

## Intercessory Prayer 2

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

When it comes to intercessory prayer the truth is that the Holy Spirit will not knock the door down, he will not. The Holy Spirit is a dear gentleman. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me and I will tell him what the mind of Jesus is for that dear one." But he will not knock the door down. And so often our door is tightly closed. We have settled what we're going to do for you Lord. We've settled moreover that we can't do it in this class or in this situation because we've other things to attend to, and we are not open sensitively to the Spirit of Jesus.

Now loved ones, the first need for an intercessor is a real sensitivity to the Spirit of Jesus. Norman Grubb wrote this book that I've referred you to called, Rees Howells Intercessor. Rees Howells was a Welshman and Norman Grubb says this about Howells, "But before he can lead a chosen vessel into such a life of intercession, he first has to deal to the bottom with all that is natural -- love of money, personal ambition, and natural affection for parents and loved ones." You can see why he has to deal with that. Otherwise, because of our natural affection for parents, we may be so strongly determined to pray for them for a purely natural reason that we cannot hear the spirit of Jesus prompting us to pray for somebody else who has no blood relationship to us.

"The appetites of the body, the love of life itself, and all that makes even a converted man live unto himself for his own comfort or advantage, for his own advancement, even for his own circle of friends has to go to the cross. It is no theoretical death but a real crucifixion with Christ such as only the Holy Spirit himself can make actual in the experience of his servant. Both as a crisis and process Paul's testimony must be made ours, 'I have been and still am crucified with Christ.' The self must be released from itself to become the agent of the Holy Spirit." That's the first condition loved ones, for being an intercessor.

That's a big one, a real death to your own concerns. Jesus walked through the world thinking only of us. He never thought for a moment of himself and the first step for us to become his interpreters and representatives is for us to come to the same place. So really to be an intercessor in the scriptural sense means coming to a real identification with Jesus, a real sense of oneness with him in his crucifixion and his resurrection. And you can see how that applies in the instances I shared in the class because you cannot receive the sensitive guidance of the Spirit of Jesus if your own mind is filled with your own plans and ideas.

So just repeating that illustration in the Old Testament, if the earthquake of your self interest in somebody else in the class is trembling and shaking your whole personality, if the fire of your own ambition is governing the way you think of your friends at work, then you'll never hear that sound of gentle stillness that is the Spirit of Jesus saying, "My Father wants to do that in this person. Will you pray for that?" And only then will you be able to pray according to God's will. And of course only then will you be able to release God's will into his people.

Interceding for God is not persuading God to do something that he doesn't want to do. It's not persuading God to do something that you think he ought to do. That's the ridiculous little creature trying to run and dictate to the mighty Creator. But it's discovering what God himself wants to do in your situation and you offering that up as a prayer to him. And that's what real intercession is. And therefore it's quite a peaceful thing.

When you at last know what is Jesus' will in a situation you simply spend time thanking God that he's bringing this about. That's why George Mueller could pray for a person for 40 years. He just thanked the Lord that he was going to bring this person to himself and it was 40 years later, indeed after Mueller's death that it took place. But Mueller did not pray continually day-after-day, "Lord, will you, will you, will you?" Mueller was so dead to himself and to all his own interest that he had received that message from Jesus' Spirit and he knew God was going to do it.

So a true intercessor does not battle to persuade God to do something. An intercessor only battles to come to the place of freedom where his own spirit is really free to receive the Spirit of Jesus. Now once that happens loved ones, another thing follows. A deep identification takes place with the people for whom you're interceding. A real deep sense of identification takes place because you begin to love them with this love of Jesus. And the love of Jesus took him to a cross for us. So you begin to love these dear ones with a supernatural love to the point where you would rather be lost than that they be lost.

Now, that is wrought by the Holy Spirit and it is very important for us not to play games with that. A lot of us would think, "Oh, one of the rules of intercession is identification with the people that you're praying for. I must imagine myself in their position." And all you get is a psychic experience, or a sense of soulish empathy with them. Only if you put your identification with Jesus first and your death to your own self interest can you be filled with the Holy Spirit's love of these dear ones.

But you do get that if you look at Romans 9:3. Paul had this sense of deep identification with those for whom he was praying. Romans 9:3, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race."

Now that is a supernatural conviction wrought in its intensity, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren." Loved ones, that's wrought by the Holy Spirit and it's really important that you don't play games with it because it's too holy.

Don't try to persuade yourself that you are like that; otherwise you then come into all kinds of problems with Satan. You begin to experience all kinds of problems from other people and you say, "Oh, I'm experiencing it because I'm so identified with them." Now the identification that the Holy Spirit brings about is a safe one for you. It enables you not only to suffer but to carry on interceding and walking in victory even though the travail is strong.

So if you manipulate yourself then you'll end up in all kinds of problems. You'll begin trying to identify yourself with somebody who is having emotional problems and then the emotional problems will come upon you. And then Satan will persuade you, "Now you are completely identified." But you're so identified that you're no earthly or heavenly use to either you, or them, or to Jesus.

The identification with the Holy Spirit works within us. It is one that certainly experiences the agony of the other person but it experiences it in such a way that you are free to continue to walk in victory and ministry. You don't walk around with sack cloth and ashes on your head saying, "Yes I am really in victory but I'm just under it for this person." No, you're in victory even though you agonize for them.

