



Lesson 8 January 23rd, 2021

Called as the Intercessor

Study Scripture – John 17:14-24

Background Scripture – John 17:14-24

Key Verse:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

John 17:20

INTRODUCTION

An intercessor is a person who intervenes on behalf of another. This action can include saying a prayer or making a petition in favour of someone. It indicates that there is hostility between the person for whom the petition is being made and the one to whom intercession is being made.

Intercession is not quite the same as a prayer even though it might be made in the form of a prayer. It should really be regarded as a step up from prayer where someone stands in the gap on behalf of a person who is in need of mercy and grace.

It is not necessary that the intercessor knows all the needs of the person, but they know that the one to whom the petition is being made, in the case of a believer in Christ, the belief is there that God the Father has the power to turn the situation around for the good of the one in need.

This notion of intercession is critically important. We know of one case where God forbade the prophet Jeremiah to make intercession for the nation of Judah who were always sinning despite the frequent warnings from God. He told Jeremiah not to pray for the people, not to lift up a cry for them, and not to intercede with Him for them for He would not hear that prayer or petition. This was now a time for discipline. So, let us approach this Study Lesson with some caution.

Intercession can be therefore a prayer and that is called an intercessory prayer. But there is a difference between a commonly made prayer and intercession for that latter involves rendering a petition on the behalf of someone who might not have the ability, the spiritual desire, or the opportunity to pray or make a petition for themselves.

Intercession might be necessary by someone who can do that for the person in need may no longer want to put their need or desires into words for they are spiritually and emotionally weak. Their situation might be so troublesome that they will never be able to search and find the right words to pray or to petition. They might not even really care for an intercession to be made for them.

The role of an Intercessor is a noteworthy one, but it carries with its great responsibility with a need for great empathy and agape love. We will see this demonstrated in the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Study is really part of the Upper Room Discourse Jesus had with His disciples and occurred when Jesus had His last meal with His disciples. It started with the foot washing event in John 13 and finishes with Jesus' prayer here in John 17.

The prayer is generally referred to as Jesus' High Priestly Prayer thus implying that Jesus is here performing a Priestly role. Jesus here is addressing His Father as 'Holy Father', emphasizing the Father' "name" and requesting that He protect the disciples from the evil one.

Jesus is interceding to God the Father for the sake of His disciples in the same way that a priest would intercede. Here Jesus is extremely concerned for His disciples and this concern was well-founded for up to now their reaction to His teachings has been quite disappointing. They have been quarrelling among themselves, trying to prove themselves to be superior to one another, and have been so far showing little understanding of the mission of Jesus.

What is extremely interesting is that Jesus the Son of God, who is God incarnate is speaking to the Father and we are therefore allowed to listen to a conversation within the members of the Trinity of the Godhead. We don't have this opportunity very frequently and so what is being spoken about is something we should pay special attention to.

17 times Jesus says His Father gave to Him for the disciples everything including "His Words" and His 'Name'. Note that to Jews the "Name" of a person held great significance. In this case God's name embodied His nature and character.

Jesus knows that His time is short, and He and the disciples have not yet gone to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would meet Judas and be betrayed. This is therefore not a prayer that is an agonizing prayer like the one in Gethsemane.

He had started this meeting event which is recorded in chapters 13 through 17 by giving His disciples as much information as He could about what was going to happen and how He would provide for them in the future.

But now there is a new direction. Jesus is changing from offering information to the disciples and would begin to make intercession for them. He will not be speaking directly to them.

God the Father sent Him to Earth with a purpose in mind and He had finished a significant part of His work. But there was still more to be done. Jesus had to make every possible preparation before He sent His disciples to carry on the work that He had begun for now His mission would now become their mission. Jesus therefore had to do this essential and critical final step to prepare His disciples before He sent them out into the world.



We should therefore make ourselves aware and note that this prayer of intercession has great relevance for us because Jesus is doing the same thing in our lives as in the life of the disciples, asking the Father to prepare us to be sent into the world.

It is important that we ask yourself a few questions.

How would you feel when someone is praying out loud for you? Remember that Jesus' disciples were sitting right there in front of Him as He did this intercessor prayer to God the Father on their behalf.

Would you be comforted, feel grateful, feel a little humbled, feel vulnerable, feel honoured or would you feel awkward and may be or maybe not appreciate that someone would really care to do that for you?

Hopefully if you are ever in a situation where someone has to make intercession to God for you, you will feel humbled and grateful.

