

Intercessory Prayer - Part 1

by Leonard Ravenhill

Intercessory prayer is a powerful means of communication with God, allowing us to seek His guidance, strength, and provision in our lives, and to surrender our own desires and plans to His will.

Duration: 29:32

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 1:1, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Topics: "Intercessory Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the different perspectives of Jesus presented in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew portrays Jesus as a king, while Mark emphasizes his role as a servant. Luke presents Jesus as a man who is dependent on his Father and is known for his deep prayer life. The preacher emphasizes the importance of prayer and obedience in the Christian life, using examples from the Bible such as Moses and Abraham Lincoln. The sermon concludes with a warning about the consequences of disobedience and the importance of trusting and obeying God.

Transcript

This morning we talked about worship, some aspects of it, not all of it. I'd like to write a book on that someday, it's a great theme. This afternoon on intercessory prayer.

Intercessory prayer, taking the wonderful story of Hannah in the first book of Samuel, the first chapter. First Samuel, the first chapter. Let's read, skip all the fancy names in the first chapter, pardon me, in the first verse.

Verse two, he had two wives. The name of one was Hannah, the name of the other Penina. Penina had children, Hannah had no children.

And this man went up out of his city yearly, will you notice that it's yearly, to worship and sacrifice. I didn't mention that this morning, but all true worship involves sacrifice. If I'd been taking my son up to the mountain to offer him like Abraham, I would have said I'm going up to sacrifice.

He didn't say that, he said I'm going up to worship. Worship costs the best that we have, that's why Satan fights it so much. But here again it says that he went up out of the city yearly to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh.

The two sons of Eli, Ophni and Phinehas. Phinehas, the priests of the Lord were there and they went at the time. And when the time was that Elkanah offered a gift to Penina, his wife, and to all her sons and daughters, portions.

But he gave a worthy portion for he loved Hannah, but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary provoked her sore to make a fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, will you notice that? But this prayer is not the product of a sudden emotion, it's something that she's had to work with, it's something that she's had to put up with, as we would say, year by year.

Year by year she went up to the house of the Lord. And so she provoked her, therefore she wept and did not eat. Then Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah why weepest thou and why eatest thou not? Why is thy heart grieved? Am I not better to thee than ten sons? So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh and after they had drunk.

Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord and she was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. And she vowed a vow and said unto the Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid and remember me and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life. There shall no razor come upon his head.

It came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought that she had been drunken and Eli said unto her, how long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee.

Hannah answered and said, no my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

I think this is the, if not the greatest, one of the greatest, one of two great intercessory prayers here in the Old Testament. It has what you might call all the ingredients. Now if that sounds too much like making a cake, it has all the, all the elements that are needed for intercessory prayer are very clearly outlined for us here.

Notice it says in verse 7 that she wept. It says at the end of verse 10 she wept until she was sore. It says at the end of verse 15 that she poured out her soul in prayer.

This always reminds me of Jesus. Obviously he walked into the garden of Gethsemane, and then we're told that he knelt in the garden, and then we're told he prostrated himself, as though the increase of the burden was manifested in his very physical deportment. And so this woman Hannah does the same thing.

She she wept when she prayed, and she prayed until she was sick, as we would say. She was sore in her praying, and then she was not only sore, but she prostrated herself. So there you have the element of weeping.

Her husband said, why don't you eat? So obviously she was fasting. Maybe you should put some chairs at the back, would you, for folk who come in late, then we won't have to keep disturbing the meeting all the time. You can put them behind the others here, not necessarily at the door, but if you, if you do it now, then we won't have to do it 20 times.

I don't like meetings disturbing. It costs too much to get people to settle down without getting disturbed. Thank you.

All right, so she was a weeping woman. She was a fasting woman. Why eatest thou not? Verse 6 says she was provoked.

