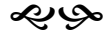


The Pinnacle of Prayer

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERCESSION

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IF THE TITLE OF THIS CHAPTER SEEMS UNUSUAL TO YOU, IT IS BECAUSE THE BIBLE PRINCIPLE OF INTERCESSION IS UNUSUAL. THE PURPOSE IS TO SHOW A DISTINCT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORDINARY PRAYER AND INTERCESSION.

A. The Principle of Intercession

In my many years of ministry, I have never claimed to be a specialist on the subject of prayer, but I am still excited as I study and learn more of the ways of God and the mystery of prayer. Someone has pointed out that intercession is: *A Power Unsurpassed, A Principle Unrealized, A Position Entered Into, A Participation Engaged In*. This being true, God forbid that we fail to look into it with an open heart and mind to learn more about this great principle. That is the objective of this chapter.

If you are serious about prayer, and I hope you are, you must build your prayer life on a solid foundation of the revealed truth of biblical principles—not on the ideas of men. There are various aspects of prayer taught in the Scriptures – *General Prayer* that is comprised of *Petition, Praise, and Thanksgiving*; and *Objective or Intentional Prayer* for specific objectives; *Adversarial Prayer* that is *Spiritual Warfare*, and *Intercession*. We will focus our attention on Intercession in this chapter.

The Bible reveals to the serious student of the Word the ways of God, according to I Corinthians 2:10. – *how God works*. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will miss the truth of how God brings the redeemed into living and practical cooperation with that of the administration of His Kingdom. His operation is not without divine order. We will see a parallel between the work of redemption and the work of intercession. This parallel will become clear as we go forward in this chapter. Largely, the work of the intercessors of the Bible is patterned after the work of Jesus. *We will consider these aspects of intercession:*

- ❖ Intercession is the most practical aspect of Christian service.
- ❖ You may not be able to teach, preach, sing, but you can be an intercessor.
- ❖ You may not have much formal education, but you can intercede.
- ❖ You may not be greatly talented and gifted, but you can intercede.
- ❖ You may not be able to give great sums of money to the cause of Christ, but you can intercede.
- ❖ Intercession is an added dimension of prayer.
- ❖ **It is amazing that those who have the least can engage in the greatest ministry.**
- ❖ Our intercession determines the extent of God's involvement in situations.

As to the Level of Prayer, Intercession is the Summit.

As to the Power of Prayer, Intercession is the Ultimate.

Have you wondered why the church has not made a greater impact upon this world, why the powers of darkness have blinded men as to their desperate sinful plight, and why the church is so powerless while the gospel is the *"power of God unto salvation?"* We have made a mockery of prayer by neglecting God's appointed means of getting His work done. *We must get serious about intercession.*

B. The Preparation for Intercession

The following are several characteristics of a true intercessor: I do not share these things to eliminate anyone, but to encourage you to prepare for the work of intercession. *The Intercessor.....*

1. Is a Spirit-filled believer.
2. Has a firm resolve to go deeper and farther in prayer.
3. Has a growing knowledge of God and His Word.
4. Deals with the dross of carnality and the alloy of unbelief.
5. Is passionate for God and His honor and glory, has a spiritual hunger.
6. Seeks access to the mind of God and is open to God's mind,
7. Maintains Intimacy with God, and lives in a divine spiritual enclosure with God,
8. Prays without ceasing. Prayer is his lifestyle,
9. Is willing to travail and experience spiritual labor,
10. Has no desire for recognition and the praise of man.

C. A Principle to Be Employed

Years ago, a man whose name was Bernouli, a Swiss scientist, discovered the principle of "lift." I make no claim to a knowledge of aeronautics, but I understand that "lift" is the principle by which an airplane flies. Because of the curved shape of the top of the airplane's wing, increased speed over the top equals decreased pressure on the bottom of the wing - and that equals "lift." The thrust of the engines moves the plane fast enough for the air flowing over the wings to create Lift and cause the plane to fly and stay aloft. But the lift factor must be designed into the wings of an airplane.

Years ago, I boarded a 747, a "jumbo jet" for a flight to Seattle. I was amazed as I observed the huge plane. I read these statistics about the plane: It was 231 feet long, the tail section is 6 stories high, has a wingspan of 195 feet; it becomes air-born at 150 miles per hour; each engine has 43,000 pounds of thrust; it cruises at 600 miles per hour at 39,000 feet above sea level.

