

UNDERSTANDING OUR ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES IN INTERCESSION

By Os Hillman

"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. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord God (Ezek 22:30-31).

The life of Moses was one of a change agent. However, when the people committed the grievous sin of making the golden calf for an idol, Moses had to play a new role, that of a priest. He stood in the gap on behalf of the people in order to "stay their execution". God was very angry and was going to wipe them off the planet just as He did in the time of Noah. Sometimes God is looking for the individual to stand in the gap for a situation that requires judgment that can only be averted by one who is willing to stand on behalf of the offender. Moses was willing to risk his own salvation to thwart off a mass judgment. "Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, 'You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.'

Then Moses said to the Lord, 'These people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet if You will forgive their sin - but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.'"[1] How many of us are willing to lose our own salvation for the benefit of another? What an amazing level of sacrifice on behalf of the people by Moses. His intercession kept the people from being destroyed. It did not forgive their sin, but it did give them time to repent themselves. This is known as identificational repentance, when one person pleads before the throne on behalf of another. We identify with and confess before God the corporate sins of one's nation, people, church, or family. That person cannot gain salvation for the individual, but they can sway the heart of God that allows repentance to take place by influencing God and the individual or group of people.

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9-10).

Every believer has a calling to be both king and priest. Like Melchizedek who was also a king and priest, we too are called to both assignments.[2] Moses' operated as both a king and priest. He operated as a king as the leader of an entire nation. His role as a king was a very public one with the people. But he also operated as priest, going before the people on their behalf spiritually by interceding on their behalf.

This does not mean we are called to "priestly" pastorate ministry; it means we are called to intercede for those we are called to serve. We are called to lay down our lives for that worker next to us in the cubicle, that CEO who operates at the top of your cultural mountain, or that government leader who wants to change your values in your state or nation. We are called to rebuild the ancient ruins. "And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the priests of the Lord, they shall call you the servants of our God."[3].

Jesus is our intercessor before His Heavenly Father. The word intercessor comes from the word "to intercede"- to intervene or mediate on behalf of another. It is a higher form of prayer on behalf of others. When Jesus was on the cross he said, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." He became sin for us and payment for our sins. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." [4].

When Jesus, the world's greatest change agent, was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he asked the disciples to pray with Him and to intercede on his behalf, but they fell asleep. In many ways, this is a picture of the church. We want to see victories without doing the intercessory work.

The Tabernacle was a moveable house of worship that involved three distinct sections-the Outer Court, the Inner Court and the Holy of Holies. The Ark of the Covenant housed the Ten Commandments. The Outer Court was for the offering of public sacrifices by the priests for Israel. It was a very public form of ministry unto the Lord by the priest. Our work lives are our outer court. It is where we work unto the Lord in our calling. It is where people see and experience what we do. It is where we publicly offer what we have to the Lord through the gifting and calling upon our lives.

The Inner Court was called the Holy Place. The altar of incense was placed in the inner room of the tabernacle and was located directly in front of the ark of the covenant and was separated by the thick veil that separated the priest from where the Ark of the Covenant resided, also known as the Holy of Holies where God's presence resided. The Holy of Holies is where the high priest went into only once a year to atone for the sins of the nation of Israel. It is the literal presence of God. A walk with God is about living in the inner court with God versus the outer court of performance and posturing.

Rees Howells lived in the early 1900s in Wales. His biography, Rees Howells Intercessor, is a story of a life that lived and interceded for others. His life was spent in the inner court which allowed him to see God's activity needed in the outer court. He explains the difference between what it means to simply pray versus intercede for another. "There are three things to be seen in an intercessor which are not necessarily found in ordinary prayer: identification, agony and authority. The identification of the intercessor with the ones for whom he intercedes is perfectly seen in the Saviour. Of Him it was said that He poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

As the Divine Intercessor, interceding for a lost world, He drained the cup of our lost condition to its last drop, He 'tasted death for every man.' Identification is the first law of the intercessor. He pleads effectively because he gives his life for those he pleads for; he is their genuine representative; he has submerged his self-interest in their needs and sufferings, and as far as possible has literally taken their place. Every greatly used instrument of God has been, in his measure, an intercessor: John Wesley for backsliding England; William Booth for the down and outs; Hudson Taylor for China; C.T. Studd for the unevangelized world.[5] Only so far as we have been tested and proved willing to do a thing ourselves can we intercede for others. Christ is our Intercessor because He took the place of each one prayed for." [6]

Paul was willing to stand in the gap for others as their ambassador: "No then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." Paul clarifies his mission and affirms the sacrifice he must make in order to fulfil that mission: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

When Joseph stood behind the veil while his brothers sat to dine, he was standing in their place to save an entire nation. He wept for them. He interceded and became the entry door to freedom for them and their nation. He had to be the sacrificial lamb for thirteen years for that to happen.

When Jesus died on the cross and took His last breath it says the veil of the temple was torn.[10] There was no longer a barrier to God. He became the bridge. And now He is our high priest who intercedes on our behalf.

