

# Principles Of Intercession

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# Principles Of Intercession

It was a time of total confusion that I will never forget. A minister called me on the telephone and accused me of attacking him and trying to destroy his ministry. I was speechless, for I knew that I had not done these things. I walked into the next room and told my wife about it. I then asked, “*What’s going on here?*” We concluded that we must be in some kind of spiritual battle, whatever that was.

That same day, unknown to me, a band of intercessors began to wage spiritual warfare in the heavens against an army of spiritual enemies—demonic hosts—which, they had discerned had invaded America. While in prayer, the leader had a vision of a man walking up behind him, looking around, and then asking, “*What’s going on here?*”

“*Look and see,*” he said, pointing to the demonic hosts in the vision. The newcomer, he would write the next day, looked surprised, and then put on the spiritual armor and joined the fight.

That was me. I had just become an intercessor. It would have been nice if I had known consciously what was happening! But I did not know, because my level of conscious discernment was too low. I could neither hear God’s voice nor see in the spiritual realm. That is, I was both deaf and blind, as prophesied in Isaiah 29:10 (NASB),

**<sup>10</sup> For the Lord has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep. He has shut your eyes, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, the seers.**

And yet, in Isaiah 42:16 He promised to lead His blind servants in ways that are incomprehensible:

**<sup>16</sup> And I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, in paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone.**

More than a year after that first spiritual battle, in which I had unwittingly taken part, I met the man who had seen me in the vision. He told me later that he recognized me immediately from the vision. I

later obtained copies of the original battle reports, which told me of his vision, and compared those reports with my own diary. Only then did the events of that day become clear to me. Only then did I understand that the accusatory telephone call was essentially correct. The fact is, that minister was a POW of the demonic host which the intercessors had attacked in spiritual warfare. He was unwittingly being used as a spokesman for his captors in this situation. And yes, I had joined his “enemies” in attacking and fighting them. But it did not happen in the way we understood at the time.

His enemies were the intercessors who had attacked the demonic army. I had joined that army and hence had “joined with his enemies.” It was not the minister that we had attacked, but his captors who were using him to give voice to the accusation.

### What is Intercession?

The word “intercession” comes from the Latin, meaning *to stand between*. Intercession is quite different from ordinary prayer. It carries with it a priestly function and duty, and since all Christians are or should be priests, it follows that all Christians have the potential to be intercessors. And from my own experience, I know that one does not need to be conscious of it to be involved in it. There are many who go through troubles blindly, not knowing that they are interceding.

Just as the Bible required training before the Israelite priests could take full responsibility at the age of 30, so also with the intercessors. They must come to some level of spiritual maturity before they can really be effective in that type of ministry. The sons of Aaron, however, entered into an apprenticeship at the age of 20, which lays down the principle that an intercessor (or priest) must undergo some on-the-job training.

### Three Phases of Intercession

1. Identification
2. Bearing their iniquity in six steps:
  - a. No reputation
  - b. Obedience
  - c. Taking the blame
  - d. Setting the level of judgment
  - e. Faith, but little understanding
  - f. Death
3. Resurrection and Harvest

### Phase 1: Identification

Jesus is our ultimate and prime Example of an Intercessor and great High Priest (Heb. 7:25). In order to intercede for us, He first became one with us, identifying with us in our flesh, feeling our infirmities, and being tempted in all things even as we are. Heb. 2:14-17 says,

**<sup>14</sup> Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; <sup>15</sup> and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. <sup>16</sup> For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**

Jesus identified with us in order to be an effective intercessor. But the principle of identification is not limited to Jesus. There are other examples in the Bible, which show us that there are many intercessors who undergo the same type of identification in the conditions and problems of humanity.

### Ezekiel

Look at Ezekiel 4, where the prophet interceded for Israel, a nation that was going into captivity for its sin. The prophet was instructed to identify with Israel in two ways. First, he was to eat food cooked with (or over) dung (Ez. 4:12). This was to identify him with the people whose priests had fed them with the traditions of men that sprang from the idols of their own hearts. The Hebrew word for “dung” is *gelel*, which literally means “balls,” and is a reference to sheep or goat dung, which looks like little balls. Ezekiel’s favorite Hebrew word for “idol” is *gillul*. It literally means “a log,” and is a reference to human dung.

In other words, the priests had been eating the Word of God and after digesting the food, they were feeding the people with dung. The priests were teaching the traditions of men—man’s interpretation of the Word, or what is left of it after man has processed it internally. (See also our book, [The Laws of Wormwood and Dung](#).)

Secondly, the prophet had to lie on his left side for 390 days for the House of Israel (Ez. 4:4, 5) and another 40 days for the House of Judah (Ez. 4:6). In doing this, the prophet identified with the captivities of both Israel and Judah, in which they would be subjected to the dung of human traditions, rather than any real understanding of the Word of God. Of course, the “remnant of grace” among them would always have a better understanding of God, but as Paul says, “the rest were blinded” (Rom. 11:5-7).

The 390-day intercession for the House of Israel set the level of grace for Israel that they would need during their long captivity to ensure their survival. From the beginning of their deportation to Assyria in 745 B.C. to the year 1986 A.D. was 7 x 390 years. The year 1986 was the 120<sup>th</sup> Jubilee from Adam. That year was pivotal and began a whole new series of events that must culminate in the manifestation of the Sons of God in the earth. We write more of the background of this timing in our book, Secrets of Time.

The 40-day intercession for the House of Judah set the level of Judah’s grace period before their destruction at the hands of Rome. It was 40 years from John’s execution at Passover of 30 A.D. to the day that the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem at Passover of 70 A.D. It was also 40 years from Jesus’ crucifixion at Passover of 33 A.D. to the fall of Masada at Passover of 73 A.D., ending the Roman war.

Finally, it was 40 Jubilees (40 x 49 years) from the crucifixion to the year 1993 A.D. In this year the Lord led modern-day intercessors to undergo a seven-year time of intercession and spiritual warfare, leading to the year 2000. These were more very important years in the events leading to the manifestation of the sons of God. But these events are not the main focus of our attention in this short study of intercession. We only mention these time cycles to point out the value of Ezekiel’s intercession.