That's repeated again in verse 7. She had a great provocation. It says in the middle of the 8th verse, not only why eatest thou not, there's weeping in that verse, there's fasting in that verse, and also there's grieving. Why is thy heart grieved? In verse 10, it says she was in bitterness of soul.

In verse 11, it says she vowed a vow. In the middle of verse 11, it says she had an affliction, and then she continued praying, and down in verse 15, it says that she had a sorrowful spirit, a sorrowful spirit. At the end of where we stopped reading in 16 and 17, it says she has a complaint and a grief.

Now, that's a pretty good list of afflictions and sorrow and hardship and everything else that came upon this woman. But the key to the whole situation again is that she was a praying woman. Prayer is the language of the poor.

Over and over again, David the king of Israel says, bow down thine ear and hear me, I am poor and needy. You remember one of the greatest psalms he wrote says, this poor man cried and the Lord heard him. So, prayer is a language of the poor.

The self-satisfied don't pray, the self-righteous can't pray, the self-sufficient don't want to pray. Your prayer life did note how much strength, dependability you have on your own ability, and how much you really believe in your heart when you sing, nothing in my hands I bring. The more self-confidence you have, the less you pray.

The less self-confidence you have, the more you have to pray. I suppose if you start preaching, I know when I first started, which is more than half a century, I've been preaching 55 years, that's a long while. And I remember the first time I preached, I never knew my knees were so friendly.

They, they were just supporting, one supported the other, then the other supported the other, I thought I was gonna go over. My knees were, I don't think I'd tremble if the room was full of devils. I've lost all my anxiety about people, I couldn't care less.

Because you see, I discovered years ago that you can't impress God. Now if you learn that lesson right now, it'll save you a lot of trouble. You may impress people, you can't impress God.

When I listen to some of these men saying, would you send us a little more to get on another station? I think I'd send you to get off. What have you said in the last 25 years? Anyhow, you've got no place. God isn't looking for sponsors, he's looking for servants.

He's not looking for people who, who have sufficiency. As I said last night, you know, the, the Apostle Paul overwhelms me every way, spiritually, his pedigree, his colossal intellect. And yet remember this, he says, that he's very conscious that when he's weak he's strong.

He's always trying to prove to himself and others that he's a nobody. I've heard people say, you know, if that famous man got converted, man, you know, he might forget it. What does the Scripture say? Well, the Scripture says he takes what? He takes the lowly, he takes the things that are not.

We need a bunch of our nots. We have too many I am's for sure, so we could do with a few our nots. I am not, I'm not, I'm not able, I'm not sufficient of myself.

He takes the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence. Now Hannah is praying, what is she praying for? Well, you say she's praying for a child. That's not what you prayed for.

Well, you say she, what did you pray for? She prayed for a man child. All right, then the Lord gave her a man child. No, he didn't.

Well, he didn't give her a daughter. No, he didn't. Is there another kind? There must be.

She didn't get a daughter. She didn't get a man child. Not in the last analysis, what did she get? She got a prophet.

God did more than she could ask or think. You see, so often when we pray we think God is going to answer our prayer for our particular need, when very often he answers our prayer for his need. See, God wasn't answering a prayer to take away her embarrassment.

He was answering a prayer because 20 years up the road he needed a prophet by the name of Samuel. Have you noticed how often in the scriptures the barren women bring forth the most wonderful sons? I was the first son my mother had, which proves the point, but the scripture makes it clear, doesn't it? Here is the first son this woman has and she gets a prophet. You see, it's barrenness.

Or her husband gives her more love, he gives her more jewels, he gives her more clothes than he gives to the other wife. But one day she says, listen, I'm not satisfied with this. I'm not functioning as I should function.

I need a child. You find it put there, epitomized there in the 30th chapter of Genesis again, where Rachel goes to Jacob and throws herself in despair and she says, Jacob give me children or I die. Now I say very often and people don't like it sometimes, that doesn't matter.

God does not answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer. We say prayer changes things.

