

Function and Authority of the Intercessor

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

First of all I'd say this brothers and sisters, there is no job more vital to the work in which we're engaged than your own. I know it sounds as if I'm trying to emphasize it (intercessory prayer) because I want to emphasize everything, but brothers and sisters there is nothing that is more important than interceding in prayer for the work of Jesus. I hope to show that in the study that we'll share in the next 15 minutes. But can I just say that again the preaching is unimportant, the singing is unimportant, the meetings don't matter, the ownership of the bookshop or Ashland House is unnecessary. But what is vital is that we have men and woman who are praying, because that's the work of the Lord.

If there's to be anything more than just hay, and stubble, and wood that will be burned up on Judgment Day, if there's to be any solid work built on the foundation which is Christ Jesus, if there are to be any precious stones or anything that will last when Judgment Day comes, it will be only because some people have labored in the spirit in prayer to bring forth real children of God. And that's why Paul said to those people, "You have not many fathers in God though you have many teachers."

Now loved ones, the teachers will come forth but we need fathers and mothers who will labor in spiritual prayer to beget children of God on the campuses. Loved ones, believe me, everything depends on your faithfulness in this ministry. Now having said that, could I just say this one thing? It's vital that you do receive the burden of the ministry from Jesus. That's right, it's vital that you're here tonight because you sense a real conviction within you that this is what you should be doing. It's vital that you do it because it's a burden that Jesus is placing upon you. I would think that's why you're here because it's not the kind of job that attracts people unless Jesus really constrains them to undertake it.

So with that preamble could I mention to you some good books? First of all there is the booklet by MacMillian called The Authority of the Believer. Then there is the booklet called The Authority of the Intercessor by MacMillian. Both of those are in the bookshop. Then there is the book The Intercessor which is really a biography of Rees Howells, a Welshman who founded the Bible College of Wales in Swansea and was taught many great lessons about how to take the position of an intercessor through obedience.

Then there is the book by Arthur Wallis Pray in the Spirit. Then there are several books on spiritual warfare. There is one by Michael Harper called Spiritual Warfare. There is one by Jessie Penn Lewis called War on the Saints. There are also some books by T. Austin Sparks Spiritual Warfare and Battle for Life. These books are good and will teach you how to undertake your ministry of intercession.

Now could I share with you just a few pointers from scripture? The function and authority of the intercessor, why is intercession necessary? The answer is in Ephesians 6:12, "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Now brothers and sisters the battle is not against the agnostic or atheistic students on our campuses, nor is the battle really against the dear ones who run the commercial world, nor against the dear ones who run the mass media world, nor is the battle really against the drug

addicts, or the alcoholics that we may see on Cedar Avenue. The battle is not against flesh and blood.

Those dear ones are only slaves of powers that are above them. They need to be set free from those powers or otherwise they are not free or at liberty to respond to the call of Christ. So the battle is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, and against the powers. MacMillian has said, "The principalities are mighty princes. Those principalities include large areas of the earth with authority over the nation included in them." There are indications in the Old Testament that there are different angels of Satan who rule over different regions and territories in the earth.

The principalities and the powers -- the powers are probably their ministers, inferior to them in position but associated with them in this government that Satan exercises over the whole world. You remember Jesus clearly acknowledged that this was the world of Satan. There was a prince of the air that ruled over the world and Satan was that prince. "Against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness." Darkness suggests a ministry of deception, keeping in darkness the minds of men and especially the leaders of thought. And MacMillian suggests that these are the rulers who blind the psychiatrist, and the psychologist, and the philosophers, and the educators. These are the rulers who blind the presidents of the universities, the presidents of the nations, who blind the politicians and deceive them so they cannot see what is right.

These are the rulers who bring out doctrines of demons to people that involve them in things that bring not release but in fact bring slavery, -- "Against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." And MacMillian suggests that this is an enumerable body of demons to whose close connection with mankind is due to grosser sin and deceptions, stirring up the animal passions and incitement to all men who have sensual and sensuous desires. These are the beings that are present in the spirited séance impersonating and deceiving people of strong intelligence like the well known leaders connected with cults today.

These beings are also at hand in religious gatherings and are a source of peculiar danger especially when the emotions are deeply stirred. Many earnest souls who have been urged to entire surrender open their beings with the upmost abandon to whatever spiritual force approaches them unaware of the peril of so doing. Such yielding often provides an opening for the entrance of demons who under some pretext gain control of the will.

Now that's a spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. That's part of what you war against each Sunday morning in the worship. Dear ones, who will come to that dance theater or to that Lutheran church (places where Campus Church was meeting), will be under the influence of many powers that will try to pervert and deceive so that they don't understand what is really being said. They will misinterpret the love that they see among us. Those powers are active every time we come together in Jesus' name. They're active, determined to destroy.

Now that's why a ministry of intercession is needed brothers and sisters. If some of us do not undertake this ministry then the body is left like a flock of poor little weak, defenseless lambs. If we don't exercise authority and exercise our ability to war against these spirits and to resist them, we will be slaughtered by the powers of Satan. This is why it's so necessary to get a great number of us who are true intercessors. That's the reason for the Bible.