### Hosea

Another example of identification is the prophet Hosea, who was told by God to marry a harlot. Hosea 1:2, 3 says,

**<sup>2</sup> When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, ‘Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry, and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.’ <sup>3</sup> So he went and took**

### **Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.**

God’s reason for telling Hosea to marry a harlot is specifically stated. God had married Israel, who had turned out to be a harlot in worshipping false gods. So Hosea was told to IDENTIFY with God in this situation in his call as an intercessor. One can only imagine what the upstanding religious leaders of the day might have said about this. In all of their own self-righteousness, they were not the ones called by God to be the intercessors. They never would have subjected themselves to the ridicule and condemnation required of an intercessor. Hosea was called, and he was willing to pay the price of obedience.

Hosea’s intercession had a happy ending, for after his wife left him, he redeemed her again (Hos. 3:2), establishing the fact that God would also redeem Israel from the bondage that her harlotry caused. This was a word of comfort to the northern House of Israel, whose ten tribes had been carried captive into Assyria and who would not find their way back to the land of Israel (Hos. 2:6). For this reason, these non-Jewish Israelites came to be known as “the ten lost tribes.”

Men may indeed lose them, but God never forgets. The time of physical Israel’s exile was 2,520 years (7 x 360, or “seven times”), dating from the beginning of their exile in 745 B.C. to 1776 A.D. America’s motto: “*Out of many, One*” is a prophetic reference to the reunification of all the ten tribes of Israel in their place of regathering in North America.

A secondary date for the beginning of this 2,520-year period was in 721 B.C., the year that Israel’s capital city, Samaria, was captured by the Assyrians. Dating from then, 2,520 years later comes to the year 1800 A.D., the year America’s capital, Washington D.C. was completed.

On a more spiritual level, of course, the term “Israel” refers to Jacob’s name given to him by the angel that he wrestled in Gen. 32:28. Jacob was not born with the name “Israel.” He received it after attaining a deeper relationship and understanding of God and His sovereignty. It is the name of the overcomers, the sons of God, who reflect the character of Jesus Christ. On this level, Ezekiel’s time frame is more applicable, where it is 7 x 390 years, bringing us to the year 1986 A.D. That is the year God began to separate the “barley”

from the “wheat,” planting the overcomers and the rest of the Church into two separate “fields” according to the law of Deut. 22:9,

**<sup>9</sup> You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest all the produce of the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard become defiled.**

Prior to 1986 God had viewed the overcomers as part of the Church under Pentecost. But after that time, God sowed each in its separate “field” in order that the leaven of Pentecost (Lev. 23:11) would not defile the overcomers, the sons of God, and prevent their manifestation.

### Isaiah

Isaiah did some very strange things as an intercessor. Look at the example in Isaiah 20:2-5, where he identifies with Egypt and Ethiopia (or “Cush”). We read,

**<sup>2</sup> At that time the Lord spoke through Isaiah the son of Amos, saying, ‘Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips, and take your shoes off your feet.’ And he did so, going naked and barefoot. <sup>3</sup> And the Lord said, ‘Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush, <sup>4</sup> so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast.**

Verse six tells us that Israel was expecting help from Ethiopia and Egypt to protect them from Assyria. Thus, in verse five Ethiopia (Cush) was “their hope” and Egypt “their glory.” They should have turned to God in repentance, rather than to other nations for help in warding off the judgment of the law upon the nation.

It is interesting to note that Jerusalem under King Hezekiah did pray to God for deliverance, and God then destroyed the entire Assyrian army. Since this occurred while Isaiah was prophesying in Jerusalem, it would seem that Isaiah’s prophecies did have the desired effect. It bought them another century or more of national survival.

About 100 years later, however, Egypt put Jerusalem under tribute, deported King Jehoahaz and set up his brother Jehoiakim as a

puppet king (2 Chron. 36:1-5). Such an arrangement meant that Egypt was responsible to defend Judah if they came under attack from another foreign nation. It was only natural, then, that Jehoiakim would rely upon Egypt and its ally, Ethiopia (Cush) when king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came and conquered Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:6) a few years later.

And so, Isaiah’s prophecy came to pass. The Israelites were carried into Assyria, as Isaiah specified. But Judah’s judgment was delayed, because King Hezekiah repented and relied only on God for their deliverance. Hence, Judah escaped Assyrian captivity, but a century later, the King of Judah had forgotten how God saved Jerusalem. Instead, they relied upon Egypt once again and so Judah, too, was carried into captivity to Babylon.

Isaiah’s time of intercession lasted three years in this case. The whole point of a limited period of time was that it would lawfully set limits to the time of judgment upon Egypt and Ethiopia. While the focus is upon judgment, we cannot forget that God’s judgments are remedial and corrective in nature. The judgments of the law are designed to restore the lawful order and restore people and entire nations into grace.

And so we see that in Isaiah 19 God had already spoken to Isaiah of a time when God would “heal” Egypt (19:22), and Egypt would be God’s people (19:25). The passage reads,

**<sup>22</sup> And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the Lord, and He will respond to them and will heal them. <sup>23</sup> In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. <sup>24</sup> In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup> whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.’**

God limited Isaiah’s intercession to three years for Egypt and Ethiopia in order to establish a time limit on their judgment. This is the purpose and end of intercession. Once the prophet put on his clothes and shoes again, it signified that the time of judgment had been completed. So Isaiah’s intercession had a positive side to it.

Egypt and Assyria would ultimately be blessed and the people would repent. Their nations would be included in the Kingdom of God during the final Messianic Age. We call it the Age of the Feast of Tabernacles which follows the Age of Pentecost.

### **Abraham and Isaac**

Abraham is called the father of faith, because it is in him that the Scriptures develop the concept of faith. He was called to identify with God Almighty in sacrificing his only son, Isaac, the seed through whom the promise was to come. When Abraham heard the voice tell him to do this awful thing, one can only imagine what went through his mind at that time.

