

Radical Time Out™ (RTO) School of Prayer

The Prayer of Intercession 1 Timothy 2:1 (ESV)

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions,
and thanksgivings be made for all people”

by Dave Mozdin

In our recent lessons in the RTO School of Prayer (since August 2021), we have been going through a progression of the basic elements of prayer that help us to pray radical biblical prayers which are pleasing to the Father, prayers which He loves to answer, and prayers to help us love radically. As we well know, this is what we do in RTO, we pray biblically and radically to love radically.

The various elements we have covered so far have been Praying God’s Word, Praying God’s Will, The Prayer of Privilege, The Prayer of Confession, and The Battle Prayer. These types of prayers have mainly focused upon the prayer life of the individual believer and his/her individual relationship with our great and mighty and Eternal Powerful Triune God. Now in view of what we’ve learned, we’ll take it outside of ourselves, to the next level from our vertical relationship with God to our horizontal relationships with God’s people, the people in our own lives. We’ll do this through the Prayer(s) of Intercession.

Like spiritual terms such as God’s will, and spiritual warfare, intercession is a term we often use in connection to prayer, but are sure we know what this really means? (Glad you asked!) Let’s review several definitions from several different resources. From Webster’s New World Dictionary (from the word intercede): “...to plead or make a request on behalf of another or others.” From Vine’s Bible Dictionary (as a noun); “A lighting upon, (a) meeting with, then a conversation, hence a petition....” “It is a technical term for approaching a king (such as Esther did in Esther chapter 4), and so for approaching God in ‘intercession’”. As a verb, “to fall in with, meet with in order to converse”, then “to make petition”, especially to “make intercession, plead with a person, either for or against others.” From the MacArthur Study Bible (NKJV), p. 1862; “(the) word comes from a root meaning ‘to fall in with someone’, or ‘to draw near as to speak intimately.’” Some of us may be familiar with the situation where we ask someone who knows an influential person to approach that person to “put in a good word for us”, to help us to gain some favor. That is a form of intercession.

To draw all these definitions together, here is a workable concise definition: Intercession is the act of interceding, pleading, petitioning by intimately drawing near and praying to God/Christ on behalf of the

needs of someone or a group. In other words, to be a “go between” between God and someone else through prayer for their benefit.

WHY IS INTERCESSION IMPORTANT?

1) Because as hopeless and helpless sinners before a holy perfect God, we need His intercessory help! God’s word is very clear about this! Ephesians 2:8-9; “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Romans 5:8; “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Our status as unworthy sinners (Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”) makes us an *abomination* before God, and there’s *nothing we can do by ourselves* to remedy this.

2) Because intercession is a part of Who God is, and it is what He does for us to supply our desperate need to avoid condemnation. It is an expression, and an illustration of His wonderful attributes. Intercession displays His love, grace, mercy, sovereignty, faithfulness, wisdom, power, and glory, just to name a few. God, as the blessed Holy Trinity, has interceded for us, is currently interceding for us, and will continue to intercede for us. How do we know? Note this biblical evidence: God the Father interceded for Adam and Eve after their first sin to help prevent them from suffering permanent final condemnation. Genesis 3:14-15; “The LORD God said to the serpent... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This is the first indication in the Bible of the Christ who was to come to be the true intercessor for mankind. Some other types and signs of the Christ who was the One to come that God the Father used were the building of the Ark of the Covenant, which included the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the mercy seat near the top of the Ark. Exodus 25: 17, 21-22; “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.” The mercy seat of pure gold represents the pure and spotless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, in His position for interceding between God, the people and God’s law. The cherubim are the ministering spirits angels to support Him. God the Father also used Moses to create the Levitical priesthood (Leviticus 8) to select Aaron and his sons as men to intercede between God and the people by executing a sacrificial system of offering slain bulls, rams, calves, and goats to be burned as offerings to forgive the people’s sins. This system was also a type and sign of the coming of Christ.

God the Father fully interceded for sinful mankind by sending Jesus Christ to us to reconcile us to Him. Galatians 4:4-5; "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Also Romans 3:24-25). The Levitical priesthood we just described was comprised of men who were imperfect sinners and had to make continual sacrifices for their own sins as well as the sins of the people. In Hebrews 7:23-26, we see a description of Christ's perfect eternal intercessory priesthood for us; "The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death (because they were sinners) from continuing in office, but He (Christ) holds his priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." Alleluia! Christ's intercession is further emphasized in Romans 8:34; "Christ Jesus is the one who died-more than that, who was raised-who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." And in Hebrews 9:24, "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." Alleluia again and again!!