**But that huge plane is limited to the end of the runway and
cannot get off the ground without the lift factor.**

The "lift" factor of must be employed in the design of a plane for it to fly. Likewise, the principle of Intercession must be employed in the ministry of the church. Neither money, nor talent, nor prestige, nor size, nor popularity, nor location, nor any other attractive characteristic can substitute for the principle of Intercession. It must be planned and employed. This principle can make the difference in the ministry of a church. Some churches have everything going for them, but are sluggish, without vision, without a passion for souls, and without the manifestation of God's power. WHY? It is because of the lack of a ministry of Intercession.

D. The Definition of Intercession

The common term "intercessory prayer" is misleading. It has reference to praying for others, and that is *a part of intercession, but not the extent of it.* The term "intercessor" suggests what a person is. The term "intercede" suggests what the intercessor does. An intercessor is one with whom, through whom, and by whom God accomplishes specific objectives. God is sovereign and can do whatever He chooses to do, but in His sovereignty He has chosen to limit Himself to our intercession. Ron Dunn said:

**Intercession is a Position You Occupy
Before it is Petition You Offer**

Among the clearest definitions of intercession I have read came from the writing of F.B. Meyer, a British pastor (1847-1929). His books have impacted my life and ministry through the years.

*“What may not one may do in one brief life, if he is willing to be simply a conduit-pipe through which the power of God may descend? There is no limit to the possible usefulness of such a life. On the one hand is the oceanic fullness of God; here on the other are the awful need and desolation of man, guilty, weak, and diseased. **All that is required is a channel of communication between the two**, and when that channel is made and opened, and kept free from the silting sand, **there will ensue one great plenteous, and equable flow of power carrying the fullness of God to the weary emptiness of man.**”*

This defines the principle of intercession. The intercessor is a channel of communication between God and man. God’s power flows through interceding hearts.

Intercession May be Defined by Observing the Lives of Intercessors.

It is the greatest involvement with God and man a believer can experience.

All through the Scriptures, we find God’s people interceding – not merely praying, but intervening in the place of, or in behalf of others. **First and foremost, Jesus was and is our supreme intercessor in Heaven.** In fact, the earthly life and ministry of Jesus was a life of intercession. Several truths describe His intercession:

❖ **He Identified with us by taking our nature.**

Jesus, in His incarnation, became at the same time very God and very man. If He were not man, He could not have died. If He were not God, His death could have had no atoning value.

John 1:14 says, *“And the Word (Jesus) was made flesh and dwelt among us.”*

Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus was *“made in the likeness of men.”*

I Timothy 3:16 states that Jesus was *“manifest in the flesh.”*

❖ **He took our place in death.**

“But God made known His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

“Who His own self bare our sin in His own body on the tree” (I Peter 2:24).

“He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

❖ **He is now in Heaven interceding for us.**

Now the question – *How does Jesus intercede for us?* Ordinarily, people think that Jesus intercedes by praying for us. And this reveals the misunderstanding people have of intercession. They think that it is prayer only. There are other ways to intercede – such as to intervene in the life and situation of another so as to meet a need. *Jesus intercedes in two ways:*

❖ **By His Presence. He is in Heaven “for us.”**

Paul tells us in Romans 8:34 that Jesus is *“risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us.”*

Hebrews 9:24 tells us, *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands that are the figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”*

When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back to the Father in Heaven, He was exalted to the Throne of the Father, and is now seated there *for us*. *What is He doing there for us?* John answers this question in I John 2:1, *“My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not (continue a life of sin). But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*

The word *“advocate”* means a lawyer – one who pleads the case of another. Jesus is there in Heaven pleading our case before the Father. Why??? Because we are accused by Satan who is called *“the accuser of the brethren”* (Revelation 12:10).

❖ By His Presentation

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:12).