We often think of the great men of the Bible as superhuman creatures who would hear audible voices from heaven and would instantly obey the voice with gladness in their hearts. But these were men and women just like us (James 5:17). God's tests are very real. First, it is highly doubtful that God spoke audibly to Abraham—at least not normally. Seldom does God speak audibly, for He makes it deliberately difficult to hear His voice. In 1 Kings 19:11, 12 Elijah learned that God spoke to men, not in the tempest, earthquake, and fire, but in “a sound of gentle blowing” (NASB), or in “a still small voice” (KJV).

If God had spoken with a booming voice out of heaven, even the heathen would obey by sacrificing their sons. But God spoke in the innermost being of Abraham's spirit. This was the real test, and it was not easy, for Abraham had to be absolutely sure that it was God speaking and not merely an evil spirit or his own carnal mind. It is certain that Abraham knew that God did not require human sacrifice. This alone would have caused doubt in Abraham's mind. We are not told the secrets of how Abraham knew the voice of God, or how he received confirmation of that word. But we are told that Abraham obeyed. He therefore came to reconcile the nature of the command with his understanding of the nature of God as he knew Him.

How easy it would have been for Abraham to rebuff God and then justify it with a treatise on The Satanic Rite of Human Sacrifice. God's test was primarily to see if Abraham would lean unto His own understanding of the nature and justice of God (Prov. 3:5), or if he would know that voice so well that he knew for certain it was not an imitator.

I have often been faced with this type of test. It is most uncomfortable and tormenting. Yet it ultimately teaches us to trust that God knows what He is doing. It tears us loose from our dependence upon human understanding of the nature of God. It shatters our rigid dogmatism and destroys the wall of our human understanding, laying bare the deepest and most glorious truths once hidden by our narrow assumptions.

Abraham was called to identify with God in his most difficult act, that of sacrificing His only Son, Jesus. Abraham was called to know the heart of God, to feel His pain, to know His love, to glory in His resurrection. And we, the children of Abraham, led by the Holy Spirit, are able to enter into the experience of Abraham and catch a glimpse of the heart of God. It is done by the first principle of intercession: identification.

Intercession (“standing between”) takes two forms. The first form is identifying with sinful men, and secondly, identifying with God. Ezekiel and Isaiah identified with sinful men by eating food cooked with dung and by walking barefoot and naked for three years. Hosea and Abraham identified with God, the prophet by marrying the harlot, and Abraham by sacrificing his son.

The principle of identification makes us actors on a stage who tell a story to the world and teach principles by living out scenes in real-life stories. However, God does not allow us to learn our lines ahead of time. We are instead called to “live it out” and learn as we go. It is like being pushed out onto a stage without knowing the script ahead of time, being expected to *ad lib* the story as best we can.

This can, of course, be quite stressful. It is hard to understand why it must be this way. But as we will see later, one of the most important features of intercession is that the intercessor must act by faith and not depend upon understanding. Even Jesus on the cross asked His Father why He had forsaken Him. I do not pretend to know why God does it this way, but I know that He does. I also know that He has higher purposes than my little mind can comprehend. And most importantly, I know that no matter what happens, all things will work together for my good (Rom. 8:28). Intercession always does.

### **Phase 2: Bearing Their Iniquity**

In Isaiah 53 we find the famous passage about the death of the Messiah. Verse 11 says,

**11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.**

We all recognize this as being part of Jesus' intercessory work, but few realize that this is also inherent in all intercession. Some think it is blasphemy to think that any man can bear the iniquities of another. Only Jesus can take upon Himself the sins of mankind, they say. It is certainly true that only Jesus could bear the sins of the whole world. But we as individuals have the capacity to bear a few sins and iniquities. Let us explain.

When God established the Levitical priesthood in the days of Moses, the people who had sinned were to bring their sacrifices to the tabernacle. Lev. 6:25-29 says,

**<sup>25</sup> Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the sin offering; in the place where the burnt offering is slain the sin offering shall be slain before the Lord; it is most holy. <sup>26</sup> The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting. . . . <sup>29</sup> Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy.**

The priests were to eat of the sin offering in order to identify with the one offering the animal. The animal represented the sinner; thus, the priest was to identify with the sinner in "bearing his sin." When the priest bore the sin of the sinner, he was first bearing it away from the sinner—that is, he was taking it out of the hands of the sinner. Secondly, he was figuratively paying the penalty himself as a priest.

The sin offering pointed to Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). The Hebrew words for "sin" (*khataw*) and "sin offering" (*khatawth*) are essentially the same word. Strictly speaking, Jesus was not made sin, but a sin offering for us. The sin offering bore the sin of the sinner and therefore had to pay its penalty. The animal was identified in the sin of the sinner, but strictly speaking, the sin was imputed to the animal, who then had to pay its penalty as if it were the sinner himself.

So it was with Jesus. He became the sin offering and bore our sin. He paid the penalty as if He were the sinner. And we, as priests, are required to eat of that Sacrifice, even as John 6:53-56 says,

**<sup>53</sup> Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup> He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.'**

Jesus was speaking of hearing and seeing Him, not of physically eating and drinking His flesh and blood. To eat His flesh, who is also identified with the manna from heaven (John 6:58), is to hear and obey His voice and His words. To drink His blood, in which is life and light, is to see Him as He is.

All through the Scriptures we see examples of God's intercessors bearing the iniquity of others. Primarily this simply means that an intercessor pays the price of the sin of others. This can be something as simple as paying someone else's monetary debt or it can be as dramatic as forfeiting one's life for the sake of another. If you study the way this concept is used in the Scripture, you will discover that it means "to be held liable" for the actions of another person.

The sinner is normally liable for his own sin. If a man deserved a beating, then an intercessor could step forward and "bear his iniquity" upon his own back. A thief was required to pay restitution, but if someone were to step forward and pay the debt on his behalf, that person is both a redeemer and an intercessor, bearing the iniquity of the sinner.