No, no, no, no. Prayer doesn't change things. Prayer changes people and they change things.

We all want Gabriel to do the job. God says, do it yourself with my sufficiency and my strength. So prayer changes things.

No, prayer changes people and people change things. People often say, why do you insist on prayer so much? Well, the answer is very simple, because Jesus does. People say, I'm filled with the Holy Ghost.

Well, if the coming of the Spirit didn't revolutionize your prayer life, you better check on it. I'm not too sure you got what God wanted you to get. Read the book, The Acts of the Apostles.

In that book, let me see, in the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit is mentioned 52 times and 35 times in that book, prayer is mentioned. That little book next to the book of the Revelation, the book of Jude, remember there? He talks about praying in the Holy Ghost. People say, yeah, I pray in tongues.

I don't care what you do or you don't, that's not. Romans chapter 8 talks about groanings which cannot be uttered. People say, well that's praying in tongues.

No, no, no, God's more sense than you, in case you don't know, or me. If it was praying in tongues, he'd say what? I've been in meetings when God has come and just collapsed a whole bunch of people and they've run to the altar and they no sooner hit it than they start praying in tongues. Now often that's a get out, that's a cop out.

They won't face up to the thing that God Almighty, they come to get blessed, stay away. What is an altar for? Well as far as I know, in my simplicity in the Old Testament, the only thing an altar for is to die. You don't want to die, don't come.

We make a, we make the altar a bit of relief. We come and weep a few tears and go back and do the same stupid thing next week. Now that doesn't make sense.

Die to a situation, die to the thing that God has convicted you about. So prayer again, you see in the life of Jesus, if you read Matthew, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all right. Matthew reveals Jesus as what? A king.

Mark reveals him as a servant. In Matthew you get a pedigree, in Mark there's no pedigree because servants have no bloodline. In Luke you have another pedigree.

In John, you have the whole epitome of John. In the first verse, John 1.1 says what? In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God. All right, in the beginning was the Word, that's eternity.

The Word was with God, that's equality. The Word was God, that's deity, that's the whole book. 92% of what John says in his gospel is John's.

He doesn't copy like Matthew, Mark and Luke, swap and change and do this. John introduces you to eight miracles, all right, six of them are new miracles. He introduces you to four new people, for instance Zacchaeus and Nicodemus that the others do not mention.

He introduces you to the work of the Spirit from chapter 14. The gospel goes down, it gets deeper in chapter 15, deeper in chapter 16, deeper in the 17th chapter. Now, have you ever considered this, that Jesus never prayed with his disciples? Ever thought of that? I can't find any record where Jesus ever prayed with his disciples.

You say, what about John 17? These words speak, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven. Well, sure he prayed with his disciples round about him, but he never prayed with his disciples. I remember the first time I went to Dr. Tozer's church and I said to his senior deacon there, well it's been a kind of a dream, that was 1950.

I kind of wanted to meet Dr. Tozer and I hope I'll get to talk with him and I hope I get to pray with him. Isn't it a prayer meeting tonight? He said, yes, but the doctor doesn't come. What? Never comes to prayer meeting.

Never comes to prayer meeting. Well, Brother Rayner, he said it was like this. He did come for years.

He'd bring a nice dissertation on prayer and then he'd say, now let's all get down and pray. Nobody prayed. They were all waiting, waiting, waiting.

Then Dr. prayed, and when he prayed nobody else dared pray. You see, he prayed not just with a vocabulary, but he prayed with a depth of understanding that, well, it's rather like hearing an orator speak and then you stand up and say A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and so on. Do you remember the man? You see, it's not altogether what you say.

I know I talk a long while, but it's all good, you've got to admit. But anyhow, do you remember on the day when that famous speech was made that's in millions of books and has been said millions of times? The day when Abraham Lincoln got up and gave his Gettysburg speech. Do you know who spoke before him? Do you know how long he spoke? The speaker before him stood up and spoke for two hours and thirteen minutes.

