

## Intercessory Warfare for the Unbeliever

As you read the title line above, understand we are going to study a very important topic that has eternal value. If you have any unconfessed sins in your life, let me encourage you to get that right with the Lord right now. Do not move forward until you have repented of your sin and gotten right with the Lord.

Do you remember that “fresh fire” that filled your being when you met Jesus? I recall, as a very young man, all I wanted to do was to tell others about the glorious relationship you can have with the Creator of the universe! I was amazed that once others heard my testimony, why they simply did not want to fall on their knees in repentance and ask for that same kind of relationship with Jesus! I purposed in my heart that I wanted to save everyone! My youthful zeal slowly eroded to disappointment and frustration. It was not until I turned to the Word of God and began to read that I understood how the enemy keeps nonbelievers blinded from the truth.

### **What Scripture Says**

Man’s desire and God’s desire can at times be in opposition to one another because of one simple thing – sin. God has made His desire clear and known: John 3:16 (ESV), *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* 1 John 2:2 (ESV), *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

The word, “propitiation” simply means, “satisfaction.” The price Jesus paid for the sins of the world, through His death and resurrection, satisfied the One True Holy God. My desire to “save everyone,” although admirable, was misguided by misinformation. As sinners saved by grace, we do not save anyone; only God through Jesus can do that. Do we have a role in leading others to the truth? The answer is simply yes, and we will get to how to fulfill our role a little later. First, we need to understand the spiritual battle that is being waged around us. Jesus paid the price for man’s redemption; yet notice in John 3:16 that a person must “believe.” That tells us there is a cognitive recognition of our sin and an understanding for our need of forgiveness. Sounds simple enough, right? In looking at the world sin is obvious; yet, amazingly enough, many are oblivious to that which is obvious. Why? Again, the answer is found in the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV), *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* As I read God’s Word, I realized that Jesus desired to redeem all mankind; yet, the enemy fights to prevent that from happening. The god of this world is Satan and he is busy at work opposing the plan of God. A little later in 1 John 2 we find the tools that he uses to accomplish that task. Many Bible scholars refer to these tools as the “devil’s triangle” found in 1 John 2: 16 (ESV), *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.* So, when we encounter those who refuse the truth should we just move on? What is God’s desire regarding those who refuse the truth of the gospel? 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV), *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* I recall listening to one of my mentors telling me, “The Bible means what it says, and it says what it means.” We just read that God’s desire is for **all** men to come to repentance. Therefore, everyone in your circle of influence, your family, friends, enemies and strangers you meet: God wants **all** of them to come to accept His free gift of salvation of grace through faith in His Son.

The moment Jesus rose from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all time the soul of every man, woman and child was given a choice. We are all created by God; but simply because we were created by Him does not mean we are His family. To become a child of God we must first, by faith, accept Jesus is who He says He is. Ephesians 2: 1-5 (ESV), *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*

### ***Our Role as Intercessor***

So, what is the role of the intercessor in leading others to the Good News of grace through faith in Jesus Christ?

For those of us who have entered the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus, we are to be diligent and vigilant in sharing our faith. It is attributed to St. Francis Assisi that he once said, *Preach the Word at all times and if necessary, use words.* I have found simply loving the way Jesus loves is a powerful tool in leading men to Christ. Yet, part of that love in imitating Jesus is prayer. How does prayer pave the way for the salvation of those that are lost in their sin? Metaphorically, prayer is preparing the soil for seeding that leads to a harvest. It was my grandfather who prayed for me. Who prepared the heart of the Ethiopian eunuch when Phillip met him in the book of Acts? How about Lydia and the Philippian jailer? Who prepared the soil in your heart? Oh, what a blessing it is to be able to spend time in prayer knowing that what we pray can be used by God can bring an eternal harvest!

Although a wonderful blessing, we need to acknowledge intercessory prayer for what it is: *spiritual warfare*. To go to war on behalf of others in prayer means you are entering the spiritual arena with Satan and his minions of demons. The advantage we have is that because of Jesus' victory that first Easter Sunday morning we know the outcome of the battle we fight. The victory is ours in Jesus' name! Luke 11: 21-22 (ESV), *When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.*

When you begin to pray for those who are blinded by the enemy, don't forget that the basis for their salvation has already been established. Father God was satisfied with the sacrifice of His Son; so, praise God and thank Him for the power in the blood of Jesus! Move forward in prayer and declare that the bondages the enemy is using be broken in Jesus' name.

It could be that Satan is using some past sin that has been afflicted upon the unbeliever by someone else that is blinding them to the truth. It could be the spirit of religion or condemnation from some authority figure in their life. Invoke the truth found in 2 Corinthians 10: 4-5 (ESV), *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*

We know Satan blinds the minds of the unbelieving, yet we also know John 16:33 (ESV), *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* I have found from personal experience that there are times when intercessory prayer can be a real struggle. There are those I have been praying for now for more than thirty years.

When I begin to wonder why they have yet to be saved, I remember that I am not God; I am simply one of His servants and He has commanded me to pray. In the first chapter of Job we find a great example of persistence in prayer. Job prayed for and offered sacrifices for his children every day. If it was good for Job; it is good for you and me.

Remember; salvation comes through faith in Jesus and it is not up to you or me to decide who is saved. Secondly, our role is to be vigilant and diligent in our prayers. Never give up, but rather remember the instructions written by the apostle Paul in Philippians 4: 5-7 (NLT), *Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

Take some time right now and make a list of names that God puts on your heart. Begin to pray and continue to do so until those names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life!