We have already seen the example of the prophet Ezekiel, who was to lie on his left side for 390 days and again on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquity of the House of Israel and Judah. (See Ez. 4:4-6). The fact that there are intercessors among men neither negates nor detracts from the intercessory work that Jesus Christ did for us. Men who redeem others neither negate nor detract from the great redemptive work that Jesus did on the cross. In fact, such men are actually doing as they have learned from their great Example, as John tells is in 1 John 2:6,

**<sup>6</sup> The one who says he abides in Him ought himself so to walk in the same manner as He walked.**

And so also when Obadiah 21 prophesies that "saviors" (KJV) or "deliverers" (NASB) will arise out of Mount Zion (heavenly, as in

Heb. 12:22) to judge the mount of Esau, this does not detract from the fact that Jesus is our Savior and Deliverer. We are, after all, his body, and the plan is for Jesus to live His life in our flesh. Anyone who knows nothing about this has not eaten of His flesh, nor tasted of His blood. He is accomplishing His purposes in us, and therefore, we are to be priests, intercessors, redeemers, saviors, and deliverers, using Jesus as the great Example of each. What He did on a universal scale, we are to do on a lesser level according to our callings.

If it was possible as a Levitical priest and an Old Testament prophet to bear the iniquities of the people, then surely in the New Testament era it should be even more possible with us. We who have received of His Spirit ought to be even more effective than they were in times past. However, because we have largely lost our respect for the Old Testament, we have also nearly forgotten the laws of the priesthood, which are also the foundation of the principles of intercession. Hopefully, this book will revive the understanding of that knowledge.

There are six basic steps in bearing iniquities, as seen in the life of Jesus and other intercessors. I have found these to be true through Bible study, of course, but I probably would not have seen the principles in the Bible except that God had already taught them to me by personal experience, by pushing me onto the stage and having me act out my parts in real life.

### **Step 1: No Reputation**

If a man is known to be innocent, yet bears the penalty for another man's sin, his reputation is enhanced in the eyes of the people. However, God's intercessors are not called to be rewarded by men for their works—except after they are dead. This is why the prophets were stoned, and then the next generations raised monuments to them and revered their writings (Matt. 23:29-31). If men were to reward intercessors during their life time with great reputations, verily, they have their reward (Matt. 6:16).

What Jesus said about fasting is also true about intercession and about any good work. We are given the privilege of choosing our own salaries. We may either receive the salary of men—which is having a good reputation—or we may receive God's salary, which is more like a hidden bank account in heaven. Jesus said in Matt. 6:17, 18,

**<sup>17</sup> But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.**

When God calls an intercessor to bear the sins of another, He always sees to it that the intercessor looks guilty in the eyes of most people. Only the few who have learned not to judge by appearances will continue to love and befriend the intercessor during his time of intercession.

Isaiah 53:3 says of Jesus, "*He was despised and forsaken of men.*" Phil. 2:7 says, that He "*emptied Himself*" of all His glory and took upon Himself the form of a bondservant. Heb. 12:2 says He "*endured the cross, despising the shame.*" That is, He thought nothing of His loss of reputation.

If anyone desires to follow in Jesus' footsteps as an intercessor, one must be willing to lose all reputation among men. This includes the loss of reputation among Christians as well, because very few Christians ever learn not to judge by appearances. It is a lesson we all must keep learning throughout life.

Generally speaking, a person will know the truth about an intercessor only by divine revelation or inspiration. He will not know it simply by reading the Bible, because the intercessor will appear to be guilty, and the Bible will appear to condemn him by the law. Yet the question is not so much a legal question of guilt or innocence, but rather a question of *divine purpose* in his partaking of the sinner's sin offering.

I used to be very concerned about maintaining my good name and reputation among men, because I felt that this reputation was necessary in order to reach others with the Gospel. I was wrong. Sinners may respect saints, but saints are too insulated from problems of the average sinner to be of much help to him. A sinner looks at a saint and says two things:

(1) I wish I could be like him.

(2) I could never be that good, because I am just a poor lowly sinner living in the real world.

The world does not need more saints; it needs more intercessors who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, our

weaknesses. Why do you suppose so many sinners flock to hear a former “great sinner”? It is because so many people want to know that it is possible for ordinary sinners to find God. They cannot relate to saints; they can only relate to a fellow sinner.

At one time I wondered if perhaps I should not go out and become a great sinner before going out to teach others of Christ. Then I discovered that I did not need to take time out to become a great sinner. *I already was one!* There were only two essential differences between me and the more visible great sinners: (1) my sins and weaknesses were quite well hidden and under control; and (2) I lacked many of the same opportunities to sin, because I had been raised in a Christian environment, which screened out many temptations to which the “great sinners” had been subjected.

Later, when God called me into various intercessory periods, I came to see that God lays upon His intercessors the sins of others, and that this serves to make even the best of saints look evil in the eyes of men. One does not need to go out and commit sin to be an intercessor. Any old saint will do.

In fact, Jesus Himself was perfect in every way, and yet even from the beginning, He had no reputation. Born in a stable, rather than in the palace; the son of a carpenter, rather than the son of a high priest. Finally, He was made to look like a wretchedly blasphemous criminal worthy only of the worst sort of death.

When God worked in my own life to take away all reputation from me, I was at first devastated and thought God had forsaken me for sure. This was what others said about me, and for a while I thought they might be right. But when I tried to escape His call and just find work in a normal job, I found that He would not allow that either. For a long time this was very frustrating. But when I finally came to understand the principle of intercession, and that *no reputation* was one of the requirements of the calling, I at last rejoiced and marveled at the wisdom of God.

What greater reputation could I possibly desire than to be reputed by God to be an intercessor? No more would I need the esteem of men. No more would reputation be the salary for my ministry. No more would I work for men. I would work only for God and let Him see to my salary, both in terms of reputation and in meeting the daily needs of life.

In John 2:24, 25 we read that Jesus had little regard for men’s esteem, because “*He Himself knew what was in man.*” When men praised Him for His miracles, it had no effect upon Him, because He was not doing it for their praise, nor was the miracle the important thing men needed. They needed to know God first and foremost. We, too, need to be in such a balanced position; otherwise, when men disappoint us, we will be devastated and disillusioned. The world is full of people who have been disillusioned by the Church or by Christian friends.