The second way by which Jesus intercedes for us is by presenting His shed blood. As the blood of the sacrificial animals was presented in the Tabernacle in the wilderness and in the Temple in Jerusalem as a promise of His own death and shed blood, Jesus fulfilled the promise by His presence before the Father in Heaven. *And He continues to make the presentation showing that eternal redemption is accomplished.* The blood of the cross speaks for us in Heaven before the Father. *Now let’s consider some other great intercessors of the Bible:*

1. Moses, the emancipator of Israel from Egypt.

In Psalm 106, we are told about the rebellion of God’s people: They forgot His works; they lusted excessively; they believed not His Words; they made a golden calf and worshipped it. God began to judge them. *“Therefore He said that he would destroy them had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.”*

Moses was willing to lay down his life if God had not honored his intercession. He prayed, *“forgive this people and if not blot me out of the book that you have written.”* For Moses to intervene was to intercede.

2. Nehemiah

Nehemiah, while in exile in Persia, served as king Artaxerxes’ cupbearer or personal valet. In the providence of God, he had access to the king at a crucial time. He had received word from Jerusalem of the terrible conditions that prevailed caused by the evil Palestinians. His heart was broken and he began to fast and pray. *“He said, I beseech You O lord God of Heaven, ...who keeps covenant and mercy for them who love Him and keep His commandments: Let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant that I pray before You now day and night for the children of Israel Your servants, AND CONFESS THE SINS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL....”*

The king took notice of Nehemiah’s burdened heart and inquired about the problem. Nehemiah told him and made his request to return to his home to help the people. His objectives were to rebuild the wall and replace the gates, to restore civil authority, and to lead the people to repentance and revival. Now God honored Nehemiah’s intercession and enabled him to do *“What God put in his heart to do at Jerusalem.”* What God did in Jerusalem, He did in Nehemiah, by Nehemiah, and through Nehemiah.

Now let me point out to you the heart of a true intercessor. You will note the last statement in Nehemiah’s prayer in which he confessed the sins of the children of Israel. Nehemiah did not commit those sins, but he confessed them. He owned them as his sins before God. He became an intercessor in

that he identified with the people of Jerusalem and intervened before God in their behalf. In your intercession for a loved one, you will find yourself with such a burden that will compel you to confess the sins of that loved one that gave Satan such a place in his life. You may claim forgiveness and the breaking of Satan's bondage by destroying the ground given to Satan in your loved one's life. This is a strategy of spiritual warfare. *Satan has to be driven off the battlefield in a person's life that he may be free to call on the Lord for mercy.*

3. The Canaanite Woman (Read Matthew 15:22-28).

Space allows for only one more example. This woman from a pagan area came to Jesus and cried unto Him, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil (demon)"* (Matthew 15:22).

The next verse tells us that Jesus refused to answer her. Was He being rude? Absolutely not! He could not answer her because she was an imposter, presuming to have that right of access to Jesus, addressing Him "the Son of David." She was not a Jew, but a pagan gentile.

Jesus began to provoke and direct her faith toward Himself as the Savior. The passage reveals this woman's persistence in reaching out to Jesus. She was not dissuaded by Jesus' remarks about His present ministry. We have cause to believe that she believed on Jesus and was saved, for she came to Jesus and *worshipped Him*, crying out in humility, *"Lord help me."*

Now please take note. This woman came to Jesus first for her daughter who was demonized. Now here she is pleading for help for herself. And this gained Jesus' attention, prompting Him to make this statement: *"O woman, great is your faith. Be it unto you, even as you will"* (15:28).

What did Jesus see in this woman's faith that made it *"great faith?"* Was this woman no longer concerned for her daughter? Yes she was. She was so concerned that she had taken the place of her daughter before the Lord. She was totally identified with her need and took on her the burden of her daughter. Her daughter's pain became her pain. All that her daughter suffered she took on herself.

This is what it means to intervene in the situation or place of another—the first prerequisite to intercession. *In intercession, you are in the place of another before God.* If you do not understand this yet, you will if you will continue patiently in this study.

Intercession May Be Defined by an Understanding of the Laws of Intercession.

The following seven things I call laws of intercession. These laws are not necessarily guidelines established for the intercessors to obey or follow. They are truths, conditions, and attitudes exhibited in their lives and ministries. They define the various aspects of the principle of intercession.