Canadians Dennis and Katie Wiedrick have learned how this concept of identificational repentance works practically in their own ministry. Dennis tells a story in his book, *A Royal Priesthood*, that provides a practical application for today. One day Katie began to experience dramatic changes in her personality that were completely foreign to who she was. She had feelings like, "I just feel like I don't want to be married anymore! I'm tired of being a mother. I can't put up with these kids!" Other such feelings emerged that were completely foreign to her nature. When Dennis inquired more he asked her if she knew anyone in their congregation that might be having those kinds of feelings. A woman named Linda immediately came to mind. Dennis suggested that she stand in the place of Linda and begin to tell God how she really felt. So, by faith Katie began to translate into prayer the volcano of emotion churning inside her.

Her prayer sounded like this: "Father, I come to you on behalf of Linda, and as Linda, I want to confess that I don't love my husband anymore. I have lost the desire to be a mother to my children, and I feel like running away.

Forgive me Father for the hopelessness I have allowed to permeate my whole life. I choose now to repent and turn back to you, and say, 'yes' to your plan for my life." Immediately the burden was lifted. All of the negative emotions were gone, and Katie was herself again. The next day Linda called Katie to tell her a miracle had just happened in her life where she hadn't wanted to be married any longer. She confessed that she seemed to have run out of grace for her kids, and how she was almost ready to pack her bags and leave.

Then yesterday, I don't know why, but God came to me, and suddenly I realized how wrong it would be to do this. It was as if I woke up from a bad dream! And now I realize that I love my husband! I love my kids! I enjoy my life! Isn't that wonderful Katie?" Katie said nothing to Linda about the intercession offered the day before, but secretly rejoiced at the specific and immediate answer to a unique form of prayer. Wiedrick further explains this unique prayer strategy: "Jesus hung on the cross and interceded for us when He said, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' He purchased salvation for the whole world, but for this to be real in your life, you must choose to receive it personally. The same is true in this type of intercession. Katie may stand in the gap and plead Linda's case, and the Holy Spirit will go to Linda, to lead her into repentance, but ultimately, she must choose to respond." [11]

If we are weak in prayer the strongman will come into our homes and our workplaces and take what is rightfully ours. "But when a stronger man than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoils." [12] A tree best illustrates the Outer Court and the Inner Court of our lives. The tree limbs represent the Outer Court; intercession represents the roots. The fruit represents the degree of abiding in the Vine. Intercession in the Inner Court allows the roots of our tree to go deep into the soil so that we can withstand the winds that are sure to come. Our tree can only grow bigger if we have a root system to support it. The more influence we have, the greater the storms and the greater the need for deeper roots. My roots were too shallow for the assignment I was called to and in 2008 and 2009 I paid a dear price for it.

God will lead and be with each of us in our times of intercession. "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." [13] Intercession is not substitution for sin. Only Jesus, the Son of God qualifies to pay for sin. However, the intercession so identifies the intercessor with the suffering that it gives him a prevailing place with God. He moves the heart of God.

He can even cause Him to change His mind, as in the case of Moses and the people of Israel. Howells shared many case studies in which he literally stood in the gap for individuals in sin or sickness and saw miracles from his intercession on their behalf.

The Inner Court is representative of the work you and I must do in intercession on behalf of those we are called to serve. This is where we must fight the spiritual battle on behalf of those who will never make it without our intercession. When I came to an awareness of this I was very convicted of my own prayerlessness for my wife and the marketplace I am called to serve. I realized I had spent much of my years of ministry operating from the Outer Court. I asked God to help me learn to be His intercessor for those I am called to redeem. If we are going to reshape cultural mountains, it will only happen if we do our inner court ministry of intercession as a priest to our marketplace. God asks us if we are willing to stand in the gap for another. Do you need to stand in the gap for a spouse, a co-worker, a politician, a business leader, a city leader? Why not identify now who God may call you to intercede for on their behalf.

King Herod threw Peter in prison for preaching the gospel. He had just killed James, the brother of John with a sword. Persecution of the church was beginning. However, the early church was a praying church. In fact, they literally freed Peter from prison because of their prayer and intercession.

The Bible says there had been constant prayer for Peter. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.

Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him (Acts 12:5-10).

Do you know someone in prison? Are they in prison to alcohol, drugs, addicted to pornography or maybe they are suffering from their own success. Maybe they are workaholics and have abandoned their families. There are many people in prisons of their own making but God wants you to be an instrument for their deliverance

"After that, God answered prayer in behalf of the land." [14] During the reign of David, there was a famine in the land for three successive years.

So David sought the Lord regarding this famine, "Why is there famine on this land?" The Lord answered David, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death." [15] Years earlier, Joshua made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites. This, too, was an act of disobedience. When God called Israel to come into the Promised Land, they were to destroy all the enemies of God. Joshua failed to see through the ruse of deception when the Gibeonites portrayed themselves as travellers. The Israelites signed a peace treaty only to discover who the Gibeonites were after the fact. Now, they had to honour the treaty. However, this led to intermarriages and much sorrow for Israel. Years later, Saul made a decision to kill the Gibeonites.