Such devastation and bitterness only shows us that we had idolized people, following men, rather than God. We were seeking the esteem of men more than the esteem of God. We need deliverance from this heart idolatry. For this reason God deposes these human idols in those He calls as intercessors. Those whom God calls must learn experientially the first commandment, “*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*”

## **Step 2: Obedience by Faith**

Paul tells us in Romans 10:17,

**<sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**

We hear the word in many different ways. Sometimes as we read the Scriptures, something suddenly stands out as the answer to a question we had. Perhaps the preacher says something that really hits home, even if he is unaware of what he has said. Other times, in the quietness of the prayer closet, God can speak to us, usually by that “still, small voice” (2 Kings 19:12) that Elijah heard. It is not audible. It is more of an impression, an awareness, and inspired thought.

Once in a while, people report hearing an audible voice. In the New Testament, such a voice was heard by a few, but those around them only heard thunder. The audible voice was not the norm, however, not even with Jesus. In most cases it was the sound of stillness. Why? Because that way, only those with spiritual ears to hear would actually hear His voice. If one’s spiritual ears are tuned, one does not need an audible voice under most circumstances.

However He speaks to us, we must learn to be obedient to that voice if we ever hope to have the quality of faith required to be an intercessor. Israel ran from that voice, because they were afraid to die (Ex. 20:19). There is always something about His voice which our

carnal minds fear. The carnal mind fears death more than anything. When we hear and obey the voice of God, some part of our flesh, our carnal mind, will be led to the slaughter and will die on God's altar.

There is no use pussyfooting around on this issue. If you fear such death so much that you would rather follow the carnal will rather than the will of God, you are not qualified as an intercessor.

Ezekiel is a good example of this, as we have already shown earlier. God deliberately had him eat food cooked with dung. Whether he mixed the dung in his food, or merely used dung as fuel, his fellow priests believed that Ezekiel was committing a grave sin. Ezekiel immediately lost all reputation for his ability to hear the voice of God. Surely God would never tell a priest to eat food that had been rendered unclean! After all, one must be a good example to the flock. One must maintain a good reputation in order to teach men God's word. Perhaps that is so, but there are more important things.

Ezekiel thus had to submit himself to the harsh opinions of men for 390 days, lying there each day in plain view to give opportunity to all to be disgusted with him. How could Ezekiel ever preach the word to decent folks after that, when most men viewed him as a sinner? It makes no sense to human logic for God to work in this way, but God's wisdom is different from that of men. While men rely on men of good repute, God relies on the publicans and harlots, the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1:27).

Men, particularly Christians, seldom see the hand of God in such situations, for they are blinded by their human understanding, which Paul calls "the wisdom of this world." Few see the divine purpose in intercessory work during the time it is being done, because that is the time when it is done by faith alone. The intercessor is walking by faith, having little understanding, but knowing one thing: that he has heard God.

The divine purpose of Ezekiel's intercession can now be seen. He was, in fact, identifying with Israel's practice of mixing the "dung" of human tradition with the pure "food" of God's word. This was the problem of the Pharisees in Jesus' day, as we read in Mark 7:9-13,

<sup>9</sup> **He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. . . .**

<sup>13</sup> **thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition**

**which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."**

The Pharisees were no more guilty of this than we are today. They read the word, attempted to understand it in the light of their best intellectual, but carnal minds. After processing the word in their own understanding, they gave it to the people. Unless we have a true revelation from God to interpret and apply the word, we all do this same thing today whenever we comment on the word of God.

Through Ezekiel, God gave His opinion of men's traditions. He said it was like a priest eating good food; then after his body digests and processes this food, it finally passes through him and is deposited in the outhouse, which has been transformed into the cafeteria for the people. God may be a bit crass here, but He does make His point clear.

The solution to the problem is to receive the true word of God by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit. This may be done by many different means. When we read the Scriptures, we must listen to the voice of the Spirit to feed us by revelation. When we listen to a preacher, priest, or read a book theologians have written, we must listen to the voice of the Spirit, for God alone can feed us true spiritual food. In every activity, religious or secular, we must be aware of God's presence leading us and teaching us. This is the only way to avoid the dung of men's traditions which so easily defiles our hearts.

Even in reading this book, you must be careful not to "eat it." Instead, listen to the voice of the Spirit and eat what the Spirit gives you. Even if this book were the greatest ever written on the subject of intercession, it is only a vessel containing the word. It is only written by one whose understanding is yet imperfect. When all is said and done, the book itself is only man's understanding of the word, not the word itself. If it is helpful to read this book, by all means do so; but in reading it, pray and listen for His voice.

### **Step 3: The People's Sins Imputed to the Intercessor**

In the second chapter of Romans, Paul refers to Ezekiel 36:20 and 23, showing that the actions of the religious leadership in Jerusalem caused God's name to be blasphemed among the nations. Rom. 2:24,

<sup>24</sup> **For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles [ethnos, “nations”] because of you, just as it is written.**

Nonetheless, the Pharisees and priests thought Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, and they crucified Him for it (Mark 14:64).

It was, of course, a travesty of justice for these blasphemous men to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. And yet, because Jesus was the Great Intercessor, such accusations had to come to fulfill all righteousness. The sins of the world were to be imputed to Him. The harsh justice of the law was to treat Jesus as though He were the One that had committed all the sins in the world. In Isaiah 53:4 the prophet writes:

<sup>4</sup> **Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**

That is, the world—and in particular, the priests judging Jesus—considered Him to be properly punished, getting what He deserved, and thus “smitten of God.” This means they thought they were judging Jesus according to the divine law and that God had put His stamp of approval upon Jesus for His “sin of blasphemy.”

It is apparent to us Christians, of course, that the priests had ulterior motives, because this is what Jesus’ disciples tell us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. One of their motives is found in John 11:48, where they said among themselves,

<sup>48</sup> **If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**

A more sinister motive Jesus gave in one of His parables in Matt. 21:38, where he says of the “vine-growers,”

<sup>28</sup> **But when the vine-growers saw the Son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the Heir; come, let us kill him and seize His inheritance.’**

In other words, the priests knew that He was the Heir of all things, the Messiah. But they also knew that they themselves would lose their jobs if He was allowed to become the Messiah. So they decided to murder Him and “*seize His inheritance*.” But Jesus said in verse 43 that the Kingdom would be taken from them and given to another nation that would give Him the fruits from His Kingdom.

