

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER TALLAHASSEE

What Is An Intercessor?

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I. INTERCESSION IS PROFOUNDLY POWERFUL

- A. Definition of the word “Intercession”: To “intercede” means literally to “come in between.” The intercessor “comes in between” two persons: God, and those who justly deserve God’s wrath. Intercession pleads for mercy, not justice.

¹³Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13). Mercy exults victoriously over judgment (Amp.)

II. THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY OF AARON – MAKES ATONEMENT

- B. In Numbers 16:46-48 Aaron provides a vivid picture of the intercessor. The congregation of Israel had sinned by rebellion against their leaders, and God sent judgment upon them in the form of a plague that was taking the lives of thousands. Moses told Aaron (the high priest):

“Take a censer, and put fire in it from the altar, put on incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for wrath has gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun.” [Num. 16:46].

- C. Aaron put the incense into his censer and ran out into the midst of the congregation. There he took his stand between those who had already been smitten by the plague and those who had not. The fragrant smoke ascending from the censer, as Aaron swung it to and fro, formed a line to divide between the two groups. *“And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.” [Num. 16:48]*
- D. The smoke of the incense from Aaron’s censer typifies *“the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16)*. Where intercession took effect, the plague ceased. Judgment ended and mercy began.

III. MOSES THE LAWGIVER – STANDS IN THE GAP

- A. In Exodus 32:7-14 it is Moses who provides the picture of the intercessor. Israel had fallen into idolatry by worshipping a golden calf. God told Moses what the people had done and said, *“Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them” [Ex. 32:10]* However, Moses refused to *“let [God] alone.”* Instead, he reminded God of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and pleaded for mercy. As a result, *“So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.” [v. 14].*
- B. In Exodus 32:31-32 Moses renews his intercession on behalf of Israel: *“Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, ‘Oh, these people have sinned a great sin... Yet now, if You will forgive their sin— but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.’”*

IV. THE 3-FOLD PROGRESSION TO INTERCESSION: IDENTIFICATION, AGONY, AUTHORITY

- A. Here is the heart of an intercessor laid bare: Moses was willing to take upon himself the consequence that was due by justice to the sin of Israel. First, he identified with his people. Then he entered into the “agony” of standing in the gap for the people. And lastly, he contended victoriously for the outcome.

- B. In Psalm 106:23 the psalmist describes this incident as follows: **"Therefore He [God] said He would destroy them [Israel], had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them."**
- C. The ministry of intercession is summed up in the statement that Moses **"stood before Him in the breach."** Israel's spiritual defenses had been breached by their sin. But Moses interposed himself and stood in the breach, to hold back the judgment that would otherwise have fallen upon Israel.
- D. In these passage the ministry of intercession is presented in two aspects. The intercessor "stands in the gap"; he interposes himself in the breach made by the sin of God's people, thus holding back judgment. But he also "makes up the hedge". By calling God's people back to repentance and obedience, he rebuilds their spiritual defenses.

V. GOD DELIGHTS IN SHOWING MERCY SO HE LOOKS FOR AN INTERCESSOR

- A. God delights to show mercy, but is reluctant to administer judgment. Therefore, in each situation where judgment is due, God looks for an intercessor who can hold back the judgment. Isaiah 59:1-16 gives a detailed and fearful list of the sins of God's people, but the conclusion to it all comes in verse 16: **"And He [God] saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor" [Intercessor: "paga" to cause to intreat, to encounter].** See also Job. 36:32, to strike.
- B. The fact that there was not even one person to intercede actually caused wonderment to the heart of God. Apparently this grieved Him more than all the sins previously listed. Let us ponder this statement: **"there was no intercessor"**. Is the same true today? There are many to criticize, to complain, to condemn, but no one to intercede. Judgment, although long due, may still be averted; but where is the intercessor?
- C. Ezekiel 22:23-31 presents another picture of God's people in desperate spiritual need. Every section of the community had been corrupted – prophets, priests, princes, and the people as a whole. But even so the situation was not altogether hopeless. God declared that final judgment might yet be averted if He could find one man to intercede: **"So I sought for a man among them, who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found no one." [Ezk. 22:30]**
- D. Once again, the agonizing, unfortunate statement that God makes is contained in the last words: **"...but I found no one."** One man with the right spiritual eyes could have averted the final disaster, but not even one was to be found. As a result, God could no longer withhold the full outpouring of judgment: **"Therefore [because there was no intercessor] I have poured out My indignation on them..." [v. 31]**
- E. All these biblical pictures of intercession convey one and the same message to us today: our situation may be critical, but so long as God can find an intercessor, it is not hopeless. Lord, make me an intercessor!" Let that be your prayer today!