

“INTERCESSION”

Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." (Exodus 32:31-32 NKJV)

The fourth part of a complete prayer is intercession. In previous sermons we have covered praise, thanksgiving and confession. My oldest son goes to Advent Presbyterian Church in Cordova, Tennessee. One of their pastors is the Reverend Doctor G. Christopher Scruggs. This past Wednesday night in their Bible study meeting he quoted Warren Buffet as saying that the current economic crisis is an "Economic Pearl Harbor." Pastor Scruggs said that during World War II the British stopped and prayed for the war effort at a certain time each day. He then called on his members to pray for the economy at 8:00AM, noon, and 8:00PM each day. He was asking for intercession on behalf of our nation.

Let's refresh our understanding of what intercession means. It means to pray or ask a favor on behalf of someone else. There are certain things implied in this. The person who is being entreated is in a position of power and can grant the favor if they want to do so. The person who is interceding is on good terms with the one who is being entreated. The one who needs the favor is not on good terms.

Two women reporters and a man, all U.S. citizens, were on the border of China and North Korea taking pictures of North Korea from the Chinese side. North Korean police arrested the two women, took them into North Korea, and drove away with them. The man and their guide escaped. The United States does not have diplomatic relations with North Korea. They asked the Swedish ambassador to intercede.

1.) Intercession is a Biblical concept and for Christians a mandate.

The ancient Greek philosophers wrestled with the concept of fate. In Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus is fated to murder his father and marry his mother. The gods cannot prevent it. Lucian, the satirist, used the concept of fate to mock the gods, "If the Fates rule everything...why do we men sacrifice to you gods and make you great offerings of cattle, praying to receive blessings from you?" *Zeus Catechized*.

Our catechism teaches us that "God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Thus, some have taken predestination as a reason not to evangelize, others have taken God's eternal decrees as reason not to pray. They say it doesn't matter whether we pray or not, "Whatever will be, will be..." Through the prophet Moses, God addressed these questions that He foresaw would trouble believers:

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."
(Deuteronomy 29:29 NKJV)

God's eternal decrees, what He ordained from the beginning, belong to Him. What He has revealed that we are to do, to go into all the world preaching the Gospel to all peoples, and to offer prayers of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession for ALL men belongs to us. God in His infinite wisdom understands how they agree, but we cannot.

The Bible is filled with prayers of intercession. Some of the more notable ones are: Abraham's prayer for the city of Sodom where his nephew Lot was living. Moses interceded for Israel several times: when Aaron made a golden idol for the people to worship while Moses was on the mountain with God receiving the Ten Commandments, when they complained they had no meat to eat, and when they refused to enter

the Promised Land the first time. Ezra has a prayer of intercession identifying himself with the sins of the people. Nehemiah has a similar prayer. Elijah prayed that God would reveal Himself to the people. Daniel prayed identifying himself with the sins of the people.

In the New Testament the greatest prayer of intercession is by Jesus for all who would believe in Him (John 17). There are also Stephen's prayer for his murderers, Paul's prayers for the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians.

Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are revealed to be offering prayers of intercession for us:

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. (Romans 8:26 NKJV)

But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:24-25 NKJV)

We are being prayed for by the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ. We in turn have a duty to pray for our family, as Job did, for our Christian brothers and sisters, and for all peoples:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NKJV)

There are an awful lot of people around you who are not born again. Just as we have no ambassador in North Korea, they have no High Priest in heaven. The Holy Spirit isn't praying for them. You are their priest, you can pray for them. You can go boldly to the throne of grace. So many problems, pains, heartaches, grief. You can take them to the One, the Only One who can truly help them. Once you start praying for others, God will bring strangers to you wanting you to pray for them.

3.) But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12 NKJV)

Prayer is conversation with God. It is like sitting in a chair across from God and letting Him look you in the eyes as you speak. In the epistle to the Romans Paul says the Holy Spirit assists our prayers with groaning that cannot be uttered. In the Revelation in several places we see an angel adding incense to our prayers as they come up to the throne of God. God is so different from us. If we think about it, God has to stretch quite a bit to meet us on our level. Nevertheless, He delights in our prayers and in fellowship with us.

What is the effect of intercessory prayer on us. I once heard someone compare it to being given the keys to a massive control room in heaven and our prayers throwing the levers to make things happen. To me that was blasphemy! When Jesus went apart to be with the Father in prayer, it wasn't to throw levers in heaven's control room. Instead, Jesus' prayers were of the nature, "not My will but Thine be done." Our conversations with God turn our requests in the direction of God's will., of beginning to see things as God sees them.

When we intercede faithfully for someone, we begin to see them as God sees them, have compassion for them, love them as God loves them. It is our human nature to despise those who are weaker, those who are not as educated as we are, those who are poor. We choose those who are just like us. God has chosen the weak things.

