
Prayer 101

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Decades ago, I was participating in an all-night prayer meeting bombarding the gates of heaven. I remember beating the wall and yelling, “God, if You loved the people in Arlington, Texas, half as much as I do, we’d have revival!” Immediately, my lightning-fast mind realized that something was seriously wrong with my theology. What was I thinking?

Did I really believe I loved these people more than God did? No, not exactly. Like many Christians, I believed God was angry with the human condition, and it was up to me to turn Him from wrath and judgment. I was interceding, or so I thought, pleading with God on the behalf of others. What could possibly be wrong with that? As I learned later, a lot.

The things the Lord has revealed to me about prayer since then have totally changed my life, and I’m now seeing miraculous results. If you aren’t getting the results you know the Lord wants you to have, maybe it’s time to consider a better way to pray. I’m not saying that anyone who doesn’t pray as I do is “of the devil.” I wasn’t “of the devil” in the way I used to pray. I loved God with all my heart, and the Lord loved me. But the results weren’t there.

First, we need to recognize that God isn’t angry at mankind anymore. He is no longer imputing or holding our sins against us.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:19

We are NOW reconciled to God through Jesus. That means we are in harmony and are friendly with God right now. He isn’t mad; He’s not even in a bad mood. The war between God and man is over. That’s what the angels proclaimed at the birth of Jesus.

Luke 2:14 says — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

These angels weren’t saying that peace would reign on earth and that wars between people would cease. That certainly hasn’t happened. They were proclaiming the end of war between God and man. Jesus paid a price that was infinitely greater than the sins of the whole human race.

God’s wrath and justice have been satisfied. Jesus changed everything. God isn’t angry. His mercy extends to all people. He loves the world— not just the church— but the whole world. He paid for all sin.

The Scripture says in 1 John 2:2—

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

In the Old Testament, God’s judgment was poured out on both individuals and nations. In the New Testament, God’s judgment was poured out on Jesus. That is the nearly-too-good-to-be-true news of the Gospel. We no longer get what we deserve; we get what Jesus paid the price for, if we will only believe.

Before I understood this, I would say, “If God doesn’t judge America, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.” Now I say, “If God judges America, He will have to apologize to Jesus.” Understanding what Jesus did completely changes our perspective.

Second, Jesus is now the Mediator. A mediator is one who seeks to reconcile, or make peace between, two opposing parties. In the Old Testament, man had not yet been reconciled to God through Jesus. The people needed a mediator, someone to intercede with God on their behalf. That is where we find people like Abraham and Moses pleading with God.

In Genesis 18:23-25, Abraham interceded with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? [24] Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? [25] That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

In fact, Abraham actually negotiated with God until He agreed not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous people. But there weren’t ten righteous people in the whole city, and only some of Lot’s family survived. A similar account is recorded in Exodus 32:9-12 and 14. Here God was furious with the people, and Moses interceded for them:

The Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: [10] Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. [11] And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? [12] Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. [14] And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Moses actually told God, “Repent!” What nerve! What’s more amazing is that God repented. From these and other stories in the Old Testament, modern-day “intercessors” believe we, too, must stand in the gap, or mediate, between God and man. Just as I did decades ago, they believe we must plead with God to save the lost, to withhold His wrath from those He is ready to judge, and to be merciful to those whose needs He is unwilling to meet because of their unworthiness.

That couldn’t be further from the truth, but it is what’s being taught in many churches today. It ignores the fact that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 10:12), ever making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). If Moses or Abraham could persuade God, don’t you think Jesus could do at least as well?

In 1 Timothy 2:5, we read—

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

In the New Covenant, Jesus is the ONLY mediator needed to stand between God the Father and mankind. Sin is no longer a problem with God; it’s been atoned for, and we are now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That is how God sees us. If we understand that, it will change the way we pray.

It was appropriate for Abraham and Moses to pray as they did because God’s wrath had not yet been appeased through Jesus. Today, under the New Covenant, if people try to mediate in that way, they are actually antichrist—

against Christ. They are saying that Jesus was not enough and are not esteeming what Christ has done. When Jesus became our Mediator, He put all other mediators out of business—forever. I know these words are strong, but they are the truth.

Satan is behind much of the wrong teaching on “prayer.” Consider how crafty his plan is and the fruit it produces. He has convinced believers to stay in their closets, taking the place of Jesus in intercession. They spend hours pleading with God to turn from His wrath, to pour out His Spirit, and to meet the needs of the people.

Meanwhile, families, coworkers, and neighbors are going to hell and dying from disease. The Bible doesn’t say that salvation comes through intercession but by the foolishness of preaching (1 Cor. 1:21). And we are not told to pray for the sick but to heal the sick (Matt. 10:8) by commanding healing into their broken bodies.

We have been deceived into believing prayer is all about persuading God to release His power. We believe that He can save, heal, and deliver but that He is waiting on us to shape up and earn it. The truth is, we don’t deserve it, and we will never be good enough. Because of Jesus, all that God has is ours. That’s good news. We no longer need to beg or plead; we need to exercise the authority He has given us and receive His blessings.