

Intercession in Prayer

by Paris Reidhead

Intercession is a crucial ministry that affords God the legal right to work in behalf of men, and it is the foundation of all revival, growth, and spiritual life in the church.

Duration: 41:26

Scripture: Matthew 9:38, Ephesians 2:6, 1 Timothy 1:20, Hebrews 10:19-20, James 5:16, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:5-6

Topics: "Intercession"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of intercession and prayer in the mission of spreading the word of God. The key message is that the responsibility to pray for laborers to be sent into the harvest rests with the church. The speaker highlights that although God has already done so much for humanity, including sending his son for redemption, he still requires the church to intercede and pray for laborers. The sermon concludes with a call for believers to commit to the ministry of intercession, as it has the power to transform the world.

Transcript

Will you turn again, please, to 1 Timothy, chapter 2. We are dealing these days with aspects of prayer. Ephesians 6.18 is that which is our foundation text, praying always with all prayer. And we've sought to see the several aspects of prayer, that in realizing that they are not, shall we say, different prayers, but different kinds or aspects of prayer, we'll recognize that the exhortations in the scripture to pray include all of the various ministries of prayer.

Notice this first verse, as Paul, writing to Timothy, delineates here, in some measure at least, these aspects of prayer. I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks be made for all men. There's been a controversy down across the centuries as to whether these were to be viewed as synonyms, different words for prayer, or aspects of prayer.

And I think that the debate has gone long enough, I don't propose to enter into it, nor to dogmatize, in my own opinion, that he is speaking, as we are, of different forms, manners of praying. Not postures or attitudes, but different ministries in prayer. We're dealing particularly today with intercession in prayer.

Webster defines it this way, to act between parties with a view to reconcile differences, to beg or plead in behalf of another, to mediate. This is what we mean by intercession. Now, this is one of the most important aspects of prayer.

It is no wonder that the prophet Isaiah could write, and God wondered that there was no intercession. He wondered, marveled, was amazed that there was no intercession. Perhaps the generation that is in the darkest spiritual blindness and death is the generation that has wanted intercessors and found none.

Perhaps all that is of God, every move of God, all that meets the needs of man and brings honor and glory to God, is the result of intercession. If it's this important, and I firmly believe it is, you have to ask this question, do I know what intercession is? Am I an intercessor? Is my praying on the level of intercession? Or have I been content just to pray, without realizing that there is even such a ministry as intercession? Let's think for just a moment. What does it mean? Why? Years ago, coming home from Africa, seeking to prepare a message on the theme of mission, I was reading from Mark, and studying that portion, the field is quite all ready to harvest.

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he'll be able to thrust out laborers into his harvest field. And in studying this in the original, I noticed from the books that were at hand, and the helps that were available, that you should actually translate that verse in this fashion. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, in order that he will be able to thrust out laborers into the harvest.

Well, I studied it, wrote it down. At the time was at a seminary, just for a few weeks residing. So I went over to the head of the Greek department, and I presented my work to him.

I said, is this correct? When I saw him two or three days later, he says, it's correct. But it's too difficult for me. I'm not going to get involved in it.

You can if you want to. But the implications are far too hot for me to handle, were his words. Well, listen to it again.

Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, in order that he may be able to thrust out laborers into the harvest. What does it have reference to? It has reference to the fact that the harvest is there. God saw the world, and loved it, and gave his son.

The son saw the world, loved it, and gave himself. Redemption full and free has been provided. But now he turns to you and to me, and said, I want you to enter in to that which I have done by interceding, by praying that the Lord of the harvest will be able to thrust out laborers.

It does seem rather strange that we'd have to ask God to do it, when he's already gone to such lengths without our prayer. We didn't ask him to send his son into the world, and we certainly didn't pray that his son would die. Why then are we involved at this end? Why are we involved at this point? How come that the process has gone this far, and now God is asking us, through his son, to pray in order that the Lord of the harvest may be able.

Not in the sense certainly of ability, but in the sense of at liberty, to send out laborers. We know that in his sovereignty he has the ability to do it, but we also know that when a sovereign God restricts his sovereignty by saying, I will do it thus and not thus, it doesn't behoove men to say, now God, you've got to do it the way we think you ought to, to be consistent with your sovereignty. When God says you are to pray in order that laborers can be set, sent forth into the harvest field, far be it from us to become sovereign and say, no God, you do it because being sovereign you can do anything you want to, so it's up to you.

This isn't proper, and yet it is the presumption that we often make. It behooves us to recognize that there's a very real reason for our Lord's word being presented to us just as they are. There is a conflict going on.

Men, Adam and all of his family since, have turned over to the God of this world, the lordship of the world and of their lives, so that sinners are called the children of this world, and they're called, said to be of their father the devil. They belong in his kingdom, they're under his rule, and the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them. We found in Africa that mothers would bring their children to the witch doctor, and he would carve into the little child's face brand marks, delineating that child as long as the child should live, as belonging not to the tribe alone, but to the evil spirits that had dictated to the fathers of the tribe what the procedure should be, what the brand should be, marking that child off as thus involved in demon worship.

And so in a very real sense it could be said to be the tribal marks of hell. So we are faced then with this this thought, that if there is a sense in which men are under the control of Satan and belong to him, God could move from heaven sending his son and his son to the cross and the tomb and raised again in triumph. But now though God has made full provision for mercy and grace, he turns to men and says I want you to ask me to move in behalf of these that still sit in darkness.

Just as our Lord Jesus came, faced his generation with his power and claims to the authority of his message, and there were those who chose. Satan had come to Eve and spoke and his words were heard and were believed and obeyed and the race was plunged into ruin. The Lord Jesus came to those that were in under the sentence of death and he spoke.

And his words were believed by some and they received those words and they were changed, gloriously changed, redeemed. Now with that seed of the company that he was able to reach personally, he is speaking saying I want you to become participants with me in that which I am to do. And so in a very real sense intercession can be viewed from this and other scriptures time won't allow me to develop, as affording to God the legal right to work in behalf of men.

God as judge of the universe has in a sense one obligation to rebel sinners and that obligation is to judge them justly. But you know and I know that if all sinners get from God is justice and judgment, they are forever lost. And that's the only thing a sinner can demand and the only thing he can demand he doesn't need to ask for he'll get anyway and if he gets it there's no hope.

Therefore God recognizing the right of the sinner to revolt and recognizing the right of Satan to blind and hold that sinner by virtue of man's concession to Satan, has turned to his own and said now you are kinsmen with the sinner, you are of his flesh and of his blood, you share his life, you share his death, you are under the same sentence and you've been redeemed. You've received me and in me you've come translated from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of my dear son. Now as a kinsman representative for those still in bondage I want you to intercede for I have to wait until either the sinner asks me or the sinner's legal representative asks me.

And there's where you come in. Therefore the foundation of intercession lies in a relationship that you once had to Satan and you now have to Christ and therefore because you are kinsmen to those still in the bondage of Satan your intercession affords God the legal right to begin to work in the sinner's heart. We'll proceed and repeat this so that you're I'm sure you'll see it as we develop before.

Now the foundation of this ministry of intercession is our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. You understand when Christ came into the world it was to identify himself with us by taking bodies like our bodies. He had given by Mary a body similar to yours and the human nature similar to yours with but one exception without sin so that he could be tested and tempted in all points like as you are without sin.

The Lord Jesus not only identified himself with us thus by eating as we eat and walking as we walk and working as we work and being tried and tested as we are but when it came to the matter of his redemptive hour he reached down to you if you please for we're concerned about you today and he drew you to him so that in the father's eyes he stood there as you your sin upon him and reckoned to him and in God the father's eyes God the son had been made to be you. Therefore he identified himself for you we read in Romans 5 that Christ died for us and in Romans 6 that Christ died as us and these two truths present to us in in simple form the extent of his identification. In the thus in the eyes of God when Christ died for you you die.

Thus this is the reason why in his book *The Normal Christian Life* Watchman Nee who has one chapter knowing knowing this that when Christ died we died knowing that we are crucified with Christ and then reckoning but the historical event of your death was the day Christ died. Now he identified himself with us so that there were in one way of presenting it two people on the cross Christ and you for you were crucified with Christ. There were two people in the tomb Christ and you for you were buried with Christ.

There were two people quickened Christ and you for you were quickened together with Christ. There were two people raised Christ and you for you were raised up together with him and there are two people seated in the heavenly Christ and you for you are seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. Now you didn't ask to go and he didn't really ask if you wanted to come but he simply did this by virtue of his purpose in redemption.

Thus in Revelation the first chapter we can read unto him who loved us and washed us in his blood and hath made us to be kings and priests or made us a kingdom of priests. He didn't ask us he did it. He didn't inquire if you'd like this he did it.

Now you are whether you know it or not a priest you're either a derelict priest or you are a faithful priest but priest you are if you're in Christ. For he unto him who loved us and washed us in his blood and made us a kingdom of priests. And the place of this ministry is in the very holiest of all seated with Christ in the heavenly.

So we are expressly told that we are part of this priesthood but writing to Peter he says that we are a holy nation a chosen generation a royal priesthood and speaks again that we should show forth the praises of him who's called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. But in Hebrews the 10th chapter in verses 19 and 20 he gives us the the nature of our ministry instructing us in that which is so clear that we just accepted as being his intended purpose. Listen having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil that is to say his flesh.

Having an high priest over the house of God let us draw near with the true heart in full assurance of faith making it quite clear that the place from which we pray and intercession is not as it were here under the circumstances but there seated in the heavenlies in Christ. And thus Hugo writing so beautifully of this could speak of the enthroned life as being the normal state of the believers understanding of his relationship to Christ. Enthroned with Christ seated with Christ.

Now if we can accept this as the foundation of the privilege that we have been taken with Christ to the cross and to the tomb and to the throne and realize that it's by virtue of his union with us his identification with us and ours with him that we have this access to the holiest of all this privilege of going into the presence of God and we have been made a kingdom of priests then you can recognize what great responsibility rests upon the church and what dire consequences result from ignorance here. Andrew Murray in the with Christ in the school of prayer indicts the church in this fashion referring to the verse that I used at the beginning pray the Lord of the harvest. He said the key that will open the door through which all that are needed for mission witness rests squarely in the hands of the church and people languish in darkness because the church has been unwilling to turn that key.

Well we could go far past and beyond then the matter of merely dealing with missions as the whole intent of this. We would say that all revival in the church all normal growth and spiritual life in the church all evangelistic effect and success and ministry through the church everything is the product of intercession and therefore it is all the more surprising if this is truth known and understood in the church that we should have so few that understand the ministry of intercession. Now let it be understood further that this is not a ministry to which a few are called and others are released any more than the Lord Jesus said some of you will be witnesses in Jerusalem and others under the uttermost part of the earth.

He did not say that but it's been so construed. He said ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and under the uttermost part of the earth. So it is that we pray both the prayer of thanksgiving and affirmation and praise and intercession and every Christian is called to be an intercessor for every Christian has the privilege of access into the presence of God.

The priesthood of the believer is the foundational truth that distinguishes the church in post-reformation times to that of the dark ages. We have understood that one can know God without the work of priests without some intermediary telling us that we're right with God. We can meet him and know him and know that we know him.

This is the heritage of the reformation. The priesthood of the believer therefore is a cherished truth and you will hold it and covet it and cling to it but are you as ready to exercise it as you are to defend it. This is the indictment that could well be leveled at all of us to some degree.

Let me illustrate from the Old Testament the nature of this intercessory ministry in order that you might have some further insight as to how you are involved. The garments of the high priest are a picture of both the Lord Jesus and his work for us and because we are in him our ministry as well. You will recall if you read recently Exodus 28 that God instructed Moses to have made an effort that would be put upon the over the heart of the high priest.

The names of the tribe were to be written engraved in stone over the heart of the high priest. Covering his heart therefore were the names of the tribe thus identifying himself with his own hard passion his own concern his own deep feeling with all the needs of Israel. And so it is that you as an intercessor are to have a heart relationship to the need for which you pray and those for whom you intercede.

For instance you there ought to be in your heart a concern for the lost. Oh what a indictment it is of us when we have to admit I have lost my love for the unsaved. I think it might well be said that we have a dimension of depth here.

The more you love the Lord Jesus the greater your love for him. The greater is going deeper is going to be the reflection of love for the unsaved. The greater will be the compassion for the lost.

And we might recognize therefore that this becomes to some degree a measure of our real love for the Lord Jesus our burden for those for whom he died. With Paul again we ought to cry oh God give to me the fellowship of your suffering. And I believe that this in large measure is our Lord's suffering as he sees these for whom he died living and going off the scene of time into eternity without having heard savingly of him.

And so the high priest having the names of Israel on his heart is going to share their danger and share their their the sentence of their death and their doom. Have you lost the sense of the fact that unsaved people are hanging over the mouth of hell? Have you lost the awareness that they're but a breath out of the pit? Oh that God can give back to you this morning as a potential if not actual intercessor a great burden for the lost. Oh God give us calvary hearts.

Give us hearts that yearn for the unsaved. The love for the Lord Jesus reflected in a concern for those who know him not. I believe it could well be said of our generation as of any other that the world is dying for a little bit of love.

I don't believe it's just words and doctrine. I can't believe that the world simply needs to hear Seymour Roadside text as much as I believe in them and car cards and tax. This is needed but the world is truly dying for a little bit of love.

Oh that as priests there ought to be. We can't of course pray an intercession for all sinners but if we're walking in the spirit certainly there will be some pressed upon our heart whose cause we'll plead and we'll act between parties with a view to reconcile their differences and we'll beg or plead in behalf of these others that they might come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it isn't only for those that are in eternal danger but the high priest had over his heart the names of Israel and this ought to be to share their longing.

For in the heart of every Christian is the longing. Paul did this. He knew that if they were born of God they wanted to be like Christ.

This was as natural as breathing and so he said little children that I prevail night and day till Christ be formed in you. He was interceding in behalf of the church and I believe that it's pastor and elders and deacons and deaconesses and all have any appointed responsibility from the Lord to recognize that he gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the faith into the work of the ministry. And it ought to be a mutual concern not restricted to any one man that the church grow.

Everyone that has taken ground with Christ ought to yearn and long that others take that same ground and that we move on together as a people who are concerned one for another that we grow up into Christ in all things. This is a reflection of our intercessory ministry. Then of course how we ought to intercede and take the part of others when we see them being turned aside into sin.

With what tenderness does Paul speak of Hymenus and Alexander and how how sensitive you recognize his heart when he says I delivered them on Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. His heart is broken because these two that have been numbered have shared in the the rebellion and sin that has brought their lives thus into such shame that their names should be incorporated into the word. Why the

spirit of God can give to you a sensitive concern not to speak of the failures and faults of others to others.

What good will that do but oh to call before God that they might meet him and partake of his life and his victory and become all that he wants to be. To intercede isn't just to complain it's not some celestial complaint it's creative love praying. When you see this person not so much as they are but as they're going to be and as they can be and your heart longing reaches out to God and you're not saying oh God look how terrible my husband is look how horrible my wife is look how vicious oh no no no not that but oh God by thy grace this attitude changed and these relationships changed and you're praying to what you see they can be.

This is intercessory prayer where as a priest you carry them on your heart you long for everyone to be all they can be. But it's not only that we also find that the names were not only over the high priest's heart but they were on his shoulder and this implies that he didn't only feel for them but he did something concerning them. And so it is that God has ordained that there should be a gentle entreaty, a gentle request.

The two aspects of ministry go so closely together to intercede for men with God and to intercede with men for God. They go so closely it's illustrated in Moses you know. Moses was of Israel he was a kinsman to them.

He'd been appointed by God to represent Israel. He was given access into the very presence of God in order that he might do that. In the 32nd chapter of Exodus you remember when Israel so grievously sinned that God said he wouldn't go with them any further.

Then Moses goes into their presence and he says they've sinned against thee grievously. Yes he acknowledges their sin, he confesses their guilt. But then he says God if thou can find it in thine heart to forgive.

Here he's entreating for forgiveness and he's pleading that God will be moved in mercy to forgive this erring rebelling people. Then he identifies himself with the Israel by saying if you can't then I've sinned and you've been gracious to me but my sin I see as bad as theirs. Blot my name out of your book.

If they can't then I can't. Oh what compassion oh what longing oh what great desire is in this man's heart. Reflected in Paul's heart when he said I could wish myself a curse for my people my kinsmen according to the flesh.

I'm willing to be damned I'm willing to be totally lost if somehow through that they might be saved. This I believe is part of the deep longing and yearning that has to be on the foundation of intercessory prayer. But it also requires as it was in the case of Moses a willingness to go out and face sinning Israel and command them to repent and to destroy those works they've done and to deal with them on the basis of God's word.

And I am sure of this that if you have been faithful in intercession in behalf of saints and brethren and sisters in Christ then when you go to them that will be with the gentleness and the tenderness that they'll recognize. How many times the reproof and the rebuke is rejected and resisted because it hasn't been preceded by intercession. Moses I'm sure stood before Israel with all the firmness and all of the hatred of sin that he could have from being in the presence of God.

But I am confident that it also carried with it that tender love that will characterize your ministry when you're called upon to speak to another. What do we see then as the object of all intercession? What is it? What do we see as the underlying purpose in intercession? This ministry that's going to carry you into the presence of God not primarily in your own behalf but as a legal representative in behalf of sinners, in behalf of the church, in behalf of erring saints. What is it? What's the motivation? Is it simply that the needs of people be met? Is it simply that their problems be solved? Is it the difficulties be removed? That life become easier for them? That they escape hell? Oh no.

The foundation of intercession has to be viewed in terms of that which is the foundation of all of God's operation in this present time. I believe that ever since our Lord Jesus prayed, Father glorify thou me with the glory I had with thee before the world was, everything that God is doing from the throne he is doing to answer that prayer. I believe that everything that God is doing in any heart he is doing to answer that prayer.

I believe you can simplify your understanding of divine government by saying the universe is ruled to answer that prayer. To glorify his son, to exalt his son, to render to him what he deserves. Thus if you're to be effective in intercession, you must have this as the underlying passion and purpose of your heart, that he be glorified.

How is he glorified? Oh, never so sweetly perhaps as when sinners, adamant and obdurate in their rebellion, constant in their warfare, defaming and blaspheming, see the enormity of their crimes, come and bow before the nail-pierced feet of the Son of God, throw down the weapons of their warfare, lay their sword aside and empty their pockets of all the little hand weapons they use, and then cry out, God be merciful to me a sinner and save me for Jesus' sake. Why ought you pray for your family, your friends, your neighbors to come to Christ, that Christ be glorified? Not so much that they should escape hell which they and we so abundantly deserve, but that he should receive the reward of his suffering. Why ought you cry out to God for the church, for individual believers, to grow up into Christ in all things? Why? Because he doesn't get from their life the glory he deserves when there's childishness and when there's immaturity and the lack of spiritual growth.

And we ought to cry to God for work in the heart of your heart, in the heart of the believers in general, and in the church, so that he be glorified. Why ought we cry out to God for revival? Because he's glorified when sinners that have been backslidden, Christians that have been backslidden, return to him, burying and forsaking those things which have grieved him. This becomes the concern then of all of our praying, that God be glorified in Christ.

By the return of sinners, by the surrender of Christians, by their entering into the fullness of his purpose for them, by the church becoming all that God wants it to be. All for the glory of Christ. Now you're on firm ground.

Now you can plant your feet. It isn't just, oh God, keep poor Bill out of hell. It's that Jesus Christ be glorified as this one receives the Lord Jesus Christ.

It isn't just help Mary not to lose her temper and gossip. It's the glory that in Mary's life, this life you've redeemed, the glory that could come to the Lord Jesus comes. In the church, it isn't just bless our church Lord, but it's that he will get in the church a vehicle, a vessel for the revelation of his glory.

Again, it's all to the glory of Christ. This is the foundation of our intercession, that he be glorified. How can it be effective? Well, I think of those two dear old women in England, of which I was the time of D.L. Moody.

They'd long since been unable to carry a load of responsibility in the church, but reading the paper from America, one of them an invalid sister who never could go, but whose other well sister could go to the service and almost repeated verbatim. But one day, sister came home and she found the one in the bed say with tears in her eyes, what's happened? Well, I've just read of God visiting America through D.L. Moody. And I can't believe that God's going to pass us by.

Oh, sister, I'm going to give myself to fasting and prayer, interceding with God for our people, that he'll visit us and if it pleases him that he'll send D.L. Moody. And so for months, she cried out to God in earnest longing for God to revive that church in such a poor, weak, failing level that it was. One day her sister came over, she said, oh, I've just had such good news.

The pastor says that D.L. Moody from America is coming to England. She said, no, I won't have any lunch. Don't disturb me for the next days until I'm certain that God's answered.

I must pray that God will bring him here. And so she began to cry out again, further encouraged that he was on in the country. And finally the word came that somehow in the strange change of plans that hadn't been understood by the committee that planned for his visit, he was coming to that village and to that church.

When the sister came home and said, D.L. Moody's been announced to begin meetings here. There's been a change and he's coming. She said, oh, God's going to meet him.

God's going to meet him. And that first service, when Mr. Moody got up and spoke, the Spirit of God settled down. And people that had been living in sin came, and people that had been on the fringes not knowing Christ came, and the Spirit of God moved.

Where did it begin? It began with a little woman that had been bed-fast for months, but had recognized that God is released to work when someone is willing to give themselves to the ministry of intercession. Oh, God wondered that there was no intercessor. For it's only as there's intercession can there be the release of God to do what he wants to do.

And he's called you, made you to be a kingdom of priest. Have you used this ministry? Do you understand it? Are you concerned? Oh, if there could come from just this company, those of you who know and love Christ, a commitment to the ministry of intercession, the world would never be the same. Shall we bow and pray? Have you been in intercession? Have you been ministering in it? Are you willing to accept the responsibility, if you say, I'm forgiven, I'm pardoned, I'm in Christ, then you've been made to be a priest, a kingdom of priest.

You have the liberty of entering into the holiest of all, seated with Christ, there to intercede on behalf of the unfaithful, the church, believers. Are you using this ministry? Oh, God, Father of our Lord Jesus, raise up intercessors among us. Make everyone who knows and loves Christ to understand that this is as much a part of our responsibility as to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Grant, Lord, that there shall come by Holy Spirit's teaching and gracious ministry, a great longing today to be intercessors. So many have said, I haven't great talent, and I haven't great ability. What can I do? And

all the time there's been for all the able, as well as those who are not so talented, the glorious privilege of intercession.

Grant, Spirit of God, that there shall fall upon us today such a great longing on the parts that I know to enter into this ministry, that we'll learn the secret of intercession, the ministry of intercession, and that all that Thou didst purpose to do may be released by the intercession of Thy people. We don't know much, Lord, but oh, how greatly we long to know the ministry of intercession that will afford thee the opportunity of exalting Thy Son in the manner Thou didst choose for us. Seal now to our hearts Thy words.

Let us stand for the benediction and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and fellowship and teaching of the Holy Spirit, be in abide with each of us now evermore.

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