The nation was now receiving the punishment for their sin of disobedience through a famine. David knew that famines could have a spiritual source, so he inquired of God and God answered. The source was Saul's murder of the Gibeonites. Once David knew the source of the problem, he took action. He repented on behalf of the nation and made restitution. The famine was then lifted. Sometimes you and I must stand in the gap for preceding sins committed. David understood this and stood in the gap for his nation.

"On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall." [16] Esther was a woman who lived for a cause greater than herself. God used this woman to save the entire Jewish people from extermination. However, before God could use her, she had to come to a place of death in herself. It was not an easy decision.

Her uncle Mordecai was the instrument God used to challenge her to measure up to the task. "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" [17]

Mordecai was telling it straight. For her to speak up meant great risks if the king did not receive her. It was automatic death if the king did not extend his sceptre, which meant acceptance of her approach to the throne. It was also a time to realize that God may have brought her to this place and time for this specific purpose. However, if she did not respond in faith, God would use another instrument to deliver the people. What would she do?

"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." [18]

On the third day of the fast she came and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. She was like Jesus who stood in the inner court of Heaven on that third, resurrection day. She gave up her life, but God raised it up on that day and delivered an entire people from destruction because of one woman's willingness to give up her life for a greater cause.

Nehemiah and Daniel provide two cases studies in which intercessory prayer, repentance for their nation and doing their jobs with excellence allowed them to scale the mountain of government and experience personal promotion and the recognition of God in their governments. Our commitment to Intercession allows us to accomplish three things:

- 1) Intercession allows us to internalize and deepen our ownership of the assignment.
- 2) Intercession forces us to sit quietly before God to clarify what we are called to.
- 3) Intercession catalyses the actions needed for fulfilment of the vision by depending on the Holy Spirit to reveal our action steps.

When Nehemiah had heard that the wall in Jerusalem had been torn down it affected him at a heart level. He mourned along with his people. He fasted and prayed several days in an effort to gain understanding of what he was to do. He was led to appeal to his king to go and repair the wall. He developed a detailed plan from his prayer time and his professional expertise. He accomplished the task by being aware of the enemy's schemes to thwart his efforts by having his men work with one hand and have a weapon in the other.

Daniel is another great example of a man devoted to prayer and excellence in what he did for a living. He was gifted with the ability to interpret dreams. This supernatural gift allowed him to break through the wall of religion in a very religious culture. God revealed "deep and hidden secrets." [19] Each time he was challenged, he went to prayer for the solution to a problem, stood firm to his convictions and God delivered him on two occasions from death. First, God delivered him and his other "wise men" when he interpreted a dream for the king. This not only allowed his life and the life of others to be saved, he was elevated to a higher position in his government and his God was recognized. [20]

This happened a second time when Daniel was elevated again and his political enemies tried to set him up. However, the Bible tells us that they could not find anything in his life that was not honourable. So they got a law passed that said citizens could only worship the idol of the king. When Daniel did not comply the king had to enforce his own law in spite of his deep love for Daniel. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den but God shut their mouths and he was delivered yet again. Daniel was elevated to an even higher position, his enemies thrown into the lion's den and were killed. A law was passed by the king to protect Daniel's God. This is the model for change agents to impact their cultural mountains. Influence will not be achieved by our entrepreneurial skills alone. It must be

sourced in Heaven and carried out through the direction of the Holy Spirit in our lives combined with our professional expertise that gives us the platform to operate on that mountain.

God has called each of us to a purpose greater than ourselves. Know that it will require death before life can be given to this purpose. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego each new the line they would not cross before it ever came up. You and I must know that as well. It must be His life that lives, not ours. Intercession in the Inner Court requires a form of death to ourselves to release others. Are you called to reclaim a cultural mountain as a change agent? Are you called to a specific group of people? If so, make intercession a strategic part of your focus to impact that cultural mountain. Interceding for those who control the mountain is important if you expect to gain victory.

- [1](Ex 32:30-32)
- [2]Heb 7:23-28
- [3](Isa 61:4-6)
- [4](Heb 4:14-5:4)
- [5]Norman Grubb, Rees Howells Intercessor, CLC Publications, Fort Washington, PA 1952, p.82-84
- [6]Norman Grubb, Rees Howells Intercessor, CLC Publications, Fort Washington, PA 1952, p.93
- [7]Oswald Chambers, Utmost for His Highest, Discover House Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI 1935, Dec 13 message
- [8](Rom 9:3-4 Amplified Bible)
- [9]Col 1:24-29
- [10]Mark 15:38
- [11]Dennis Wiedrick, The Royal Priesthood, Wiedrick and Associates, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1997, p. 77-79, 83
- [12]Luke 11:22,23
- [13](Rom 8:26-27)
- [14](2 Samuel 21:14)
- [15](2 Sam. 21:1b)
- [16](Esther 5:1a)
- [17](Esther 4:13b-14)
- [18](Esther 4:16)
- [19]Daniel 2:22
- [20]Daniel 2:46