Now you may say, "Who is able? Who is able to stand against these things? Surely no one can war against these powers. They are powers that exist in the heavenly places; we are only human beings here on earth. How can we war against these powers?" Dear ones we could not at all if it weren't for one thing -- somebody already fought them and destroyed them. That's our position of authority.

Now that is stated plainly in Ephesians 1:20-23. But you remember that God is saying plainly that there is an immeasurable greatness that you see in Verse 19, "The immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might..." The same power that worked this miracle is available to us according to the working of his great might in Verse 20, "Which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead." And then here's the part, "Made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places." Where in regard to our enemies? Well in Verse 21 it says, "Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion." Above the principalities and powers? Yes, "above all rule and authority and power and dominion." "Above the world rulers of this present darkness?." Yes, above every principality, power, authority and dominion.

"Do you mean against the powers, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places?" Yes, "Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." That is not only in the age that is to come after this present one but in this age also. "And he has put all things under his feet." "What Satan?" Yes, Satan. "The power of deception?" Yes, the power of deception. "The power of sensuality?" Yes, the power of sensuality. "And has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

Now do you see God has made Jesus a head over all things for the church? In other words, we have a dear Savior who has been made head over these principalities and powers. For who? For us. He has been made head over all these things for the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all. Now you are Christ's body and your head has been made head over all things for you and for me and that is our position. You may say, "Oh, is it our position? No, it's Christ's position." No, dear ones, it's our position. Look at Ephesians 2:6-7. And God, "raised us up with him," -- that's with God -- "And made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now there's no mistake about that. That doesn't mean we are made to sit with Jesus. It says, "And made us sit with God, in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

In other words God is there, at his right hand is Jesus and in Jesus we are sitting. Now that's why Watchman Nee says, "We sit, walk, and stand." We sit in that place in Christ Jesus. Why? In Verse 7, "That in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." That's why we're placed there, that we may begin to see the immeasurable greatness of Jesus' power in the coming ages. That's in this present age, warring and bring to naught the powers of Satan. Why? Because they have already been destroyed.

In other words all the Holy Spirit is doing through us is making actual what has been potentially done in Christ. He laid death under his feet and destroyed death. And with death he destroyed sickness which is only a lesser degree of death. And with sickness he destroyed sin which was the cause of sickness and death. And with sin he destroyed Satan and his power. That's our position, that's your position as an intercessor.

In other words you've to take authority over these things. Authority is delegated power. A policeman stands up in the middle of a street, puts up his hand and the traffic stops. Why? Because the cars and busses are afraid of his hand? No, they could run him over hand, and body, and

legs. But his hand signifies delegated power. It signifies the power of the law. Now when we exist in and abide in Jesus, and obey him, and submit to him, we represent the delegated power of Christ. Now that is our position as intercessors. We have no need to fear any power or spirit that works against the body.

Now that's our position you see and we need to take that position. Loved ones, if you try to pray up from way down here you'll have no power in intercession. You need to take that position by faith you see. Now this is what Jesus meant when he gave the disciples power. You remember, Matthew 10:1 and I'll just talk for a little while, while you find that. You remember, Jesus gave to the apostles and therefore to the apostolic church (which we are), he gave certain authority. And this is why he could give it. He knew that he himself in the mind of God had already destroyed Satan and would in actual fact as far as people were concerned be raised to God's right hand after his crucifixion. And so in Mathew 10:1 he gave them this retroactive authority, "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity." Now that is the authority that we have.

It's authority you see in Verse 8 to, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons." That's the authority that we have been given as intercessors. Now it is important to see that it's authority, not just the right to pray and plead with God. It's actual authority. And so you find in Matthew 17:20 that there was a boy who had an evil spirit or an epileptic spirit and the apostles were not able to heal him. Then you find in Matthew 17:20, that Jesus tells them that this authority that they've been given is not something that they plead for but something that they exercise. So in Verse 20, "He said to them, 'Because of your little faith.'" You could cast these demons out. "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

Now do you see Jesus did not say, "Plead with my Father to remove this mountain?" Jesus said, "Take your position in me and speak to the mountain. Say, get out, move mountain, in Jesus' name move." And then not only say that but stand in that position of faith and praise God that this mountain is moving however long it takes the symptoms to appear or disappear. You take that position by faith and just stand against that mountain. "What mountain?" The mountain of prejudice that would prevent us moving into the Marshall High School Auditorium if that is God's will. The mountain of disobedience that would prevent God bringing enough money for us to buy a Christian center on the campus ourselves. The mountain of satanic and spiritualist activity that would keep brothers and sisters from coming to the Minnesota Dance Theater who should be there every Sunday. The mountain that would try to bring disruption into our meetings through spirits of evil and deception moving in dear ones.

