die for the sake of the pure preaching of the gospel and the salvation of his countrymen.** Knox's greatness lay in his humble dependence on our sovereign God to save His people, revive a nation, and reform His church. As is evident from his preaching and prayer, Knox believed neither in the power of his preaching nor in the power of his prayer, but in the power of the gospel and the power of God, who sovereignly

ordains preaching and prayer as secondary means in the salvation of His people.

Although Knox had been imprisoned and enslaved, and though he was often infirm and under threat of persecution, he consistently lived out his theology, believing that “one man with God is always in the majority.” As such, the prayers of one man heard at the throne of God were a threat to the throne of Scotland. During the time of the sixteenth-century Scottish Reformation, Knox’s ministry of preaching and prayer were so well known that the Roman Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, is reputed to have said, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.”

- **Stephen Olford (Biography quotes)**
- **Billy Graham**

Don’t pray to be like these men. Pray to be like Jesus.

After glorious Ch. 8 - victory in Christ - Paul shows the Spirit's actions in intercessory prayer. Brought Paul to the point that he desires to be anathema, go to hell, in order that Israel might be saved. I dare say that many of us today have a lack of this in our lives. We in contrast wouldn't choose to go to a prayer closet or gather together in someone else's behalf, much less go to hell for another.

Paul is willing to be harmed personally. He desires to be expended eternally in behalf of rebellious stubborn people. True intercessory prayer extends beyond mere words. Only one intimately involved in prayer with God could ever utter such words. You will never say this without praying for another. The reason why the NT lays intercessory prayer at the heart of evangelism and Christian growth is clear, here a man's heart is fashioned into the heart of God. Here God's burden becomes man's. Here we are cast into the image of Christ, The Mediator. Here we become true partakers, true participants, and true agents of Christ's continuing work on earth. In the wonderful economy of grace, God has ordained intercessory prayers because that is the normal way he dispenses grace.

As God's burdens become your own, things happen:

1. Your sensitivity to others increases.
2. You become available.
3. Removes critical spirit.
4. Agony of God and others become your own. Bearing the burdens of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2).
5. Holy Life...leads to...
6. Authority with Almighty God (Jam. 5:16-18).

Take the Entire Church for Example...Ephesus...(dramatic ministry)

Ephesians 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,**⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love⁵ he **predestined** us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,⁶ to **the praise of his glorious grace,** with which he has **blessed us in the Beloved.**⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,⁸ which he **lavished upon us,** in all wisdom and insight⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and **believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,**

Ephesians 1:16-23 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the **Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,**¹⁸ **having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,** that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and **what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,**²¹ **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved--⁶ **and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**⁷ **so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

Ephesians 6:24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

The business of co-ruling with Christ ceases to be theory and becomes actual, practical, and real. We become engaged in co-ruling with Christ in the place of intercession, victory in Spiritual warfare always involves Intercessory prayer. That is how Paul finishes the book of Ephesians! The language of scripture moves from General prayers to a specific kind of prayer: intercession.

Ephesians 6:16-19 In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;**¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,¹⁸ **praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,**¹⁹ **and also for me,** that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel...