

(Knowing God's Way) 12. Do You Accuse or Do You Intercede?

by Zac Poonen

Believers are called to choose between the ministry of accusation and the ministry of intercession, and to replace the spirit of accusation with the spirit of intercession.

Scripture: Genesis 3:12, Zechariah 3:1, Luke 11:24, John 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 2:12, Colossians 3:15, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 5:16, Revelation 12:10

Topics: "Intercession", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches about the importance of being co-workers with the Lord Jesus in His ministry of intercession and salvation, contrasting it with Satan's ministry of accusation and condemnation. He emphasizes the need for believers to cooperate with God in working out their salvation, changing their attitudes towards others to reflect Jesus' love and compassion. Poonen warns against being co-workers with Satan by engaging in the spirit of accusation, highlighting the detrimental effects it can have on believers' lives and health. He urges believers to replace the spirit of accusation with the spirit of intercession, following the example of Jesus in saving and interceding for others.

Transcript

Are you a co-worker with Satan or with the Lord Jesus?

We read in Revelation 12:10 that Satan is the 'Accuser of the brothers', and that he accuses them before God day and night. This is a full time ministry that Satan is engaged in. And in this ministry he has many co-workers - both among his evil spirits as well as among men. The sad fact is that there are many believers too who are co-workers with Satan in this ministry of accusation.

Satan transmitted his nature to Adam as soon as Adam sinned in the garden of Eden. We see proof of this in the fact that when God came to Adam and asked him whether he had eaten the forbidden fruit, the very first thing that Adam did was point his finger at Eve and say, "She was the one who gave me the fruit to eat" (Gen. 3:12).

That pose of Adam's - with his forefinger pointed at a fellow human-being - is a familiar one, found among all his children as well. From early childhood, we have all developed the habit of blaming and accusing others. As we have grown older, this blaming, accusing spirit has become cleverer, more subtle and more

evil in its manifestations. The sad thing is that it has not been eliminated from most believers, even many years after they are born again!

The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation; old things are passed away. Behold all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Our attitude towards other people must now be new - the same attitude that Jesus has towards them. But such a change of attitude can never take place in us, without our cooperating with God. Without doubt, it is God Who works these new attitudes in our hearts. But He does not treat us as machines or robots. WE need to cooperate with him in "working out our own salvation" from our wrong attitudes (Phil. 2:12,13). Only then will we change.

It is because believers have not taken this command seriously, "to work out their own salvation", that they continue to behave like the children of Adam until the end of their lives. And the Lord gets a bad name through the behaviour of His children. A false teaching has led most believers to imagine that they have to do nothing in order to be sanctified, but "simply believe" the facts of the gospel intellectually. If that were true the devil himself would have been sanctified, because he believes all the facts of the gospel too! But he still remains the accuser of the brothers - and so do many so-called "believers".

Consider the Pharisees of Jesus' time. They were fundamental in their doctrine and deeply religious. They fought against the "liberal" Sadducees in their generation for the truths of God's Word - just like evangelical Christians do today. Yet Jesus condemned them more than He did the Sadducees.

We see the attitude of those Pharisees clearly in the incident where they accused a poor woman who was caught in adultery. They had no interest in saving her from a life of sin. All they desired was to show off their own "righteousness". There they stood, pointing their forefingers (like their forefather Adam) at that hapless woman. By that action, they revealed whose children they really were. Jesus however, had come to save such women from their sins. And He told those Pharisees that their father was not just Adam, but the Accuser, Satan himself (See John 8:1-11 and 44).

Jesus' entire public ministry was one of confrontation with the Pharisees, because He had come to earth to fight against the Accuser and his agents - even if those agents wore religious robes. When we follow the Lord, we will find that our conflict too is with "Christian fundamentalists" who major on doctrine more than on sanctification, and who would rather accuse others than lift a finger to save them! Many who seem to be burdened to save the lost heathen, at the same time accuse their fellow-believers, with no interest in saving them!

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world (Jn. 3:17). And the reason our Lord is able to save us completely is because He always lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).

The ministry of accusation and condemnation is the ministry of Satan and we should have no part in this. Our Lord, on the other hand has a full-time ministry of intercession and salvation. This is the ministry that we should have.

God has given us to Jesus as His Bride and His 'helpmeet' for this ministry. So we are to be co-workers with our Lord in this ministry of intercession. As the Father sent Jesus into the world - not to condemn (judge, accuse) the world, but to save it - even so, He has sent us too, into the world, not to condemn, judge, or accuse others, but to save them. (Jn.20:21). Therefore, we can be effective instruments in God's hands in His work in the world today, only if we get rid of "the spirit of accusation" (the spirit of Satan)

totally from our lives and replace it with "the spirit of intercession" (the Spirit of Christ).

In Zechariah 3:1-5, we have a beautiful illustration of these two ministries. There we see Joshua (symbolising a believer) standing before the Lord's throne. He was clothed with filthy garments - which indicates that there will always be sin (conscious or unconscious or both) even in the best of us until the end of our earthly lives - for remember that Joshua was the high-priest, the leader of the Jews (1 Jn.1:8). We then see Satan standing next to Joshua to accuse him. On the other side, we see the Lord taking the side of Joshua and rebuking the Accuser. The Lord took away Joshua's filthy clothes and replaced them with glorious clothes. Zechariah, who was watching all this, was so thrilled to see the Lord "justifying" Joshua, that he too joined the Lord in "making his brother glorious" and said, "Let them also put a clean turban on his head." The Lord answered Zechariah's prayer and gave Joshua a clean turban too. This is what it means to be a co-worker with God.

