

Intercessory Prayer 1

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Dear ones, what I would like to do is share at least the introduction to this study this evening. One of the books that I would suggest you should buy if you're interested in interceding in prayer is Rees Howells Intercessor. He is a Welshman who died perhaps 30 years ago, and the book is: Rees Howells Intercessor.

Particularly during the battle of Britain there was an incredible change that took place when the Luftwaffe (Aerial warfare branch of Germany during WWII) ruled the skies. It seemed as if undoubtedly an invasion would be launched. And this man had his Bible school in Swansea, Wales, and he was interceding for that very issue. They interceded night and day over a period of months and there was an incredible change in the whole turn of the war. The invasion was never launched you remember, because the weather was impossible for Hitler to get the things off across the Channel. The Channel is of course maybe 20 miles at most so it was an incredible answer to intercessory prayer.

And so Rees Howells mentions other things like that but it isn't the answers that are important it's the whole teaching regarding intercessory prayer. That's what I'd like to share a little bit about tonight and all I'll have time for loved ones is maybe about 10 minutes. Intercessory prayer is praying for another person. And such people are called intercessors. They are interceding in prayer for another person. I suppose inter is between and cedo in Latin is to yield or to go between. And so an intercessor is going between God and another person.

There is one principle that rules God's actions with us besides the principle that he will not act against his own will. That is the principle that God will not act and cannot act against our wills, or apart from our wills. So God cannot act apart from our wills. In other words, God cannot save a person despite the person. God cannot save the world despite the world. God cannot do anything in you against your will and he cannot do anything anywhere apart from the positive operation of our wills.

Now, that is indicated if you'd like to look at it in Matthew 9:29, "Then he touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith be it done to you.'" That's the principle. Be it unto you according to your faith. If you don't believe then it can't happen, or if someone doesn't believe for you it can't happen. God has refused to come down and arbitrarily apart from your free will work miracles on your behalf. He has refused to do that because he refuses to manipulate us as robots. So God will not act apart from our wills.

You get it again in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." But it won't be opened unless you knock, and it won't be given to you unless you ask. So God will not act apart from our wills.

And that brings up a problem. How are non-Christians saved? How do people who don't care about God come to be concerned about him? Because God isn't going to just choose and say, "I'm going to make that person concerned about me." He will not act apart from that person's will. Now there is one way, there is general grace. The person is always seeing the order and design of the universe; he's always seeing signs of justice that the evil are punished in the world. He's always sensing his own

conscious so there is something in general grace or general revelation that makes him aware that there is a God.

But he has no touch at all with God's redemptive grace unless some human will is exercised on his behalf. So I remember one of the old saints said, "No one is saved unless somebody prays for him." No one is ever saved unless somebody else prays for that person. So I remember a brother coming to Jesus here in the body who had very little touch with God in his own home. I wondered how he had come to Jesus. Then a number of weeks ago I met the two people who were praying for him who were neighbors.

There is no one saved and no one comes to God apart from the exercise of their will or somebody's will on their behalf. Now, you get that teaching in John 17:9. Somebody must bring the man and let him down through the roof to be healed. Some friends have to exercise faith on behalf of their sick friend. John 17:9, "I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine." Jesus himself was praying for special people. In verses 15-17 he says, "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth." Would God not keep them from the evil one without Jesus asking? No, he wouldn't. God cannot act in a redemptive way unless somebody prays for someone.

Now you get this great need then set forth in Ezekiel 22:30-31. It's the need of the whole of Christendom and the reason why Christendom is defeated at times or movements within Christendom are defeated. It's the greatest need easily of our body here. Ezekiel 22:30-31, "And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it." Now that's interesting. "And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their way have I requited upon their heads, says the Lord GOD." And God could do nothing but that because he couldn't find a man who would stand in the breach for the land.

Loved ones, that's the whole truth. What is most needed in the body here are intercessors. If there's to be real spiritual work done among us and not just a lot of excitement intercessors are needed. Men and woman who will quietly pray and who will learn how to pray. I'd like to talk next Sunday evening about how to intercede, but what is needed are intercessors. The money's good and we give the money anyway out of obedience to Jesus, quite apart from whether money is needed or not. The preaching is alright, and the singing is alright, and the building is nice. And we're all nice people. But loved ones, there'll be no work of God done among us unless there are intercessors.

About 70 or 80 years ago when revivals would sweep through a local church you'd find a dear old lady or a dear gentleman who had interceded for years for that church. That's always the answer. There is no mighty work of God unless there is intercession. All this preaching that goes forth; it will do no spiritual work unless there are men and woman who intercede. That's why you cannot say that any work of God depends on a man or depends on the people up front. The people up front are the least important people. They are God's mouthpieces. But the important people are the people who spend hours on their knees in prayer for different people in the body. And what is most needed are intercessors.

