

Intercessory Repentance

by Don Rogers

For a number of years this ministry has been practicing what we have termed "intercessory repentance." We have encouraged those to whom we minister to practice it as well. Simply defined, intercessory repentance [IR] is the practice of interceding for those who are bound by sin by repenting on their behalf through confessing their sins to God until they are brought to repentance. It consists of a heartfelt sorrow concerning other's sins against God and the desire for them to turn away from their sin and submit themselves to God. We do not in any way seek to undermine the responsibility of the individual to be accountable for their sins.

Often we are not able to talk with those who are involved in sin because they are very defensive, hostile or self-righteous about their behavior. **IR** provides a powerful way of ministering those who cannot be reached in any other way. It avoids confrontation on a human level, but is a very powerful way to confront the enemy on a spiritual level.

There are ample scriptural precedents to support this principle. Let us examine various elements of this principle in God's Word.

I. The Believer's Priesthood

God directed that Aaron be consecrated as the first high priest of Israel. God established him as the model of priesthood. Priests were to be guardians and servants of the relationship God wanted with His people. The priests represented Israel before God and they also represented God to Israel.

In Leviticus 16, we are provided with detailed insight concerning the high priest's duties. On the Day of Atonement he prepared himself through physical cleansing and then offered a sin offering to make atonement for himself and his family. Following this, he interceded on behalf of the people and once again entered into the presence of God. Aaron received from the people two male goats. One goat was sacrificed as a sin offering and the other was made a scapegoat upon which the peoples' sins were placed and then sent out into the wilderness.

The point is that the priest first dealt with his own sin and then he came before God with the sins of the people. We have been taught that our priesthood primarily involves direct access to God; that we can come boldly and directly to Him through prayer. That is true. But our priesthood also involves bringing the sins of others to God, confessing sin on their behalf and asking for God's grace to be extended to them so they may repent. As priests we come to our high priest, Jesus Christ and draw upon the grace provided by the shedding of His blood. As He makes intercession for us, so we make intercession for others, confessing their sins to God. In so doing, we bless them and frustrate the enemy by undermining his sin claim.

II. Forgiveness and Love

IR is not possible unless there is true forgiveness in our own hearts. We have to let go of judgment towards others no matter what they have done to us or to others we love, because the

Lord loves them and that is His will. It may be difficult at first, but the Lord will help you do this. Strange as it may seem, we will also benefit if we are obedient in this manner. Through this act of forgiving grace, we will begin to see the person in a new light and will be released from the inner turmoil that has influenced us. It can bring much healing to the body of Christ.

III. Burden Bearing

Gal 6:1-2 (NRSV) "*My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*"

I cannot think of a better way to restore people than to repent for their sins which are grieving God, so that His grace may bring conviction in the area of the sin and hopefully repentance will follow. Through **IR** we can help fan the fires of conviction as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, because God will honor our priestly work. After a time a change of attitude in the individual is often detected and an opening may be provided in which someone is able to speak to the person in a loving and gentle way concerning sin issues. We encourage parents to minister to rebellious children by confessing their sins daily.

IV. Discernment and Warfare

Eph 6:18 "*Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.*"

As we intercede for those bound by sin, the Spirit will give insight as to the nature of the sin and also the activity of Satan concerning it. It is very difficult to bind the power of any spirit that is working in someone's life unless the sin claim, that gives him power to operate, has been addressed through intercession.

V. The Corporate Element

It is difficult for Americans to understand our corporate accountability before God, because we are culturally very independent and individualistic people. In the scriptures we witness the sin of an individual affecting future generations in a family (2 Ki 5:26-27) and also affecting a nation (Jos 22:20). In many respects, we are our brother's keeper. (Gen 4:9) God considers us accountable for how we feel about others, and how we treat and relate to them. Our sins affect others and their sins affect us.

Nehemiah understood that Israel had been taken into captivity because of their sins. He prayed to God and said, "*I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.*" (Nehemiah 1:5-7)

As a result of this intercession, Nehemiah received favor with the king and was sent back to rebuild Jerusalem as governor. After Jerusalem's walls were repaired and gates built, Nehemiah and Ezra, who had also been confessing Israel's sins (Ezra 9:5-15), both witnessed God's Spirit bringing conviction and repentance to the people following the public reading of God's word in chapters 8 and 9. God honored their obedience with a spiritual revival!

Stephen was a man full of God's grace and power. He did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. He was brought before the Sanhedrin because of false accusations and he spoke eloquently but was condemned to death by stoning.

Acts 7:59-8:1 **"While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death."**

Shortly after Stephen's prayer and death, Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was converted. God had honored Stephen's prayer.

On the Cross, just before His death, Jesus said, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** The book of Acts is a record of many that came to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Savior. They became the basis of the Church that God called into being to become the body of Christ continuing His work here on earth.

Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit continue to make intercession for us. This is part of God's wondrous plan of grace.

Some Practical Applications

1. Ministering to family members
2. An effective element to include in our ministry to others
3. An effective way to intercede for institutions, government and nations

Summary of the principles:

1. Adopt a Christ-like attitude toward the person for whom you are interceding. Realize God's desire to see people repent and be free. Ask God to show you any wrong attitudes or motives which remain in you. Pray for God's love to overcome your prejudice and judgmental attitudes.
2. Ask God to show you the sin areas in a person's life that need to be addressed. Make a list of these sins so that you may intercede daily concerning them. Bringing them to God daily is necessary because people renew their sins daily.
3. Address every act of sin that occurs around you immediately. This can be done by quickly praying silently or going into another room for privacy.

4. Use your believer's authority in Christ to address demonic activity and bind the authority of the demon that is working at the time. Command that the demon's power be broken and order him to leave and go to where Jesus sends him. Mental commands can be effective in circumstances where you cannot speak aloud. Spirits communicate on a mental level anyway and the Holy Spirit anoints our commands with the authority and the power of God. **Always learn to act on the basis of faith, because you will not always see a reaction in the natural.** If Christians only realized what often happens when they pray or exercise spiritual authority, they would truly be amazed.

5. Test the spirits (1 Jn 4:1). Do not always assume that your problems are always natural ones, or always the enemy. Pray for spiritual discernment. It is possible to test situations by confessing any sin connection and then exercising spiritual authority against any demonic activity associated with the problem. You will be surprised in the number of times your situation will change as a result.

This principle of intercession can be summed up by the words God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel concerning Jerusalem's sins. *"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."*

If you are willing to step out in faith and explore this biblical principle of "intercessory repentance" you will soon realize it is possible through God's grace and power to pull down strongholds that the enemy has built. But you will have to learn to be patient, persevering and stand in faith on God's promises.

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