Please do not take Hebrews 7:25 lightly, let the impact of that verse sink into your mind *and* your soul, "He (Christ) is able to save to the *uttermost* (the most or the greatest that is possible) those who draw near to God through Him, since He *always lives* to make intercession for them." If you have not done so yet please draw near to Jesus Christ and embrace Him by faith as your Lord and Savior, to be spared from forever judgment in hell and to be welcomed into His kingdom of heaven forever. He is and will be your perfect intercessor, always interceding for you to help you to navigate this sinful world in a way that is pleasing, honoring, and glorifying to God. If you have made a commitment to embrace Him by faith as your Lord and Savior, use this verse to re-ignite your passion for Him and worship of Him if it has grown lukewarm, cold, or dim. Remember, Christ "*Always lives to make intercession.*" Tremendous!

While God the Father and Christ interceded for us by their actions and redemptive work, the main vehicle that God uses is intercessory prayer. A portion of Christ's ministry while on earth was through intercessory prayer. More on that later.

To show that the entire Trinity is involved in intercession for us, the Holy Spirit also has a part. Romans 8:26-27; "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of

God.” Remember our earlier lesson on Praying God’s Will? The Holy Spirit is the intercessory helper concerning God’s will, which is critical for God to hear our prayers. 1 John 5:14-15; “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears is the us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.” The Holy Spirit is a huge help in fulfilling God’s promises in those verses, to help us to pray according to God’s will.

3) Because God has commanded and encouraged it in His word. He always blesses obedience, and His commands are given because He loves us, and wants the best for us. While He never forces us to be obedient, He does delight in it and prefers it over some other forms of honor, 1 Samuel 15:25; “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” Bible verses that lead us to intercessory prayer are: Ephesians 6:18; “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.” 1 Timothy 2:1, the key verse for this teaching; “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.” James 5:16; “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” Matthew 9:37-38, the very words of Christ; “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

4) Because God the Father, besides commanding and exhorting us to intercede, has used great men and women of faith in the Bible as intercessors. As His children, joint heirs with Christ, we can and ought to follow their examples, engaging in intercessory prayer right here and now. God the Father used some of His own special people from the Old Testament as intercessors through both action and prayer. When it seemed apparent that God was going to destroy the wickedly sinful people of the city of Sodom, Abraham interceded in prayer for them, see Genesis 18:22-33. God the Father used Moses to intercede for the people, against Pharaoh saying, “let my people go”, starting in Exodus 5 through 12. Moses also interceded for the people in prayer in Exodus 32:31-32 and 33:12-17 after they committed gross idolatry by worshiping the golden calf and God threatened to consume them, especially since this was not long after the miracles of release from 400 years of slavery in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea to help them to escape.

While the book of Job is well known among us for the multiple awful disastrous trials he endured, and for the lessons about God’s sovereignty over everything, what is not so well known was Job’s godly

actions as an intercessor. Job 1:5; “And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them (his children), and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did continually.” In chapter 42, the final chapter of this book, God rebukes Job’s “friends” for being so wrongfully judgmental of Job throughout all those days of tremendous trials. In v. 8 God tells them, “And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” And v. 10, “And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.” How wonderful! That God restored Job, giving him twice as much as before, *after he prayed an intercessory prayer.*

In the book of Nehemiah, chapter 1, Nehemiah intercedes for the people in actions and in prayer as he grieves upon learning about the destruction of the badly damaged, burned-out city of God, Jerusalem. He confesses their sin (as well as his own), asks God to grant them repentance, and for favor from God in being able to rebuild the city. God stays true to His promises (because He is faithful) as Nehemiah prayed and granted him favor in rebuilding the city.

The book of Esther, chapters 4 and 5 tell of how Esther risked her life approaching the king, breaking protocol because the king was never to be approached unless he asked to see an individual. Nonetheless the king accepted her, and she was able to successfully intercede for the Jewish people who were in danger of being annihilated.