And when intercession stops in this body we go the way of all flesh. And no doubt eventually that

will happen. We'll go the way of all flesh and we'll be a byword among the nations. But that can be prevented as long as there are people who will intercede. So I'd just ask you point blank how much time you spend interceding for others? And how many problems have you worried about, thought about, or argued about and you've never interceded for them and you've never prayed for them? And how many people have you criticized and run down and you've never prayed for them?

Loved ones, the secret is intercessory prayer. That's the secret. Any questions loved ones, because I think all we can do is introduce it?

Q: Will God always give us what we pray for?

A: Rick it seems to me that he cannot refuse to do the very best to work all things according to the counsel of his will. So he cannot refuse to answer the prayer in some way. But, he certainly will not tie himself to give a less than the best answer. So I think you can see that. You're right he cannot resist the positive will but because he loves us he will give us a better answer than we ask for if he sees a better answer. So he is not at our mercy but he is limited all the time by us human beings.

Q: With Jesus or the Holy Spirit interceding is it always for non-Christians?

A: That would be when the Holy Spirit would intercede through one of us or when Jesus was interceding there. It seems to me that Jesus was saying that on the occasion he was interceding for the disciples because that was the responsibility that God gave him at that time. There's no question that at this moment Jesus is interceding for the entire world. And if one of us intercedes for a non-Christian it is only because Jesus himself is interceding through the Holy Spirit in us.

So our intercession would gain nothing. It's because we voice and agree with the intercession that Jesus is offering to the Father. It's really only Jesus' intercession that is answered and we'll get into that time – i.e. the importance of who to intercede for and what to intercede for.

Dear ones, prayer is the key to everything it really is. Power Through Prayer by E. M. Bounds is an old, old book on prayer. He says, "Prayerless preaching is killing preaching. Prayerless singing is death dealing singing. Anything that is prayerless brings death with it. It may appear to bring some light at the time but it will really bring death. But anything that has intercession behind it has the touch of God's life upon it." Of course it's obvious why. God's whole teaching is to teach us that without him we can do nothing. So if we try to do something on our own then he is committed to destroying it.

But you can affect others immensely by interceding for them. I cannot explain to you the lifting in a person's life through prayer. I think I've told you about the situation of a friend of mine. Some of you may know him from the OMS, Oriental Missionary Society. He was in India when he went out on a motorbike with his little son on the back to distribute tracks. He went down close to the Ganges River and the pilgrims were all washing themselves in the holy river. At a certain moment a great surge occurred in the crowd. The whole crowd began to panic and there were thousands, and thousands of people.

And it was dangerous because nothing could stop them and they surged right towards him. He took the motorbike and the little fella back as far as he could. They withdrew right to an electrical panel. He climbed up a little on the panel and the crowd stopped at that panel. On that same day, he

discovered two years later when he came back to the states, a woman here in America had prayed all night for him (as it was night time here).

So loved ones, prayer works miracles in the spiritual world, and that's where everything comes from. That's where all the power comes from – from intercessory prayer. Anything that God has achieved here among us has been through prayer. The first thing we started was an eight o'clock prayer meeting. The second meeting we ever had was at Valley Pizza and it was an eight o'clock prayer meeting. That was the first thing we organized, intercessors within the body.

So anything that has happened has come by prayer and it's through prayer that it will continue. Anything that fails, fails not through organization. God blesses our miserable organization and has done so down through the years. He has blessed all kinds of ridiculous judgments all down through the years. He has overruled all kinds of foolish decisions in response to people's prayers. Now, that's no argument for making these decisions or for badly organizing. But it is true that it is only God's sheer grace that moves his people forward.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for telling us very plainly that if there's to be any blessing it can come only from you in response to our prayers. And that you will not act apart from our wills, and you cannot touch our sons or daughters unless we are interceding for them. You cannot touch the brothers and sisters here unless we're interceding. You cannot touch our dear friends on the campuses, unless we're interceding for them.

Father, we thank you that you have said, "Be it unto you according to your faith," because it means that you respect our free wills. And Lord, we know that was the reason for the whole plan of salvation because you would not overrule our free wills. And we see that you refuse to overrule them in prayer. So we thank you Lord. We apologize Father for the lack of prayer, for lack of interceding for our friends. We apologize Lord, for those million times we've criticized individuals, organizations and movements. Instead of talking to you about them we've talked to others about them.

Father, we apologize to you and we would commit ourselves now to making room in our daily prayer lives for intercession. We know Lord, that you will make the whole desert blossom as a rose. If we think we see blessing and success at this present time, we have no idea what the fields can look like when you touch them with your long reign of the Holy Spirit.

So Father, we would begin to commit ourselves to this task and to being used by you. We trust you Father, this coming week for grace and wisdom to intercede that we may begin to see the changes even now. We ask this in your name and for Jesus' glory. And now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and ever more. Amen.