Now you find it in Moses' life if you just look at Exodus 32:32. Verse 31 gives the continuity better. Exodus 32:31-32, "So Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'Alas, this people have sinned a

great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, it thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”

Now that can be only said under the anointing of the Holy Spirit otherwise it becomes a sin. And so we need to see that the first condition of being an intercessor is an absolute identification with Jesus in that death to your own self concerns so that the Holy Spirit can begin to give you the desires of Jesus. The first thing to fulfill is that readiness to say, “Lord Jesus, I want to live only to receive your intercessions for your world. That’s the only thing I want. I want to be free from my own self interest at every opportunity so that I can receive your wishes.”

You remember how your dad used to say when you were sick, “Oh, I wish I could suffer it for you.” And that’s real love. “I wish I had the pain and not you son,” or, “I wish dear that I had the pain and not you.” Now that’s what an intercessor experiences. It’s Jesus in him expressing that and that’s the first step loved ones.

So do you see it’s not a crude thing? It’s not just picking anybody and everybody to intercede for. It’s receiving the mind of Jesus. You could go round each one of your houses, and your jobs and offices, and you could apply it to each situation. Those of us who are in offices, I’m sure you could name about 10 things right off that need to be done in those offices. But do you see that there is a certain order that the Father has and he knows what is best?

In engineering jobs there’s something that you have to do before something else can be done. There’s an order that you follow. Now there is an order in the application of Jesus’ atonement to our world and the Holy Spirit can reveal that to us. And that’s why people get answers to prayers. You’ve maybe wondered, “How does this person talk about the continual answers to prayers that they get?” I’ll tell you why. It’s because they care about nothing but Jesus. They don’t care about themselves. Now that’s true loved ones, they care about nothing but Jesus and his glory and therefore they begin to receive the mind of Christ.

Now we have two minutes left. Are there any questions? There’s more to talk about as we’re just beginning.

Question: What is the highest goal for intercessory prayer?

It seems Rick that the one thing that you come against in doctrine and theology is that God himself is the one self existent being in the whole universe and our finite minds cannot go beyond him. There can be no greater motive or purpose in the universe as far as our finite minds can understand. We do believe that our finite minds understand it as it is eternally, but there can be no higher purpose than God himself. And that’s what we end up with; that the glory of God is the highest thing for which one can do anything.

Now it is a dangerous situation when the little creature says, “You’re not perfect Lord, because I can think of a higher standard by which you could govern things than that.” It seems to me that we simply find ourselves in the position where we see that God has created the whole universe, that he is bigger than the universe itself and that it is a higher motive to do things for him than for the universe. And we believe that he is an utterly wise God and that we will find our fullest completion and our real fulfillment in doing things for him.

So even though I agree with you, it is Jesus at the right hand of the Father, then us down here on

the earth and the Holy Spirit working through us. He brings the love of Jesus through us by the Holy Spirit and then back up to God and then God to Jesus. You can say that's circular but then one could say it's a beautiful circle. We could say that it's certainly very fair or round.

Now if one charges God with unfairness and wanting his own glory I do think that it helps a little if you see that God, when he talks about glory does not mean, "I want you to praise me, and say I'm a good God and make me big. I am big. I am the greatest one of the universe. I want you to see my glory by simply seeing me as I am." And so when God talks about us seeing his glory, or glorifying him, he simply means, "See me as I am, that's all I want you to do. Then you will glorify me." Berkhof might help, and Systematic Theology chapter two I think.

Question: Are we not belittling or limiting God when we say that he cannot do anything apart from our wills?

I'm sure we ought not to go too deep into theology, but it's the whole distinction between the idea of omnipotence which is *omnis potens* in Latin, all powerful and the idea of – "pantocrator" which would mean the ruler of all. This means God can do anything. This means God rules all and can do anything he wishes. So it is true to say that God is capable of anything as long as it isn't against his nature. But it is his nature to preserve our free wills and so God cannot commit himself to anything that would work against our free wills.

So I think it's not belittling God but it's recognizing that God's nature is to preserve our free wills. And so he "will not" rather than "cannot". He will not do anything that opposes or contradicts our free wills. You see, the idea of omnipotence held in it the concept that God could sin if he wanted to, you see. God could do anything. He can sin.

Well God cannot. Omnipotence is really a questionable concept. All one can say is not that God can do anything but God can do anything as long as it is according to his nature. And it is his nature to preserve free will. Loved ones, I think that maybe in fairness to us all we should stop and we'll continue next Sunday evening on intercession. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you as we come nearer to you and see you more truly as you are, that we see how magnificent you are and how great. Father, how you the Lord of all have contracted yourself to a span and become a little baby and limited yourself in so many ways. And then Father we thank you how you have begun to release us into your infinity.

Father, we thank you for the respect that you give to us. We thank you that you have tied yourself to our willingness so that we may not become robots or unknowing morons. Father thank you that you have required us to cooperate with you.

Lord, we want to become men and woman who know your will and with the Lord Jesus can intercede and fill out the fullness of your sufferings. Lord Jesus, you have done all the hard suffering for us. All we have to do is stop being wrapped up in ourselves and instead become wrapped up in you. And that Lord Jesus is such an easy thing compared with your death on the cross.

Lord, we want to do it. We ask you Holy Spirit, in the office tomorrow and in our houses tonight, and in our classrooms tomorrow to show us where we're too taken up with our own interests. Lord Jesus, we want to see our friends at work as you see them. We want to understand them as you understand them so that we may ask your Father to do what he has planned.

Thank you Holy Spirit that you will be faithful to lead us into this work and ministry. 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 throughout this coming week. Amen.