Note that Jesus considers the disciples as persons that the Father has given Him and so the Father has brought them into the love of the Father and the Son and into the mission of God. Because this is the doing of God the Father Jesus can now go to the Father with requests on behalf of the ones that the Father has given Him. The heart of Jesus for His disciples and for us is obviously made clear.

Note also that Jesus is not only making a petition for those that are sitting with Him at this meeting. He is also praying for those that will believe on Him. That means Jesus is interceding for you and for me. We are now therefore looking at relationships with the members of the Godhead. It is this relationship that will enable us to have eternal life, for we note that eternal life is a relationship with Jesus being the source of life.

Note also that this petition involves the future for Jesus is not only petitioning for His disciples and thanking God for them but is also pointing to what awaits them in future.

This relates obviously to people who are completely different from persons and forces that are opposed to or indifferent to the things of God the Father and Jesus the Son.

Jesus is identifying clearly exactly who He will be interceding for now that He knows that He will be going soon to the Father after delivering the 'words' from the Father and they had received these words and accepted them as coming from the Father.

We are clearly now looking at the heart of the Saviour and this of course would point us to our heart.

Have we received the "words" from the Father or are we prone to be attracted to and receiving other words?

Do we have any interest in keeping His 'words' or His commandments?

Are we in unity with one another?



What does unity mean? Let us carefully consider this prayer of intercession for those that have come to Christ.

Not to be forgotten, Are we in a relationship with the Godhead?

THE TEXT

By way of context, we should note that Jesus had lifted His eyes to heaven and acknowledged to the Father that His hour had come, and He wanted the Father to glorify Him the Son so that the Son would be able to glorify the Father.

Jesus speaks about the Father giving the Son authority, and giving the Son work to do. God the Father had given the Son a group of people with instructions to give His words to them. Jesus the Son had received the words from the Father and now carried out His mission from the Father

“to give eternal life to all who you have given him”.

Jesus then defined eternal life for us, namely,

“This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”.

Knowing God and believing that Jesus is from God is what it is all about. Observe that Jesus is confident that the disciples have received His words and have known the truth. You might not think that this is a great bunch of fellows for they had so many flaws, but in fact they have been really outstanding, and Jesus will now pray that God will keep them and protect them for they have received life. They are in a unique relationship with the Father and the Son.

Jesus gives us four reasons for His confidence in praying and petitioning on behalf of His disciple and interceding for them. Now observe closely that Jesus is doing something that God the Father wants.

First, Jesus makes it absolutely clear that He is not praying or petitioning for the world but is praying for those that God the Father has given Him. ***They are yours***, says Jesus.

Note carefully know that if you belong to the Father, He is predisposed to acting on your behalf. He is looking at His ***own*** and very logically will ***Always*** look after His ***own***. Jesus knows this and bases His intercession on that fact. So, the first thing you have to ask yourself is, Are you one of God's own. We would therefore have to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are ***of the world***.

Then Jesus makes the astounding claim indicating His unique and equal relationship with the Father in Chapter 16 which makes Him, given His authority, able to appear before the Father and make intercession for His disciples. Jesus is able. He has authority which the Father gave Him. So, Jesus will now say:

All things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine.”



This of course is amazing for the Father is now pleased. The disciples and those that believe in Jesus were partakers in the glorification of Jesus, and Jesus is now glorified. God is pleased when we bring glory to His Son. When we believe in Jesus, we are buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him to eternal life. We share in His glory.

In His introduction Jesus states to the Father that He has kept the disciples in the Father's "name" which the Father gave Him. He has guarded them and kept them, and not one of them had been lost except the son of Perdition. This was not really a loss but had happened so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. So now He can come to the Father with great joy.

Verse 14. It is to be carefully noted that now that we are looking at the very ancient subject of the separation of the church from the world. Jesus repeats this very important idea in verse 16 making it very plain that the disciples are not of the world, just as He is not of the world.

One cannot therefore avoid this biblical doctrine of biblical separation. Some even misinterpret it in strange ways and have developed monastic orders where they withdraw from the world and have nothing to do with it and so contemplate and meditate, living in a cloister. Some are even so rigid fundamentalists that did not only separate from those that do not accept the doctrine of Jesus Christ but are unwilling to have relationship with others that believe in the doctrine of Jesus Christ and separate themselves from even those that believe.

But we know that there is a true separation for the church is different and is not of the World. Just as Israel in the Old Testament was separated from the nations around them so the church is separated from the world.

This of course is extremely relevant when we look at the conflict over the nature of the mission of the church for some think that this mission is totally spiritual, and the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the saving of lost souls is the fundamental and likely the only task of the church. Doing good in the world and helping the world physically has nothing really to do with the work of the church.