Daniel chapter 9 tells of how Daniel interceded in prayer for God’s people as the 70-year exile in Babylon was ending and they were returning to their land (A lesson we covered in an earlier School of Prayer). He confessed their sins (as well as his own), prayed for forgiveness, for repentance, for their spiritual faithfulness and for God’s mercy to meet their needs.

The New Testament also has many great illustrations of intercession by God’s people by works and through prayer. In Matthew 8:5-13, the centurion intercedes to Christ on behalf of his paralyzed servant. In Matthew 15:21-28, the Canaanite woman interceding to Christ on behalf of her severely demon possessed daughter. Mark 9:14-29, the father of the boy with an unclean spirit interceding to Christ for his son. The apostle Paul interceded for the salvation of unbelievers, 1 Tim 2:1-6, and often for the sanctification, that is, the spiritual growth in Christ of believers, Romans 1:9-10, Ephesians 1:15-21, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-12, and 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Above and beyond all this, God the Father has used His Son Jesus Christ as the clearest and best example of intercession by works and particularly through prayer. First, God sent Christ to be His intercessory servant, Isaiah 42:1; "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations." This harmonizes with what was described earlier about the mercy seat of Exodus 25. Christ is God's chosen favored intercessor between God, the people and God's law and the administration of justice of God's law, whether the people are condemned or saved, depending upon their acceptance or rejection of Christ.

Second, Christ intercedes by taking the punishment for our sins and giving us His perfect righteousness so we can stand before God, worthy of heaven, spared from hell's judgment. Isaiah 53:6,12; (NKJV) "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, everyone, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. " (v.12) "Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors." Also 2 Cor 5:21 (NKJV); "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Not only did Christ intercede for us to take on our sin, but also He replaces our sin by giving us His perfect righteousness, so we can stand before God the Father, who sees us as only wearing the righteousness of Christ!

Third, Christ intercedes through prayer through by His example as recorded in the New Testament. He prayed for Peter in Luke 22:31-32; "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Shortly after, Peter was sifted like wheat by Satan, denying Christ three times, yet as Jesus prayed, his faith did not fail, he was restored and was used by God as a powerful force in beginning the church as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. Christ even prayed for those who were crucifying Him as He hung on the cross, Luke 23:34; "And Jesus said Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

John 17, the chapter known as Christ's High Priestly Prayer (covered in a 2019 School of Prayer lesson), is the longest recorded prayer in the New Testament, 26 verses in length. In vv. 1-5, Jesus prays for Himself in His relationship with the Father. The remaining 21 verses are all intercessory, vv. 6-19 are for the apostles. He prays that the Father would keep them in His Name, to keep them from the world and not to be overtaken by Satan. He prays for their unity with Christ and the Father (v.11), "...that they may be one, even as We are One", that they would be as close to each other in that truth (such as

exemplified in Ephesians 4:4-6) as Jesus is to the Father. He prays for them to be sanctified, that is set apart from the world for God's particular purposes by the vehicle of His word, the Bible. "Sanctify them in the truth, Your word is truth." (v.17). In v.20 His prayer takes an even more sweeping dramatic turn as He prays for "those who will believe in Me through their word...." He is praying for believers yet to be born, yet to have heard and responded to His effectual saving call, in other words, US, and those who will come after us!! His request for us and those yet to be saved in v.23 is like the one He makes for His disciples in v.11. "I in them and You (Father) in Me, that they may become perfectly one...." Even more, Christ goes on for one more final fulfilling request in v. 24, "Father I desire that they also whom You have given me, may be where I am." He's talking about heaven, that's the ultimate perfect place of oneness for us with God forever! *Marvelous, awesome, amazing* that our Lord and Savior was praying for US so many years ago and is still praying for us even now, *today* as we noted in Heb 7:25 and 9:24!!

Drawing all this together, what can we do to become radical biblical intercessory prayer warriors? We can:

A) First and foremost, get right with God. Be saved, embrace Christ by faith for the forgiveness of your sins, confess your current sins so you can be sure God hears you. Psalm 66:18 (NKJV); "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." James 5:16 sums this up very well, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

B) Once you get right with God, stay right with Him, get right and stay right with others. The Great Commandment as stated by Christ in Matthew 22:37-40; "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. **39**And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

C) Be obedient to God through obedience to God's word, especially in following the commands and exhortations to intercessory prayer as cited earlier and remembering that God always blesses obedience.

