

Will You Be an Intercessor?



The Ministry of Intercession (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. At the outset of my talk today, let me remind you of the definition of intercession which I gave earlier on this week. The intercessor is the one who comes in between. That's the literal meaning of the word. He comes in between God and the object of God's just wrath and impending judgment and he says, "God, you have every right to strike these people. It's your justice that you do so, but I'm standing between you and them; and God, in all reverence but boldness I want to say if you strike them you're going to have to strike me first." That's the position of the intercessor.

In my talks this week I've taken examples of this ministry from four great servants of God: Abraham, Moses, Daniel and Esther. Certain features have emerged from these examples which characterize men and women who've mastered the art of intercession. Let me list some of these features for you briefly, with a few references to those who best represent each feature.

First, intimacy with God. I think we see that particularly in Abraham and in Moses. They talked to God just like a man talks to his friend. Then, boldness. They spoke out to God. They really, in a sense, almost challenged Almighty God. Third feature, conviction of God's absolute justice. This we see, perhaps, particularly in Abraham and in Daniel, who freely acknowledged that God's judgment on His people was entirely just. Fourthly, a concern for God's glory. And conversely, a disregard of personal interests and ambitions. We see this particularly, perhaps, in Moses. God said, "I'll make of you a great nation." But Moses was much more concerned for God's reputation than for his own. And then fifthly, dedication to the task, even at the cost of life itself. Both Daniel and Esther had literally to risk their own lives to keep on with their ministry of intercession.

And then, a willingness to identify with those for whom we intercede. Again, we see this particularly in Daniel and in Esther. And I contrasted this with the prayer of the Pharisee that Jesus speaks about in the New Testament, the man who said, "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are." That's a self-righteous attitude that's totally inconsistent with the spirit of the intercessor.

Well, we've looked so far this week at situations where God found an intercessor, where the situation was saved, a nation maybe was saved, history was changed. What does the Bible have to say about it, about situations where there was no intercessor? We're going to look at that for a while in my talk today. We'll turn, first of all, to Isaiah 59. This is a terrible catalog of the sins and the backslidings of God's people, Israel. It's a picture of almost unredeemed and unrelieved failure, wickedness. It's given in the first person plural. It's an acknowledgement by the people of their own condition. We'll read from verse 12 of Isaiah 59:

> "For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, fomenting oppression and revolt, uttering lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey, [What a terrible situation. Now we see God's reaction in the middle of verse 15:] The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and He was appalled that there was no one to intercede..." (NIV)

Isn't that an amazing statement? Let me read that again:

> "God was appalled that there was no one to intercede."

It seems to me that the worst part of the entire situation was not the wickedness of the people, although that was bad enough, but the final thing that made God appalled, that He could hardly conceive, was that there was no one to intercede. It seems to me that that's the final evidence of backsliding and hardness of heart in the people of God, when there's no one left to intercede. And it seems to me that at that point the situation must truly be called hopeless. As long as there's an intercessor there's hope, but where there's no more intercessor, it seems to me on the basis of scripture we have to say there's no more hope. The one person that God looks for in such a crisis is the intercessor.

Let's look at a similar situation now portrayed in Ezekiel chapter 22, somewhat later in the history of Israel but a similar type of situation. Beginning at verse 34 of Ezekiel chapter 22. The prophet says:

> "And the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, say to her [that's the land of Israel], 'You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.'" (NAS)

It came to me very vividly on time that when a land is wicked and backslidden, the only thing that can cleanse it is the rain. Not the literal rain but the rain of God's Holy Spirit. And last week I spoke about the injunction in Hosea, "It is time to seek the Lord until He comes and rains righteousness upon us." That's the kind of rain that can cleanse a land. I do personally believe it's the only kind of rain that can cleanse this land of the United States.

Now, let's go on with the catalog that follows of the failure of every section of God's people in this situation. Now, we find that there are four categories of people listed by coincidence in the English language. Each of them begins with the letter "P". They are prophets, priests, princes and people. And it's significant that God begins His catalog of wrong-doing with the prophets and with the priests. The princes I take to be the secular rulers, but God doesn't lay the blame primarily at the door of the secular rulers. He lays the blame at the door primarily of the spiritual leaders: the prophets and the priests. I would say the prophet is the one whose responsibility it is to declare the counsel of God to God's people. The priest is the one who cares for the daily life of the congregation of God's people. Let's see now what God says about prophets, priests, princes and then all the people. Ephesians 22:25-31:

> "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey... 'Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things...' 'Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey...' 'Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them...' [Notice the prophets, instead of reproving the wickedness, have covered it up with false excuses and religious talk. And finally:] 'The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery...'"

So, all sections of the entire nation are held guilty before God, the prophets, the priests, the princes and the people. What was the general characteristic, what was the general guilt of all of them? I would say it would be summed up in the phrase "the ruthless pursuit of selfish ends." Everyone was putting his own gain, his own selfish ends, before those of his fellow men and before the interests of God. Now, how did God respond to this desperate situation of wickedness? We read the two closing verses of that chapter, verses 30 & 31.

God is speaking, He says:

> "And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. 'Thus [or, therefore] I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,' declares the Lord God." (NAS)

In this desperate situation God did not look for a large group. He did not necessarily go to the rulers or even the prophets or the priests, but He looked for one man. What kind of a man? A man who would stand in the gap before Him for the land. What kind of a person is it who stands in the gap before God for a land, for a city, for a nation? It's an intercessor. And I suppose one of the most tragic statements of scripture is there at the end of verse 30 where God says, "I found no one." It seems to me to indicate that even in that desperate situation, one intercessor could have changed the whole course of history and could have prevailed with God to the sparing of the judgment that came upon God's people, but when God can find no more intercessor, then there was no more hope. Let me say that again. As long as there's an intercessor there is hope, but when there's no more intercessor, there's no more hope.

How do you see the land of America today, the nation of the United States? Isn't it, in many ways, very much like the situation in Ezekiel today? Isn't there guilt and failure on the part of almost every section of the populace, the prophets, the priests, the secular rulers, and the people at large? What is the situation? What is God's response? I believe God is looking for a man to stand in the gap, to make up the hedge, a man or a woman, an intercessor. Will you offer yourself to God for this ministry?

Well, my time is up for today but I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be starting on a new and important theme. If my talk today has stirred a desire in you to become an intercessor, I would like to put you in touch with an interdenominational fellowship of more than 50 thousand Christians dedicated to the ministry of intercession on behalf of the United States, "Intercessors for America." If you will write in to us this week we will send you a free copy of their monthly newsletter which will give you much timely and helpful information and link you to an army of committed intercessors across this nation, an army that can save the nation. Stay tuned now for further details.

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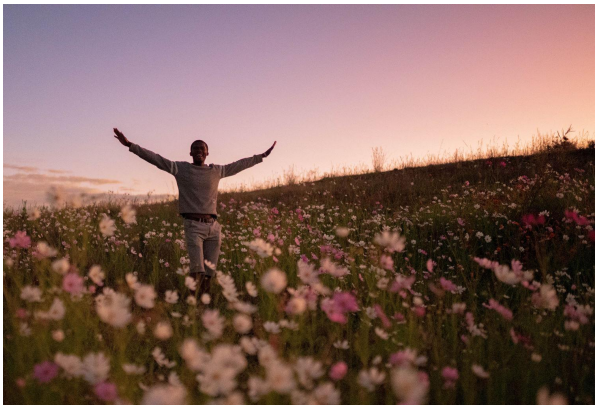

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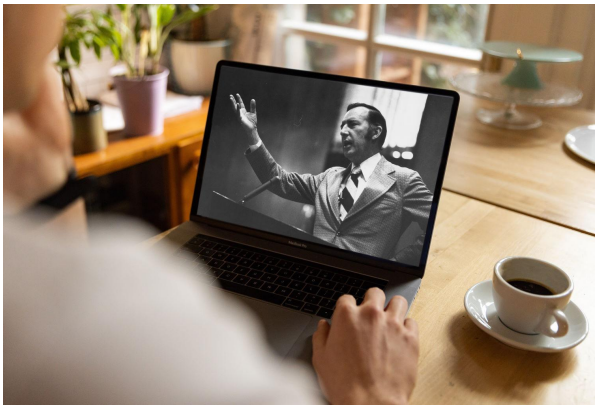

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