The Bible says that "if anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give life to those who commit sin" (1 Jn. 5:16). This is an amazing promise of God. Have we ever considered using it, when we see a brother sin or fall? Or have we joined Satan's hosts instead and accused the poor brother?

Before the throne of the Lord, these two ministries - accusation and intercession - are constantly going on. It is upto us to decide now which of these two ministries we will participate in.

We need to see clearly first of all, that it is Satan and his evil spirits who constantly urge us to accuse our fellow-believers - and Satan will always give us a "good and righteous" reason for doing so!! But the more we do this, the more we will expose ourselves to the influence of evil spirits in our lives. This one evil habit of accusing others alone is the main reason why many believers today are afflicted in their bodies and their minds with incurable sicknesses.

We must be radical in getting rid of the spirit of accusation entirely from our lives - just like the "radical surgery" a surgeon does on a person having incurable cancer. The question however is whether we have seen that "the spirit of accusation" is far worse than any cancer.

All of us have had this evil habit of blaming others from birth. We have spent our lives pointing our fingers at others and accusing them of one thing or the other and backbiting against them. Like the Pharisees, we have forgotten about our own sins and not realised that our own sins disqualify us from being fit to throw stones at others!!

We need to mourn that this evil spirit of accusation has found so much place in our lives in past years. Unknowingly, we have been co-workers with Satan in his ministry of accusation, instead of being co-workers with our Lord in His redemptive ministry of intercession. We need to repent of this at least now.

Casting out the evil spirit of accusation from our lives is only the first step to a full salvation. If we don't fill that empty space in our hearts with the spirit of intercession, the spirit of accusation will come back into our hearts with seven worse spirits and torment and corrupt us all over again - as Jesus warned (Lk. 11:24-26). It is essential therefore that we are filled with the Holy Spirit - who is called "the Spirit of intercession" (See Zech.12:10 and Rom.8:26,27). The only way to drive out the spirit of accusation permanently from our lives is by being filled with the spirit of intercession.

It is impossible to speak evil of, or to accuse a person whom you are regularly praying for. Check it out and see if it is not true: You never pray for those whom you accuse. Right?? That is why this "cancerous spirit of accusation" never seems to leave you, but on the other hand gets worse and worse every year - just like any other cancer!

Satan has a field-day in Christendom today, with the easy access that his spirits of accusation have into the lives and hearts of so many believers.

But the Lord has given us authority over all evil spirits, including the spirits of accusation (Lk.10:19). We must exercise this power over these spirits by interceding for those whom we are tempted to accuse. If we don't do that, we will remain the third-rate, useless Christians that we have always been, until the end of our lives. We cannot be co-workers with our Lord.

The ministry of intercession is one that every one of us must take seriously. There is no other way to overcome Satan in the church. Our Lord has told us not only to forgive those who persecute us, but also to pray for them (Mt.5:44). If we only forgive them but do not pray for them, then the spirit of accusation can re-enter our lives. Let us begin to thank God then for one another, for this is where all true intercession begins. "You were called in one body - be thankful (for one another)" (Col.3:15).

In Paul's letters, we see how he had this habit: He invariably began his letters by thanking God for the Christians - at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Phillipi, Colossae and Thessalonica and also for Timothy and Philemon (Rom.1:8; 1 Cor.1:4; . Eph.1:15, 16; Phil. 1:3; Col.1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2Thess.1:3; 2 Tim. 1 :3; Philemon 4). No doubt, there were many faults in all those Christians, that a godly man like Paul could easily see. But he refused to join hands with the Accuser in accusing them. God had sent him to help them and save them, not accuse them and condemn them.

Even when writing to the Corinthians, who had such serious problems in their midst, Paul began by thanking God for the good that he could see even in them. It was only after saying that, that he corrected them. Perhaps this was why the Corinthian Christians accepted Paul's correction readily (2 Cor.7.8,9). Perhaps this is also why others do not accept our corrections and exhortations - because we have never appreciated the good that we have seen in them!

You who are parents, consider this: Haven't you been quicker at pointing out the failures and mistakes you see in your children than in appreciating the good that you have seen in them? Have you ever spoken words of encouragement and appreciation to your children? Have you ever knelt down with them and thanked God for them? If you have criticised but not appreciated, then it is not surprising that your children haven't got any better!! Why not try another - more Divine - approach? When you change your attitude, you will find that your children change too. Try it out and see if it doesn't work.

We who are believers could also ask ourselves this question: Is it really true what Satan keeps telling us that there is nothing good at all in those other believers whom we have been accusing for so many years??

God grant that, as much as the spirit of accusation and complaining and backbiting against others has found its place in our thoughts and in our hearts in the past, we will now be equally filled - and even more - with the spirit of thanksgiving and intercession for one another. Thus the enemy will no longer find a place in our lives. The Accuser and his spirits will be overcome and driven out by the the spirit of intercession. Will you be radical now and forsake this habit of accusing others - once and for all - and replace it with the

spirit of intercession? May the Lord help us all to do so.

"Let the one who wants to be holy keep himself holy. But let the one who wants to be filthy remain filthy"
(Rev.22:11).

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