One of the ways in which God teaches His intercessors the awfulness of sin in their own lives is to create a circumstance in which those hidden sins come to the surface. Let’s face it; no intercessor other than Jesus Christ is sinless. God has to train His priests and intercessors, and most of His training comes while on the job.

In other words, God leads the intercessor down a path, knowing fully that he will fail in front of the whole world. In order to mature in Christ, we must know that no good thing is in our flesh. We must love all confidence in the flesh and in our ability to be righteous by our own will. But God does not make His people stumble so that they would fall forever (Rom. 11:11). His sovereign purpose is that we would know the true condition of our fleshly hearts, and thereby we would be broken bread in the Master’s hand, humbled and more willing to extend mercy to other sinners.

When God leads an intercessor down a path where he stumbles, the purpose is not only for personal cleansing. It is also to give others the opportunity to impute their same faults to the intercessor. In their blindness, never having been humbled and broken themselves, thinking they themselves are more righteous than the priest in training who they believe has sinned—they are quick to point out the sin in him, quick to “cut out the cancer in the body,” quick to separate the bad apple, lest the rottenness spread to the “righteous.”

God does not call righteous men. He calls sinners only (Mark 2:17),

<sup>17</sup> **And hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”**

It is apparent from this that Jesus was referring to those who were “righteous” in their own eyes and those who saw themselves as “sinners.” The “righteous” have their own comfortable pews and think they are quite deserving of God’s blessings. Sinners are real people. It is not that Jesus ever condoned sin, but he was more comfortable around those who knew their own failures than those who did not.

Those who think themselves to be healthy need no physician. Those who have no true sense of being a sinner need no savior. Jesus was not talking about a doctrinal position here. Even the Pharisees

would have acknowledged that they were sinners from a doctrinal point of view. But too often we spout doctrines from our heads without knowing it experientially in our hearts. We are, too often, theoretical sinners, rather than real sinners in our own eyes.

Theoretical sinners are reputable enough to be preachers and leaders in the Church, but they are not broken bread in the hand of God. They cannot feed the body of Christ, nor can the body of Christ partake of them. They are not real. They do not know the reality of human nature by personal experience or by revelation from the direct dealings of God in their lives. They know the right words to say, but it is mostly theoretical ideology.

If you want a true revival, find one who views himself as a publican or a harlot. Find one who has benefited from God's grace, rather than one who merely knows it doctrinally. Of such is the Kingdom of heaven, because they have been stripped of all their self-righteousness. They are unlikely to impute their own sins to others and judge them by the law. Only sinners understand grace and mercy, so they alone are qualified to dispense it to others. "*He who is forgiven little, loves little*" (Luke 7:47).

The Church is divided into two groups: those who impute their own sins to others; and those to whom sin is imputed. Paul gives us the definition of imputation in his fourth chapter of Romans. In verse 17 he says that God "*is calling the things that be not as being*" (Young's Literal Translation). In other words, God, who sees the end from the beginning, treats us as if we are already perfected, even though we are not yet perfect. In the negative, men often call what is not as though it were. For example, they imputed the sin of blasphemy to Jesus.

It is a principle of intercession that the intercessor must be treated as a sinner, while the people impute their own sins to him and then judge him for those sins. I know this by personal example, and I have seen it happen to others as well. It has to be done, because only in this way can God train intercessors to be overcomers. They must experience the pain of false accusation. Or they must experience the pain of being overly judged, which is the indication of men imputing their own sins upon the intercessor who has committed a relatively minor infraction.

The priests in Jesus' day not only represented Israel, but also the whole world. Through those priests, the whole world imputed its sin

to Jesus and then judged Him for it. This was the divine plan. It could be no other way. The Righteous One was called unrighteous, so that the unrighteous could be called righteous. Church intercessors are called to bear the sin of the Church, so that the Church's cup of iniquity might not be so full. Not only does this postpone judgment upon the Church, but it also trains people to be like Christ and to do the works that He did. It creates overcomers.

What a marvelous plan!

It is one of the primary marks of a true priest of God, even in our own day, that he be blamed for other men's sins. It is a mark of shame in the eyes of the world and of the religious world. But it is a badge of honor and acceptance with God, for those who bear their iniquity with humility as He did. They must not lay blame on those who mistreat them, nor must they blame the devil for the evils that befall them. They must take all things from the hand of God alone, even if it from God's left hand of judgment. Nothing happens without His direction or permission, and all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28).

#### **Step 4: The People Set the Level Of their own Judgment**

No doubt many of Ezekiel's fellow priests in the corrupted temple really believed that they themselves were fully innocent of eating unclean food. Surely it was safe to judge Ezekiel with immunity. But while Ezekiel's "sin" was obvious to them, their own dung-filled hearts were obvious to God.

Ezekiel's fellow priests never would have considered eating unclean food. Absolutely never! They were too religious for that. But Jesus said of the Pharisees in Matt. 23:24,

<sup>24</sup> **You blind guides, who strain out a gnat [galma] and swallow a camel [gamla]!**

In this Aramaic pun, Jesus was saying that the religious leaders of His day went to great lengths to keep those unclean gnats out of their mouths. But in their spiritual lives, they were swallowing camels of unclean doctrines. Camels were also unclean to eat. One of their most important traditions was to wash their hands ceremonially before every meal, in case they had touched a table whereon a dead gnat or fly had rested.

It is important to be careful about judging others, for we will be judged by the same standard of measure that we judge others. Jesus said in Matt. 7:1, 2,

**<sup>1</sup> Do not judge, lest you be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.**

In other words, if we extend mercy and grace to others, that same measure will be used when God judges our own sin. It is the basic law of equal weights and measures found in Deut. 25:13-15,

**<sup>13</sup> You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. <sup>14</sup> You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. <sup>15</sup> You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.**

God will not use an unequal weight or measure in judging the weight of sin or the measure of its sentence. Those who are quick to judge others, or carry a grudge, or take revenge should take Solomon's advice. In fact, Jesus, in Matt. 7, probably had Prov. 20:22, 23 in mind when He made His statement. Solomon says,

**<sup>22</sup> Do not say, "I will repay evil;" Wait for the Lord, and He will save you. <sup>23</sup> Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord, and a false scale is not good.**

I know from much personal experience that God's judgments and disciplines upon us are in direct proportion to the "weights and measures" by which we have judged others for the same sins. At times I have regretted judging others for a sin that God later uncovers in my own life. At some other times, happily, I did not set myself up as another man's judge, for God's discipline upon me was then much lighter than it could have been.