On the other hand, some believe that the mission of the church is not primarily spiritual, but that the church should concentrate on the political, sociological, economic, environmental matters and so the church must speak on the issues that are currently facing the nation.

There is therefore this false dichotomy that has developed by many that express views on this matter. But we know that the light carried by the church must never become low and the love that Jesus has taught should never grow cold, and as one writer says, the watchers should never slumber while the bridegroom tarries. Jesus certainly witnesses to Himself and the words of the Father and so He prays for Himself that He may be glorified in the sacrificial death that He would offer to glorify the Father. The words of the Father and the Cross of Jesus Christ must therefore be always proclaimed.

The loved and "given" ones must be protected. So there has to be a security system. Psalm 121 tells us the kind of protection those of God have. The Psalm tells us



***“He will not suffer thy foot to be moved,
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep”.***

But there is a threat from the world and the evil one who hates anything of God. The word of the Father in believers and disciples has given them new life, a new birth, new ambitions and desires, new goals, new aims, and the things which motivate them are totally different from the things that motivate the world. That means that followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are fundamentally different and so even though there is conflict going on in them, those born again can never be truly happy with the world and how it operates even though they may think for a little while that the things of the world and the style of the world can satisfy them. Sooner or later however they will discover that it's a mirage, an illusion, for the world's philosophy cannot fit with their different nature.

The doctrine of separation then is a very interesting one for it is clear that the world would love to finish off believers in Jesus and would love if there was no church of Jesus Christ for our existence and the existence of the church make them feel guilty and so they will hate believers in Christ just as how they hated Jesus Christ. True separation is not isolation or amalgamation. One writer helps us in this matter:

“There is a phrase that Christians often use to describe this distinction. It is said that we are supposed to be *“in the world”* but not *“of the world”*. That idea comes from this passage. In verse 11 Jesus says, *“they are in the world”*, and in verse 16, he says, *they are not of the world”*. So, it is true that we are *“in the world, but not of the world”*.

But that isn't the full picture. If that's your answer to how Christians relate to the world, is deficient. Jesus doesn't tell his disciples to be *“in the world”*. That would mean that we are supposed to coexist with all the people around us, but not be affected by them.

That is how a lot of people understand this passage and how a lot of people live. But it's not what Jesus says. Jesus says that we are not *“of the world”*. Instead, we are *“sent into the world”*. That is the relationship that Jesus says we have with the world. We are sent. That's a lot different than simply being in it. Sending implies action. Sending implies purpose. Sending implies communication. Sending implies a message. Jesus wants God to prepare his disciples to be sent, to carry out his mission. We are not of the world, but we are sent into the world... there is no point being sent into the world and forgetting what you're supposed to be delivering. You can't be a messenger without a message”.

Verses 15-16. The key idea therefore now is “keep”. Jesus has previously made this request in Verse 12 where He used the word “guard”. However, this is what the Father Himself wants and so Jesus is interceding in line with what the Father desires. The world is really a world of wickedness and it is ruled by Satan the evil one. The likely meaning here given the tense is of a personal, masculine, evil one. The forces in the world are evil and the one who influences them is evil. So, the disciples need protection, preservation, and to be cared for. They need the constant watchful care, to be kept under the watchful eye so that they may be eternally safe. They are very different from the world. They are like Jesus who was not of the world.



Verse 17. So, the intercession continues that they will be set apart for God for the word “sanctify” means to set apart and set apart for a special purpose. One might think that sanctification means moral holiness but that is not the only meaning obviously for Jesus does not need that improvement in holiness.

The remaining meaning which is used in the Old Testament therefore is the sense of consecration where an object is consecrated to the purpose and will of what God has in mind. It generally carries with it the idea of dedication of an object for the purposes of sacrifice. So, this refers to the mission that God has given to the Apostles and to us who have come to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ after them.

The sacrificial task to which the disciples and we have been assigned is enabled by the instrument of the “truth” which Jesus defines as the “word” of the Father.

This of course is “truth” that is not found outside of the Bible.

In spiritual terms the “truth” is the divinely revealed word of God in the Holy Scriptures which God as revealed through the ministry of the teachers and prophets which prepared us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This truth is fulfilled in the person of Jesus and we see it in His person, His words, and His work for Jesus has shown by His preaching and teaching everything that the Father wants us to know.

Verse 18. Jesus indicates that He is the message of God and so He is the complete message that leads to eternal life. One can read His life and see what God the Father is. The mind of the Father is displayed in Him and He is Himself the Gospel, the Good News. His relationship with the Father has been carried over with His relationship with the disciples. They have been sent to show this relationship with the Father to those in the world.