1. The Law of Advocacy

In the person of the Holy Spirit, Christ indwells the believer. By the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, the believer is in union with Christ. This wonderful relationship with God affords us another great provision in the advocacy of Christ. He is not only in us and with us, **Christ is for us**, as we have already emphasized. The Holy Spirit is the advocate, or intercessor, within us—Jesus is our advocate in Heaven. As Jesus is *for us at God's Throne in Heaven*, the responsibility of the intercessor is to stand in for the unsaved before God. To advocate is to plead for another. I have already stated that this is what Jesus does for us. This is what the apostle Paul did for Israel as he prayed, *"My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved"* (Romans 10:1). Paul said also:

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:2-3).

2. The Law of Authority

We have already discussed the subject of the authority of the believer in another chapter, but a word needs to be said about utilizing authority. Our authority is worthless unless we exercise it. Again, I remind you that our authority is not over the will of people, but over the powers of the darkness of Satan's evil regime. Authority can be directed toward the ungodly influence of people who are controlled by Satan. Now when you are interceding for someone, Satan will interfere and hinder if you allow him to do so. You don't have to allow it. With a sense of your authority in Christ, you must speak to him and issue to him whatever commands that are necessary. And you don't say, *"If you please, but in Jesus' name I command you and you must obey."* *You don't need to argue, persuade or try to convince Satan. That was done for you when Jesus died on the cross.* The reproofing work of the Holy Spirit is in progress now. Just speak your commands, quote Scripture, resist in Jesus' name and make clear to Satan what you want him to do. **Command with confidence** and allow the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to do their convincing work.

3. The Law of Aggression

The weaponry of modern warfare is comprised of sophisticated missile systems for defense as well as offense. In the ministry of intercession, we have access to both defensive and offensive weapons. The true intercessor is ready to use both, but there is a natural reluctance by many intercessors to use their weapons of aggression. Although we must guard against self-confidence, we must put full confidence in our sufficient and adequate weapons. We are not spiritual wimps, nor little toy soldiers—we are courageous warriors who must use our weapons of aggression against the powers of darkness wherever we observe their evil activity. We must not be passive and wait for the attacks of the enemy—as watchmen on the wall, we can spot the approaching enemy and be aware and ready for his assaults.

Consider Epaphras about whom we read in Colossians 4. He was in jail with Paul in Rome, but he prayed for the people back home. Study this chapter and observe that this noble servant of the Lord was *"always laboring fervently"* for the saints in Colosse. Now this term does not describe what we call our daily quiet time. It means that Epaphras *"contended with an adversary to accomplish something."* He was engaged in aggressive adversarial prayer against the enemy of God's people. For guidance in prayer, study the prayers of Paul for the saints. They are found in several of his epistles.

4. The Law of Availability

The chief desire of the intercessor is to be open to God's will. We must not resist God's purposes, nor try to pick and choose that which pleases ourselves. Our attitude should be as was Isaiah's, *"Here am I Lord, send me."* He may not send you physically, but He will lay on your heart some place or some people you never thought you would be praying for. Distance is not a limitation to God. Wherever you can send a thought, God can manifest His presence and power.

Friction between our will and God's will creates a very uncomfortable situation, but peace comes from total acceptance of God's will. The fulfillment of His purposes for our prayer lives should be our daily goal. Maintain an attitude of availability, for intercession is never forced upon you—God makes assignments to the available prayer workers.

5. The Law of Abandonment

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Assignments for intercession are not forced upon us. We may choose them or God may give them. But when we accept them, they are for life. In interceding for specific souls, you must abandon yourself to prayer for them until they are saved, or until God calls you home. Intercession is a life-long ministry.

You must never give up. I have referenced before George Muller who prayed for five close friends for many years. The last one was saved soon after Muller's death.

6. The Law of Acceptance

There should be no discrimination in the life of an intercessor. We must not discriminate between people or places that are pleasing and those that are not. Whatever the need and the condition we must accept it.

