

Two Ministries ■ Accusing and Interceding

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of showing mercy to others as God shows mercy to us. It discusses how Satan accuses believers but Jesus intercedes for them, highlighting the choice believers have in being co-workers with either Satan or Jesus. The message encourages believers to refrain from accusing others, to intercede for them, and to partake in God's nature by showing love and mercy.

Scripture: Matthew 5:7, Zechariah 3:1, Revelation 12:10, Hebrews 7:25, Isaiah 58:9

Topics: "Mercy", "Intercession"

Description

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Transcript

A lot of the commands in the Bible relate to how we are to deal with each other as believers, and God deals with us pretty much in the same way we deal others. He treats us as we treat others. For example, you know that verse which says, Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

So, mercy is not going to be received by those who are unmerciful to others. When somebody slips up and we are very hard on him, don't be surprised if God is hard on you when you slip up. But when you see somebody slip up and you're merciful to them and say, It's okay, God will treat you the same way.

And it's wonderful to have a life's testimony where we have experienced that again and again and again, that we have sought to be merciful to others and experience the riches of God's mercy towards us. We all need God's mercy. How to get it? I'll tell you.

Be merciful to people around you. Don't be hard on them. Forgive quickly, easily, and don't wait.

Don't even wait for them to apologize. Forgive before they apologize. Jesus forgave people on the cross who never apologized.

That's our example. I want to turn to Zechariah. There's a great lesson we can learn in the book of Zechariah chapter 3. Here, Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest.

He's a picture of a believer standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. Now, in the Old Testament, Satan appears very rarely. He appears in the form of a serpent, you know, in Genesis 3 to tempt Adam.

And then in the book of Job, he appears as one who comes to trouble Job, and God uses him to test Job. And then he appears once in the book of Samuel, where he tempts David to do something wrong. And here, we find Satan again in Zechariah chapter 3. Now, the reason why Satan does not appear too frequently in the Old Testament is because he was not yet defeated on the cross.

When you come to the New Testament, we find very many mentions of Satan frequently because he's already been defeated on the cross. And during Jesus' lifetime, of course, Satan was tempting him from the beginning. But that's significant.

God does not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. So here we see Joshua standing before the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. Throughout the scripture, Satan is an accuser, quick to find fault, looking for something to find fault in God's people.

And the Lord is standing by there to defend us. We see here in verse 2, the Lord said to Satan, the Lord rebuke you. I want you to see this picture of Joshua, the high priest, is a picture of a believer.

And on one side, Satan is there to accuse him because there is something wrong in him because it says very clearly in verse 3, Joshua was clothed with filthy garments. That means there was sin in his life. And so Satan had grounds to accuse him.

But the Lord still rebuked him in verse 2. The Lord stood by Joshua and said, the Lord rebuke you, Satan, because this is a brand that has been plucked from the fire. And so the Lord comes down on the side of Joshua, picture of the Lord coming down on our side against Satan, and saying, remove the filthy garments. And see, I've taken away your iniquity away from you.

That's how the Lord treats us. And I'll clothe you with the righteousness of Christ. Now listen to this.

This is the best part of it. Zechariah, young man, was watching all this. He pitches in.

And he says, not only that, Lord, put a clean turban on his head as well. And the Lord did that in answer to Zechariah's request. Now the point I want you to see here is it's a similar situation we face today.

Satan is always there to accuse. And you see that mentioned in Revelation in chapter 13. In Revelation 13, we see Satan is first of all called, in verse 9, the deceiver of the whole world.

Sorry, Revelation 12, not 13. Revelation 12, verse 9, Satan is called the deceiver of the whole world. That's a title given to him.

And that is what he does. He deceives people. But he's also called, in verse 10, the accuser, middle of verse 10, the accuser of the believers.

He deceives the world and accuses believers. He's called the accuser of the brethren, just like we saw in Zechariah. As soon as he sees someone, he's there to accuse him.

And it says here, he accuses them not only to themselves, but to God. Day and night. We can say Satan has got a full-time job, 24 hours, always looking for something wrong in some believer in some part of the

world and accusing that person.

God, see what that person did there. See that chap, he doesn't do that for the worldly people. No.

There he's just deceiving them. But wherever he sees a believer, particularly someone who claims to be following the Lord, that's you and me, and he sees something wrong, he immediately picks on that and says, God, see that. He claims to be your child.

See how he behaves. See what he did. See how he spoke.

See the wrong thing he did there. And this is a 24-hour job, day and night. Now, there's something else that Jesus does, day and night.

Do you know a verse in the Bible which says that? Satan is the accuser day and night, it says in verse 12, 10. In Hebrews, in chapter 7 and verse 25, we see something that Jesus is doing day and night. It's the opposite.

Hebrews 7, 25. It says here about Jesus, he's able to save forever those who draw near to God through him because he always, always means day and night, he's praying for them. So think of these two ministries going on in the heavenlies.

Satan looking out to find something wrong in somebody and immediately talking about it and telling God about it. And Jesus also seeing it and immediately praying for that person. Father, forgive him.

Deliver him. Set him free from that habit. Now, what I want to say is all of us believers are on one of these two sides.

We are either co-workers with Satan or co-workers with Jesus. And what do I mean by that? When you see something wrong in a fellow believer, maybe your husband, maybe your wife, maybe somebody else in the church, and if you're quick to pounce on that or remember it and pass a judgment, he claims to be a great believer, but look how he behaved there, look how he spoke, you know immediately, at least from today onwards, you know immediately whose side you are on, who you are a co-worker with. Certainly not Jesus.

You're a co-worker with the one who is looking out to accuse believers day and night. And how many times you and I have been co-workers with the devil. Okay, we didn't have light till today, but you got light today.

Now you have no more excuse. From today you have no more excuse for being a co-worker with Satan. So it doesn't mean we stand neutral.

We say, okay, I won't judge. That's not enough. What did we do, see Zachariah do? When Zachariah saw the Lord cleansing Joshua, the high priest, he pitched in and said, oh, do something more, put a good, clean turban on him.

He made his brother glorious. And that's our calling, to cooperate with Jesus Christ, to be a co-worker with Christ in making our brothers and sisters glorious. They're not perfect.

The Lord knows they're not perfect, so we are not perfect either. So there's something that this is very practical because we have many opportunities, particularly those who have a very sharp mind, quick to

see things wrong in other people, quick to condemn, and slow to appreciate. We have to change our whole way of thinking.

And the Holy Spirit has come primarily to help us in this matter. The reason God, Jesus, gives us the Holy Spirit is so that we can have His nature. You know, we're told that we are made partakers of God's nature, of the nature of Jesus Christ, and this is spiritual growth is not increasing in knowledge of the Bible.

If knowledge of the Bible could make a person spiritual, then the devil would be the most spiritual person of all because he knows the Bible better than you and me. He knows every verse. He could even quote verses to Jesus.

So don't ever think that knowledge of the Bible or increased knowledge of truths in the Bible like we receive in this church makes us spiritual. No, it's partaking of Jesus' nature that makes us spiritual. Just because we can be excited when we learn something new in the church, praise the Lord, but that doesn't make us spiritual, no.

In area by area, we must partake of God's nature. I mean, we've thought of partaking of the Lord's nature in purity and humility and many other areas and loving people, but one area of loving people is this, where when we see something wrong, we're not quick to find fault, not even neutral, but quick to join hands with Jesus and be a fellow, I mean, a partner with him in his ministry. So I see these two ministries going on all the time, and we lose a lot when we have this pointing the finger attitude.

What is the first thing that Adam did when God asked him a simple question? Did you eat from this tree? That was only a yes or no. It's one of those yes, no questions. But he didn't say yes or no.

He pointed his finger, you read that in Genesis 3, at his wife and said she was the one. You see how as soon as he had partaken of that tree and disobeyed God, he had also partaken of the devil's nature. And you see that immediately.

They were a wonderful couple, but as soon as he contacted the devil, he got that spirit of accusation, she's the one. And you find that that spirit has carried on throughout all the marriages in history, where husbands and wives point fingers at each other. Remember, Adam did it first, and you're following in fallen Adam's footsteps when you point the finger at your marriage partner, saying you, you, you, you did it, you made me do this.

And we see these things in Scripture. I want to ask you, are we going to pray to God that God will help us to finish with it today? Help me, Lord, that by your grace, the power of your Holy Spirit, I will never again point a finger, beginning with husband and wife, saying you did this, or even inwardly without saying it outwardly, to have that attitude. I'll tell you what we are missing by having that attitude.

Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 58. There's a great promise in Isaiah 58 that the Lord will make us like a watered garden. It's a beautiful promise.

Isaiah 58 and verse 11, the Lord will continually guide you. Think of the many promises in just this one verse, or those one or two verses. The Lord will continually guide you in every situation where you need and don't know what to do.

The Lord will guide you. And when you're in a dry situation in your life, the Lord will satisfy your desire. He'll refresh you.

And when you're weak spiritually, he'll give you strength, and you will not be dry. You'll be like a watered garden, and you'll be like a spring of water that can satisfy the need of anybody who comes to you. What a wonderful promise.

And you will rebuild the ancient ruins. The Lord will use you to build his church. You'll be called the repairer of the breach and the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

But there's a condition. You know what the condition is? Turn to verse 9. If you want to be like this, you will call verse 9, Isaiah 58, 9. The Lord will answer. You will cry, and without any delay, the Lord will say, Here I am.

If you stop putting a yoke on other people, stop putting a burden on other people, and stop pointing the finger like Adam did. You see how seriously the Lord takes this business of pointing the finger? And it's an inward thing. An inward pointing the finger.

That was you. It wasn't me. It was you.

It was your fault. Because you did this, that's why this happened. And that is speaking wickedness.

So there's a lot that the Bible speaks about this whole area of accusing the brothers or interceding for the brothers. Accusing the believers or interceding the believers. There are two ministries going on all the time.

And the Lord is inviting us to join the right one. Amen.

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