This principle is best illustrated in the case of David, who had sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba—and then followed up with the murder of her husband, Uriah. The prophet Nathan was sent to confront David with his sin in 2 Sam. 12. Nathan told David that a certain rich man in his kingdom had had some unexpected company come to visit him. So he took a poor man's only lamb and butchered it to feed his guest, instead of taking one of his own lambs.

Nathan asked David what to do about this. David's response is recorded in 2 Sam. 12:5-7,

**<sup>5</sup> Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. <sup>6</sup> and he must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion." <sup>7</sup> Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!"**

By the law of equal weights and measures, David had sentenced himself to death and to restore the lamb fourfold. David later repented and as a consequence his sentence was overshadowed by grace. Yet someone had to die to satisfy the law's demands. There was no way around it, for the law demands equal weights and measures in judging sin. David's son by Bathsheba was the first to die to pay for David's sin (2 Sam. 12:14).

What a beautiful picture we are given of David's greater Son, Jesus, who died for our sins. And yet we ourselves who are in Christ, who are priests of God and of Christ, are likewise called to do the works that He did as our great Example. He paid the debt of sin for the whole world; we are called to pay smaller debts to the law according to our abilities and callings.

But getting back to the story of David, we find that David had also judged himself to repay fourfold, according to the law found in Ex. 22:1,

**<sup>1</sup> If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for an ox and four sheep for the sheep.**

David's judgment was indeed just, according to biblical law. Thus, David lost not only the baby that Bathsheba bore to him; he also lost three other sons: Amnon (2 Sam. 13:33); Absalom (2 Sam. 18:15); and Adonijah (1 Kings 2:24).

Other men also set the level of their own judgment by judging others. It was the same with Ezekiel, Hosea, Isaiah, and even with you and me. We may have a difficult time understanding the ways of God, but there is no question that God does this. It is written in the law, by which He judges all sin. The law of equal weights and measures gives us opportunity, a legal technicality, to extend to

ourselves grace and to lessen God's discipline for our own sins. It provides God with a legal opportunity to give us grace. If we know the law and utilize and put into practice its grace, we may save ourselves much hardship and trouble.

There is, of course, a sense in which Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins. Yet observant Christians also know that God disciplines us by the law when we sin. For this reason, in order to really understand grace, we must see it within the context of God's law that judges sin. If grace were absolute in the sense of canceling all liability for sin, then God could not judge us at all for any reason, and we would end up abusing grace (Rom. 6:1).

Paul makes it clear that the works of the Christian will undergo a test of fire to see if they are made of gold or of straw (1 Cor. 3:11-15). The purpose of the fire is not to determine whether or not the man is a Christian believer. It is to determine the nature of his works and to determine the level of his reward. This goes beyond salvation and the reward of eternal life.

The salvation which Jesus wrought and "finished" on the Cross is on one level; the works of the Christian are on a secondary level. When we speak here of grace and judgment for sin, we are referring to grace on the secondary level. The cancellation of sin on the Cross did not preclude God's judgments upon either the believer or the unbeliever for his works.

The intercessor, in his call to bear the iniquity of the people for whom he is interceding, will stumble or at least seem to stumble, in order to allow the people to set the level of their own judgments. As they judge the intercessor, so also will they be judged. And yet, an amazing thing happens. Even as David's son bore the iniquity of his father, so also does the intercessor bear the iniquity of the people. His hardship caused by the people's judgment benefits those who repent even as David did.

While it is true that the people will not and cannot escape all judgment for their sins, yet they benefit from the intercessor's work, because he has already paid part of the law's penalty owed for their sins.

The death of David's son benefited David himself. The hardship of Hosea in marrying the harlot served to limit Israel's harlotry to a specific length of the sentence. It is pictured in his redemption of his

wife after she had left him for another and then had been sold into slavery (Hos. 3:2).

The hardship of Ezekiel in eating food cooked with dung served to limit Israel's dung consumption to a certain length of time. That is pictured in the fact that Ezekiel's intercessory period did not last forever. After 390 days, he stood to his feet and brought Israel's judgment to an end by a 390-day cycle. So after 7 x 390 years, God began to raise up a body of overcomers in the last days that could feed the people the true word without the dung of men's traditions. These are overcomers that God is bringing to perfection under the anointing of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### **Step 5: Faith First; Then Understanding**

One of the most difficult ingredients of intercession is that the intercessor seldom if ever knows why he is experiencing the troubles and the false accusations. His understanding is fruitless. Nothing makes sense. There is a constant inner battle to overcome bitterness against God for allowing these terrible circumstances to happen to him.

In a time of intercession, nothing is fair or just. He is generally falsely accused; or if he is somewhat guilty, then certainly his guilt is overly magnified, as he is made to pay for the sins of his accusers as well. The big question arises: If God is really just and good and loving, then why would He allow all these bad things to happen to me?

That is the voice of bitterness, caused by a lack of understanding. It is, to the intercessor, a test of faith. More than that, it is to show us the purpose of evil and God's absolute sovereignty. In Job's distress, when his wife told him to curse God and die, he replied in Job 2:10,

**<sup>10</sup> . . . Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?**

Jesus, our great Example, also wrestled with this same bitterness. It comes out in Matt. 27:46 when He said on the Cross, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" In one wrenching cry we are shown the reality of His temptation, his lack of understanding, and the extent of the requirement to have blind faith in His Father for the terrible injustice upon the innocent. Jesus knew the will of His Father in the spirit, but his soul had no understanding. He was called to

experience the utmost injustice as a test of His faith, to see if He would yet believe and trust God in spite of the evil befalling Him.