A hundred and thirty-two minutes. Abe Lincoln got up and spoke for two minutes. Just over in his address.

Now, who do you remember? The man that spoke before him? The man that was the greatest orator America ever had? The man that was the first man to get a PhD out of a foreign country? The man that was the first American ambassador to other countries? Do you remember his speech? No, no, you don't. Is it in the statute books? No, it isn't. Is Abraham Lincoln's? Yes, it is.

Again, I say that Jesus, as far as I know, never prayed with his disciples because he prayed in a dimension they never understood. As I said, maybe yesterday or maybe I said at Teen Challenge last week, I don't know. But I think the greatest privilege that human beings have ever had were given to Peter, James and John.

Again, I remind you that all the disciples did not go to the Mount of Transfiguration. All the disciples did not go into the Garden of Gethsemane. I think the greatest privilege given to human beings was to go into Gethsemane with Jesus and they fell asleep.

Doesn't that seem incredible? They went on the Mount of Transfiguration. They fell asleep. Jesus said, well, they're tired.

I'll go back. He went a second time. They were asleep.

He went a third time. They've had your chance. You see, we think we can toy with God almost.

Well, if I backslide a little or I ease off a little or I, you know, don't keep up with that. He called me to, I'll ease off and go. No, no, you won't.

Isn't it, isn't it really amazing that God never, never threw up into the face of Moses that he was a murderer. God never, God never brought his sins up and said, you dirty old murderer. You better watch what you're doing because, you know, God forgot all about it.

But one day he gave a commandment to Moses and Moses disobeyed him. It's very simple. You see, the first time, have you noticed this too? Well, I think of Moses here.

The first time he got the tablets of stone, God made them. God chiseled them with his own finger and he gave them to Moses and Moses got angry. You know, the other part of the story.

The second time God said, you go dig the stones. I'm not doing it for you. So, he had to sweat and toil and chisel that old rock.

Got his fingers all sore and felt mad about the whole thing. Now, on the other occasion, God said to him, you smite the rock. The second time he said, speak to the rock.

But he got angry. Not only smited, he smote, you know, in your temper, you lose your balance and he hit it twice. For losing his temper for 30 seconds, he got 40 years of punishment.

God never let him go into the promised land. He didn't chastise him for being a murderer. He chastised him because he said that he loved God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and strength.

And he disobeyed God and for 40 years he lived under a cloud. The table's hard. But he never got into the promised land.

Yes, he did. Of course, he did. Took him nearly 2,000 years, but he made it.

Who was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? Right. But think of what he missed. Isn't it terrible for one act of discipline? You better watch if God tells you to do it, do it.

Because there are penalties if we don't do it. All right, then you get Matthew showing you the kingly life of Jesus. Mark shows Jesus as a servant.

Luke, John shows him as the Son of God, equal with God. He was in the beginning, eternity, with God, equality, and with God deity. He was God deity.

Now take the other gospel we didn't mention there, the other interpretation. Matthew, Mark, Luke. Luke shows Jesus essentially as a man, totally dependent upon his father.

So, the other evangelists say that, oh let me say this, you could change the title of the gospel according to St. Luke and you could call it the gospel of prayer. It's the life, the prayer life of Jesus. The other evangelists say that Jesus was in the Jordan and the Spirit descended on him as a dove.

But Luke says it was while he was praying the Spirit descended on him. The other evangelists say that Jesus died on a cross. But Luke says even when he was dying he was praying for his disciples, for those who persecuted him.

The other evangelists say he went on a mount and he was transfigured. Luke says it was while he was praying he was transfigured. There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer.

You can boast in your preaching, you can show off, but I'll tell you what. You know the secret of praying is? Praying in secret. When thou hast shut the door.

You can't show off when the door's shut and there's nobody there. You can't display your gifts like some preacher that wants to be impressive and he's a fireball preacher. You know these little two-by-four preachers that have their picture taken like this, you know.