The song we sang as children must still prevail in our hearts: "Red and Yellow, Black and White, they are precious in His sight." Your assignment for intercession may be for an enemy who hates you, but you must accept people for who they are. It may be for someone you dislike, one who may be repulsive to you, but you must accept them. Often, we are compelled to intercede for people we do not even know. It may be like praying in the dark, but God will give us light. The psalmist said, "*He lights my darkness.*"

6. The Law of Agony

We come now to a vitally important law of intercession. Because agony is so uncomfortable to bear, humanly we are prone to back away from our assignment. Praying for the salvation of souls involves two things that are difficult to experience, but in most situations are definitely necessary. We must guard against the power of the self-life, the enemy of prayer. Jesus took it to the cross when he died; that is where it belongs; and we must make sure that it remains consigned to it. This is the only way of victory over it. No self-denial, no rededication, nor amount of Bible study can break the power of the old corrupt nature that still inhabits us. *Two things express agony:*

❖ Tears

A lady went to her pastor with this question: "Why can't I win my two boys to Christ?" The pastor asked her a few questions and she gave all the seemingly right answers. But then the pastor said, "*The reason you can't win your boys to Christ is because your eyes are too dry.*"

Tears have to do with emotional pain. I read the story of two small boys in Mexico who had the mumps. The Doctor was about to give one of the boys a shot when his brother who had almost recovered from the mumps broke and ran. He felt the pain from the shot his brother was about to experience. Identified with the person you are interceding for, you are subject to being brought to tears if you feel his desperate plight of being unsaved and headed for Hell. **Love for that soul will produce a broken heart to the point of tears.**

During Jesus' ministry on earth, the Son of Man prayed with "*strong crying and tears*" (Heb. 5:7). Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet was a man of tears. He wrote:

"Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jeremiah 9:1)

The Psalmist David requested, "*Put my tears in Your bottle; are they not in Your book?*" (Psalm 56:8).

This leads us to believe that our tears are stored and recorded in Heaven, and the Lord remembers the agony of our effort and concern in intercession.

❖ Travail

We read in Isaiah 66:7-8 these significant words, "*Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who has heard of such a thing? ... for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.*"

These words set forth a great principle for us. As a woman must travail to bring her children to birth, even so, in intercession for souls we must suffer the agony of spiritual travail to bring souls to salvation. Souls do not come to Christ on their own—they are *bought with price*, the blood of Christ; they are **sought** by the Lord who *came to seek and to save that which was lost*; they are **claimed** for salvation and service to the Lord Jesus by intercessors with concerned hearts.

E. The Declaration of Intercession

Jesus said, *“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit”* (John 12:24).

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you.”* (II Corinthians 4:10-12).

❖ The Great Secret...

When the Seed Dies, the Harvest Will Rise.

Oh, how the church today needs to learn this secret. Let me illustrate it. Years ago, some archaeologists were exploring a pyramid in Egypt and found some seed, the age of which was not known, but was very old. Later, they planted the seed and to their amazement the seed came up and grew and produced fruit. Now why had the seed not done so before? Because they had not been planted so they could die. The germ of life was locked up in the seed and could not get out until it died.

It is said that a kernel of corn reproduces itself between 2,000 to 3000 times. That is amazing. You may not realize that in the ground below a stalk of corn is a grave where the kernel of corn dies. Again, locked up in the seed is the germ of life that can’t get out unless it dies. But when it dies in germination, it comes forth to life and produces fruit. Someone said, “You may count the seeds in one apple, but you cannot count the apples in one seed.”

The principle truth is that Jesus had to die and be resurrected to satisfy the demands of God’s justice toward sin and pay the price for our redemption. Jesus tells us that when we claim death to the self-life, new life will come forth to produce fruit. The desired fruit is the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of God’s Word in the lives of people for whom we intercede. Fruit cannot come from the effort of our self-life – it comes from the Christ-life within us. Jesus compared Himself to a corn of wheat and stated that He must die. *That was the purpose of the cross of Calvary.* Likewise, we must die to the self-life.

This death comes by consigning the old self-life to the cross where it was crucified with Jesus. When we do this, the resurrection power of Jesus will then be manifest in our lives—Power to pray, to intercede, to witness, to win souls. This is what Paul meant by these words, *“death works in us,” and “life works in you (others).”* There will be power in our intercession to bring souls to an awareness of their sin and need of salvation. We cannot operate in the power of the old nature, but in the power of the Holy Spirit and the Christ-life. Again – *when the seed dies, the harvest will rise.*

What a Man Is in His Prayer-Closet Is What He Is.

(R.M. McCheyene)