D) Make sure you intercede through the One true intercessor. 1 Timothy 2:5-6; "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all...." No person, dead or alive matches Christ's unique qualifications as the One true intercessor. There is no need, nor is it effective to intercede in prayer to deceased saints, deceased relatives or to Mary, the Christ's earthly mother. Those prayers will fall on deaf ears.

E) Intercede for the right people. And who would that be? Everyone, according to 1 Timothy 2:1; “for all people”. You can also follow God’s priority of relationships as outlined in Genesis. If you’re married, start with your spouse, then your children, grandchildren, extended family, parents, brothers, sisters, in laws, their families. Beyond them, intercede for friends, neighbors, coworkers. For the church, intercede for pastors, staff, leaders, fellow church members, also parachurch ministries such as Koinonia House/RTO. As a prayer warrior for K House, pray for Manny, Barbara, the staff and the board, pray for inmates, ex-inmates, the families of inmates and ex-inmates, those who are wrongly incarcerated, or wrongly sentenced. As 1 Timothy 2:2 states; “for kings and all who are in high positions”, that is those who are in positions of authority, such as government officials like the president, the governor, the mayor, police, prison wardens, guards, even if you disagree with their policies or you just plain don’t like them! Their calling is from God, see Romans 13:1-6. This is quite a list, isn’t it? Then again, this brings us full circle back to 1 Timothy 2:1, intercede through prayer for ALL People!

F) Intercede for the right requests, for the right reasons. These include temporal needs, like health, healing from sickness and disease (and there has been an even greater need for this because of the recent pandemic), daily necessities (“give us this day our daily bread”), food, clothing, shelter, financial needs, job/career challenges, the health and progress of the church and para church ministries like Koinonia House/RTO. Of greatest importance, though, are the spiritual needs, of which we always need to be aware. First, prayer for the salvation the lost, of unbelievers, as our Father and His Son Jesus Christ placed great importance on this. Returning one more time to our key verse in 1 Timothy 2, after noting what Paul wrote about interceding for all people and kings and rulers in vv.1-2, he then discloses a reason why in v. 4, “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” This is a statement of God’s will, He “desires *all* people to be saved.” Our Savior, the Lord Christ, not only had a heart for the unsaved, He spoke of the Father’s heart for them too. Matthew 9: 36-38; “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” This is also good biblical instruction for us to intercede for evangelists, missionaries, and missions. Christ, being God, could have interceded on His own to raise up more laborers for His harvest, but He invites His disciples (including us!) to pray for this. Pastor Michael Reeves has said: “Our praying for mission is our Christ likeness, it is an important part of our Christ likeness. It is being united with God’s Son and enjoying life in Him, praying like Him in Matthew 6:9, “*Our Father.*”

Along with praying for the salvation of the lost, we pray for the sanctification, the growth in Christ of believers. It is my belief that many of us don't have a constant awareness of this, yet we can do well to note Paul's emphasis on this in his scriptural writings as noted earlier in Romans, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians. Pray for BOTH physical (temporal) and spiritual needs in any given situation 2 Cor 4:18; "For the things that are seen are transient (temporary), but the things that are unseen are eternal." For example, if you're praying for someone who is a believer to be healed from an illness, pray also that this situation would result in the person having a fuller relationship with Christ. If you're praying for a person who is not a believer to be healed from an illness, pray for that person's salvation to result from that situation.

In closing, the prayer of intercession is a wonderful privilege of prayer that God has graciously given us through Christ's saving work for us. We can boldly approach the Throne of Grace through Christ, the one true Intercessor. The Trinity graciously intercedes for us, and God's word commands and encourages us to pray this way. Jesus Christ Himself models this in God's word, even inviting us to do so in Matthew 9:38. The great saints of God, down through the ages, both in the Old and New Testaments model this including the apostle Paul, who urges us to be imitators of God and Christ in 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Ephesians 5:1. The prayer of intercession helps us to pray more specifically, with more purpose and according to God's will. If we get right with God, get right with others and stay right, confessing known sins, praying the right things, both physical and spiritual through the right intercessor, Jesus Christ, according to God's will, He will hear and answer. 1 John 5:15; "And we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests we have asked of Him." Amen.

INTERACTIVE EXERCISE, pray Colossians 1:9-12 for an individual believer.

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