Ever seen any of those posters around? This man's coming to town, ooh, come on in, he's a fireball preacher, greatest thing since Elijah. Well you can impress others but you can't impress God. You can show off on the platform, singing, preaching, doing your stuff, but not in prayer.

You'll sabotage your own prayer, you'll kill your own prayer. All right, Jesus prayed then when the Spirit descended upon him, Jesus prayed on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus prayed on the cross. And then of course the other disciples say that Jesus chose twelve disciples.

Luke says it was after he spent a night in prayer he chose twelve disciples. I wish all our churches would spend a night in prayer choosing twelve deacons, most of them never get in. Good, somebody has experience.

All right, but he spent a whole night in prayer before each other. Oh, he's a son of God, I mean he's the anointed of God, he was anointed for his ministry. Why does he need to, I mean you get the baptism of the Spirit, you've nothing else to do from here to eternity.

Sit on an escalator and make it. That's our stupid idea. If Jesus needed all this time in prayer, don't you and I need that time in prayer? If he needed in every crisis, don't you and I needed every crisis? If he needed, and it says that they went to bed, that was what they did, and he went to pray as was his custom.

It was his custom to pray. Now again Hannah prayed, yes she prayed and she got a child. No, she didn't get a child.

Not just a man child, she got a prophet. This broken woman says, give me children or I die. Did she get a prophet? No, she didn't get a prophet because God didn't need another one.

He did need a prime minister and she happened to bring to birth Joseph. God didn't just solve her problem, he solved his own problem. Dr. J.S. Stewart said years ago, I remember, he's one great preacher I never heard, but I think he's written some great things.

But I remember he said, you know we preachers, when he was talking about himself, he said, we prepare truth, we get a whole slab of truth. And we say, now after this hymn the preacher will preach and you expect them to open their mouths and it's taking you hours to prepare. They say, there you are, and they swallow it in a slab.

No wonder they get indigestion. Well that happens so often and it happens in reading the Word of God. You know, you read it, you don't get any goose pimples anymore, it doesn't stir you, it doesn't humble us, it doesn't break us, it doesn't challenge us, you just read it.

I mean, I never go out of the house in the morning without praying and reading a scripture. That's what people, I know people who do that, religiously, superstitiously. Some people read the horoscopes, of course, before they go out.

The same thing almost to many people. Do I read it because it's food, it's a lamp for my feet, it's a staff, it's my sword by which I fight, it's my guide from here to heaven. Why do I read it? How do I understand it? What do I get out of it? You see, one of the most difficult things in the Christian life is the period of growth.

Now, don't for a minute say, well, you know, in one way I'd like to be 50 or 60 years of age because I'm sure I'll be a lot better informed. No, no, no, you won't. I know people who've been, say, 40 years that aren't two years old yet.

One of the greatest hymns ever written is a little hymn that says, Trust and obey, for there's no other way. And if you don't trust and obey, you're rust and decay, so make your choice. Trust and obey, for there's no

other way.

That's all there is to it. That's all men of God did. I don't care how big they ever became.

They trusted, they obeyed. You see, it's so easy to sit down and say, you know, I like to read that story, it's wonderful, you know. And it says Elijah was a man, you know, he had nerves.

Did you ever realize that? Maybe he got stomachache. He was flesh and blood, just as you and I are, so we won't have any excuses. Faith, that is going to be trusted, is going to be tested.

Faith is something that grows. You see, if you ask 50 people, what is, what is God's problem in America today? You might get 50 different answers. God's only got one problem in America, that's his church.

All the other problems are the churches. His problem in the Old Testament was not the Amalekites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and all that. His problem in the Old Testament was Israel, his problem today is the church.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they're the first four books in the New Testament, you must remember that. All right, what's the next? The Acts of the Apostles. What is the balance of the New Testament? Who is it written to? Is it an epistle to lost men?

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