

INTERCESSORY PRAYER – Numbers 12:1-16

INTRODUCTION – Intercessory prayers are the kinds of prayers prayed more often by believers than any other prayers. Believers prayed for their loved ones regardless of their standing before God. Must they be believers first before an intercessory prayer could be made for them? This is a question that we seldom ask, if at all.

There are many kinds of intercessory prayers. There are those where the unbeliever asked a believer to pray for him because of the calamity that he faced. This was true of Pharaoh in Exodus 9:22-35 when he faced the plagues of the LORD. The LORD had to use the plague to whittle away his resistance and refusal to let Israel leave Egypt for the Promised Land. After the ninth plague Pharaoh and Egypt were reduced to a near wasteland and he pleaded for Moses to intercede for him to ask the LORD to stop. Moses interceded for him and asked the LORD to stop the plague and the plague was stopped. The prayer was answered immediately.

Another example of an intercessory prayer is one done on behalf of a nation. Daniel prayed for Israel while they were in Babylon. It was near the end of the seventy years of captivity as prophesied by Jeremiah. In his intercessory prayer, Daniel asked the LORD for forgiveness on behalf of his people Israel when he confessed that they have sinned against God. He also acknowledged that they deserved the punishment that the LORD gave to them. Daniel pleaded for God's mercy to restore Israel back to their homeland. The LORD answered Daniel's prayer immediately.

In the case of Abraham who interceded on behalf of Lot and the cities like Sodom, they were unaware of his intercessory prayer. Abraham prayed and the LORD heard him. For that very reason, Lot's life was spared as the LORD sent two angels to "drag" Lot and his wife and 2 daughters out Sodom. In that intercessory prayer, Abraham "bargained" with God reduced the number of believers in that city from 50 to 10 so that the LORD would not destroy it but would spare it. Again the LORD answered Abraham immediately.

From these examples and there are many more, we know that the prayers of a righteous man truly avail much in the sight of God. Intercessory is very potent for it is a request from God's children to their Heavenly Father on behalf of others. These "others" do not need to be believers, or even be aware of it and yet the LORD would intervene in their lives because God's children prayed for them! What a tremendous power believers' have over the lives of others. How then ought we to make intercessory prayers? We shall study Numbers 12:1-16 to glean the principles of intercessory prayer for our blessings and example.

A. The Issue – 12:1-2 –

- a. The LORD had appointed Moses as the leader of Israel to bring Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. The will of God was challenged by Aaron and Miriam.
- b. Establish that there is a certain issue. Do not pray for generalities. Pray in specifics. This issue was one of great sin as the will and work of God could be jeopardised because of their usurpation of Moses' leadership.

B. The Intervention – 12:3-9 –

- a. The LORD intervened in this matter of undermining the will of God for Israel and the world!
- b. Confronting the sin of the sinners is necessary. The person has to be made aware of his sins. In this instance the LORD did it Himself directly. In our case we have to do it especially the leaders of the church. The Word of God has to be used in this confrontation. When this happens it is basically the LORD who is doing the confrontation since the Word of God is used.
- c. The sin was clearly established by the LORD against Miriam and Aaron.
- d. The anger of the LORD was made known to them as well. This is important as the sinner must understand that he has sinned against his LORD. There will be no excuses or justification when this is done.

C. The Confession – 12:10-12 –

- a. The LORD departed after the intervention. Aaron and Miriam realised their sin against God immediately as Miriam was stricken with leprosy.
- b. Aaron proceeded to ask Moses his younger brother for help. He requested intercessory prayer. They acknowledged their sins. Aaron acknowledged Miriam's sins as well on her behalf. As a leper she was now ostracised.
- c. He pleaded for mercy for her sister as her ostracism means that she was as good as dead. She would die alone.

D. The Plea – 12:13 –

- a. Moses acceded to the request of his older brother, Aaron. Moses cried unto the LORD.

- b. He prayed for Miriam that the LORD would heal her now i.e. immediately. There was no arrogance as Moses pleaded for the LORD to heal using the vocative to indicate pleading and crying.
- c. Moses pleaded with the LORD to heal by the phrase "I beseech thee." Here was no boasting but humility. Intercessory is always one of pleading for mercy and not demanding even when one knows that it was revealed in God's Word that it was to come to pass (e.g. Daniel's prayer for Israel to return to Promised Land).

E. The Restoration – 12:14-16 –

- a. Miriam was forgiven but she still had to go through the cleansing process according to the Word of God as revealed in the Pentateuch. The illustration used by the LORD was one of a father spitting in the face of his daughter. She was forcibly made unclean for 7 days. If this was true of an earthly father how much more when it is the heavenly Father!
- b. Miriam had to go through the process for her to return to society. This act of cleansing was to demonstrate the fruits of Miriam's repentance. Consequences has to be borne for sins committed even though that sin was forgiven. We must not confuse forgiveness with consequences of sin.
- c. The entire nation knew of Miriam's sin. Their inability to depart was the indicator that they all knew. The person who wants to cover his sin after repentance is a reflection that his repentance was not genuine in the first place. He was still very much concern for his own face and name rather than God's grace and mercies shown in his life. God must increase and we must decrease. It is only when we are weak then only can we be strong.
- d. After the cleansing period was Israel went on their journey to the Promised Land to continue to complete the will of God through Israel. The record is to indicate that once sins have been forgiven and consequences are borne the people can move on.

Conclusion – Intercessory prayers are very potent prayers. It is the privilege given only to God's children who have clean hands and pure heart so that they could pray anyone in their lives. There is no limit to this privilege. That is why it is so important and needful that the children of God lives holy and sanctified lives so that they can have access to God's throne of grace and mercy on behalf of others.