We actually speak to those mountains and we stand against them in Jesus' name. We exercise authority. Loved ones, your position as intercessors is mighty. It is a mighty position of authority. Now how do you exercise that authority? Because you may be sitting there feeling pretty excited and yet pretty miserable thinking, "Boy, I don't have that authority. What do I do try to auto suggest it, build it up? Do I say, I have authority, I have authority, I have authority?" No, you allow the Holy Spirit to bring you into that position of authority. You allow him to bring that conviction that you have that authority, and he will bring it about inside you.

Only a conviction wrought by the Holy Spirit will stand so your job is to allow the Holy Spirit to bring that conviction. Well, how does he bring it? Well the problem that the disciples came up

against with this boy was an evil spirit and they couldn't do anything. They couldn't cast it out of him. And you get the story in Mark 9 there if you'd like to turn to it. They draw Jesus aside and then in Mark 9:28 it says, "And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?'" You may be in that position you may be thinking, "Well I know that by faith and by the statement of the word of God I have this position of authority but how do I actually enter into it?"

Well, Mark 9:29 tells us. "And he said to them, 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.'" And you see a footnote j that says, "And fasting." And really there's no reason from what we see of Jesus, his fasting and praying in the wilderness, there's no reason for not facing the fact that that is a legitimate addition, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." And maybe in some future meeting you'll want to discuss among you the position of fasting. But do you see the way to enter into your authority is by prayer?

In other words, our task is to go before the Father in prayer and plead those promises that we shared together about our position of authority, study them and meditate upon them. Ask the Father to reveal to us if there's any reason why the Holy Spirit cannot bring in us a conviction that that is our position. Now you may be open to coming into that conviction, maybe all you need is to study those passages, mediate upon them and the Holy Spirit will lift you into your position in Christ. Then of course, he will lay certain burdens on you in prayer and you will simply stand against these, pray and bear them up until they're released from you by the Holy Spirit. He will teach you how to do this.

On the other hand, you may meditate upon these passages and you may have a great difficulty in feeling that you're in that position. You may feel, "Well, no I believe it and yet I don't sense I'm in that position." Then ask the Holy Spirit to expose any disobedience to you. You see, because you can only abide in Jesus at God's right hand in that position of authority if you're abiding at this moment in his words by perfect obedience. So ask the Holy Spirit to expose to you in any way in which you're not walking in perfect obedience.

And that is a good thing to do each time you kneel down to begin your ministry of intercession. Ask the Holy Spirit first to expose to you any disobedience. Then wait before the Lord Jesus and allow the words of scripture to come to you. Come first into a place of perfect obedience. Then exercise faith in your position. Thank the Father for it, speak to God, speak to God from your position -- not from all the way down here in the world but right next to him. Just whisper to him, you're close to his ear, you're at his right hand, his right hand isn't far from his face. You're at his right hand with Jesus. You just have to speak to him calmly, quietly, and intimately.

Just speak to him, thank him for your position. Thank him that you're above all the enemies, all the powers and the principalities. Then just trust him as you praise and thank him. Trust him to bring certain burdens upon you. Now here's the beauty of it. If you ask him to expose your disobedience, and thank him for your position, then, as you're thanking him the Holy Spirit will lay on you the burdens that you're to bear. He won't lay the same burdens on all the intercessors. He won't lay the burdens on you that I see. He will lay the burdens on you that he sees need to be lifted if the body is to move forward gloriously and according to God's timetable.

So listen to the Holy Spirit, let him lay on you a burden. Maybe he'll lay on you a burden of a certain person. You need to bear and pray through that burden until it lifts. Don't pray through -- don't leave off praying until it lifts. The Holy Spirit will lift the burden off you when he knows

that you've raised it up to the Father in the right way. And the Holy Spirit alone can teach you that. I know you'll ask, "Well, how do you bear a burden?" Only the Holy Spirit can teach you how to bear a burden. But you can know when a burden has been lifted. I'll try to talk more about it Sunday evening, but you can know when a burden has been lifted. Then let him lay another burden on you.

Now just one last word brothers and sisters, be free of your own burdens so that you can be free to receive the burdens the Holy Spirit gives you. Be free, walk free of burdens about your own worry, your own life, your own career, your own money. God will look after that. If you take care of the ministry of intercession that he has given to you he will see that you don't starve and you don't fail miserably. So be free of your own burdens, lay them aside, come into a real death to self of your own burdens and then bear the burdens that Jesus gives you.

The last word is this, release the burden. Pray through and get rid of the burden. If you don't, then burden will pile upon burden until the Holy Spirit can give you no more. Finally you just end up useless -- burdened with burdens that are the Holy Spirit's will but that you're not bearing up to God. So bear up your burdens as the Holy Spirit gives them to you and then you need to share with me the guidance that the Holy Spirit gives you as intercessors.

But that's the ministry of an intercessor, your position of authority and the exercise of that authority. Your position of authority is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit if you're walking in perfect obedience. And if you're meditating on the words of scripture that will assure you of your authority. And your authority is exercised through prayer by bearing and releasing the burdens that the Holy Spirit lays upon you. I praise God for you, I tell you that if anything mighty is going to come of our body here it'll be because of you dear ones who are called to be ministers of Christ in this way.