During His time on the Cross, the soldiers offered Jesus a drug to help ease His suffering. We read in Matt. 27:34,

**<sup>34</sup> They gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.**

Strong's Concordance tells us that the Hebrew word translated "gall" is the poppy plant, which contains opium, a drug that deadens pain. Wormwood and gall are often mentioned in the same context, because wormwood is the extract from gall (poppies). What the Bible translators call wormwood is actually the opium itself. See our book, [The Laws of Wormwood and Dung](#).

Jesus was offered opium to relieve the pain of the Cross, but He refused to drink it. Why? Because gall and wormwood are also symbols of heart bitterness. For Jesus to be tempted as we are in all things (Heb. 4:15), He did have to taste the bitterness. However, He refused to become embittered about His unjust situation, even though His soul lacked understanding.

We, too, are called in similar fashion, though not to the extent that Jesus was. When we can receive evil from the left hand of God, not knowing why or for what purpose, yet trusting that God indeed works all things out for our good, then and only then are we truly an overcomer. By such hard circumstances, God brings all bitterness to the surface, where it can be skimmed off by the right hand of God, to purify our hearts in the same crucible where Jesus was placed.

The intercessor, by hard experience, learns also to listen to the voice of the Spirit and not the fleshly soul. He recognizes that the Spirit is the one with divinely appointed authority over him, and he submits to it, for his Spirit has been quickened by merging with the Holy Spirit of God.

Understanding is no longer a premise of faith.

### **Step 6: The Intercessor Must Die**

We know from the Scriptures that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. As Christians, we are called to identify with Him in both death and resurrection. Rom. 6:4, 5 makes this clear in his commentary upon baptism:

**<sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.**

It is most fortunate that we do not literally have to die, not for our own sins, nor, in times of intercession, for others. Men have indeed died for others throughout history, and that is a form of intercession as well. But when God calls us to intercede, He is very protective of His intercessors and limits their burdens accordingly. I believe the only time He may call someone to die literally for another is when his calling on earth has been completed.

Normally, the death of the intercessor is a dying to the flesh. The whole point of baptism is to picture the death and resurrection of Jesus being applied to us as we identify with Him. Every time the intercessor is obedient to the voice of God (Step 2), he must go against his own fleshly mind, the "soulish man." He must be obedient to the Spirit and make his soul subservient to the headship of the Spirit. One gets used to this, but it never seems to become easier, for the flesh refuses to die easily. Our minds demand to understand before allowing obedience. The fleshly soul is in a continuous power struggle with the Spirit to usurp the authority set by divine order.

Every time the intercessor denies his soulish mind its carnal need to understand before allowing obedience, he puts down his flesh nature, the Babylon within his heart. He is subjecting Babylon to the rule of Jerusalem, the Spirit, the dwelling place of God's holy presence. He is crucifying the flesh, even as Jesus did on the Cross; and moreso, he learns to refuse the gall that tempts him to indulge in the bitterness of blaming God in self-pity.

To the extent that the intercessor dies to the flesh, he is then able to be raised up in resurrection power.

These, then, are the six steps of the intercessor's work in bearing the iniquity of the people. It is not an easy road, but rewards are there at the end. Our final section deals with that reward.

### **Phase 3: Resurrection**

In normal applications of the principle of dying to the flesh, people are raised at the same time that they "die." However, with

intercessors, there is more of a time lag between the two events. The time depends wholly upon the length of time required in a particular job of intercession. With Ezekiel, it was 390 days for Israel and 40 days for Judah. With Isaiah it was three years. With Hosea, it was for his entire time of married life.

In Jesus' example, it was three-and-a-half years from the time He presented Himself to John for baptism to the time of His resurrection. It culminated in a three-day time in the tomb before resurrection.

Most important to this phase, however, is *the result* of the intercessory work, for herein is the reward. Of Jesus, we read in Heb. 2:9, 10,

**<sup>9</sup> But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. <sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.**

He brought many sons into glory through His sufferings. Eph. 4:8 says that "*He led captive a host of captives and He gave gifts to men.*" That is, He freed those captivated by death. It was customary in those days that if a man saved another man's life, the man saved owed his life to the one who saved it. If a general conquered a city and led the survivors away captive—and if another general should conquer the first general—the captives became the property of the second general. That is, "he led captive a host of captives." If he were a generous conqueror, it was customary to release those captives and give them gifts and provisions out of the spoils of war, so that they could return to their homes.

Jesus did this by conquering General Death, who had formerly captivated all men through Adam's sin. In Jesus' conquest of Death, Jesus took all men captive and set them free. Jesus then gave men the gift of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts as their provision whereby they could return to their inheritance, the Promised Land.

What Jesus did on a worldwide scale, Ezekiel did on a national scale for Israel. When the time was completed, he stood up and stopped eating food cooked with dung. In doing so, he ensured that Israel would also stand up one day and shake off their shackles, the

bonds that held them bound in darkness for so long. He ensured that they would be fed with the true Manna from heaven, the pure word of God not cooked or prepared with the dung of men's traditions.

This was the reward of intercession. Ezekiel, too, would lead captive a host of captives and give gifts to men. To be sure, Ezekiel was "in Christ," so Christ gets the ultimate credit for these things. But this does not negate the fact that Ezekiel would get his reward, for God always rewards His servants, even though they can do nothing without His empowerment.

Many Christians wonder why they experience troubles and spiritual battles. They wonder why God does not seem to answer their prayers to release them. The answer might be that they have been called as intercessors, to pay the debt to sin that the law requires, not only for their own sins, but for the sins of others as well. Remember, the high priest of Israel not only had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, but then he had to offer sacrifices for the sins of the nation as well.

Intercessors have a priestly function in bearing the iniquity of others. If you suspect that you are such a person, called to intercede, here is what to do: trust God; He knows what He is doing. Remember Rom. 8:28. All things will work out for your good. So guard yourself against heart bitterness. Rather than accuse God of child abuse, thank Him for His love and for caring enough about you not to leave you in your present carnal condition. Thank Him in all things.

Know that because Jesus has overcome the world, and He is in you, that you too will be more than a conqueror. Submit to the death of the flesh, that you may be raised to life as well in due time. As you overcome, so shall those you are interceding for, because what you sow, you shall certainly reap at the proper season.