Verse 19. For the benefit of the disciples Jesus will offer Himself as a sacrifice for He has been consecrated for that purpose so that they too will be set apart by the truth and carry out the mission that the Father had appointed for them.

Verse 20. Now we are sure that Jesus is praying for the entire family of believers. Jesus is very optimistic for He knows that the disciples will witness to the world and that this witness will be effective. The circle is therefore now widened to include everyone that will come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The intercession therefore now looks to the future. The disciples seated before Him will not be alone. The “word” sent by God the Father will stand against the hatred of the world.

We know now therefore that Jesus describes His hope and His vision for what His followers will look like and how they will live their lives. We are now brought into a peculiar kind of unity where believers in Jesus will be one.

Verse 21. We must now look at the sense in which this petition is made. One writer poses the question:



“Is this a petition for organizational unity? Is he praying for spiritual unity alone? Or is he perhaps praying for spiritual unity as well as organizational unity?

In the first place, there is, so far as I can see from our Lord's statement, there is no belief apart from the apostle's word. In other words, men believe through their word.

We might think of “one” in different ways. We would think of “one” in the sense of unanimity, absolute agreement of thought. That's what you almost have in Soviet Russia today. Unanimity in Christian things lead to something like a Pope or a vicar on Earth. While of course ultimately, we shall have views that are precisely the same in the time to come, it's doubtful that our Lord prays for that now, otherwise he would be very frustrated, and we know that he is never frustrated in his petitions. So probably he does not mean unanimity.

Well, perhaps we could think of uniformity. That is an agreement in practice, agreement in ritual..... Well, it's doubtful that the Lord had uniformity in mind. Why, uniformity just as unanimity outwardly may exist without unity at all. We have churches in which there is outward uniformity, but a large difference of opinion on the doctrine of Jesus Christ....

Is it perhaps that he's speaking about union then, not unanimity, not uniformity, but union, organizational union? That is, they should all have the same affiliation. We should all be Presbyterian, or we should all be Baptist, or we should all be Methodist, or we should all be Roman Catholics. Well of course we know that you can have that kind of union with unity at all....

Our Lord obviously is referring to unity, “*that they may be one*”. That is, one is in our heart, oneness of purpose that arises from oneness of the doctrine... the one thing that they all had, the one thing that they all had was the fundamental doctrine of Jesus Christ”.

We know that there are many church organizations with people believing different things even though they stayed together. In so-called church organizations or affiliations, you have liberals, you have some that if you listen to what they say they do not seem to really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ at any significant level. So, if we all join the same organization that does not mean that we have true unity in the way that Jesus intended.

It would therefore appear that true unity in the body of Christ would fundamentally be an inward oneness of trust in Jesus as the God- man who offered the atoning sacrifice. There will be different opinions but only God the Father can tell whether believers are truly one. True believers have been baptized by the one Holy Spirit into the body of Christ but there may be ways in which they might differ. But if there is a fundamental difference in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ that cannot mean that there is fundamental oneness.

Verse 21 Even when individuals come from different backgrounds, different organizational units and different associations they must proclaim full agreements to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. They must believe that He is the only one that can satisfy the needs of the human heart. They must be prepared to accept the testimony of the truthfulness of the Word of God without trying to make changes in it. There must be acceptance of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the redeeming Messianic God- man, born in the nation of Israel as promised, and who came and died on the Cross for the salvation of all men, and whose blood



can cleanse from all sins. He will come to judge the quick and the dead. Beside Him there is no other. He has all authority and can forgive all sins.

Anyone therefore who does not believe that there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who is responsible for speaking and changing the hearts of all men, they cannot be in the One. When those that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are “one” the world will believe that God the Father sent Jesus as the Saviour of the world.

Verses 22-23. God the Father had given Jesus a glory and Jesus had given this glory to those in Him. This meant that the disciples had the task of missions which involve consecration to the work of the Lord, and they would receive a reward.

Note that Jesus had received a glory which was manifested in His death, resurrection, and ascension and it is through the Cross and resurrection that Jesus returned to the glory that He enjoyed with the Father before the creation of the world. The disciples who would follow Jesus, and take up their cross, would share in His Glory. Jesus was exalted, and He would remain in His disciples and they would be made perfect in becoming one.

Clearly therefore Jesus would never leave His disciples. He would sit at the right hand of the Father always making intercession for them. Jesus knew that the Father loves Him and would love them. The disciples belonged to Jesus and they also belonged to the Father

It is quite understandable that Jesus desired that those that the Father had given Him would be with Him where He was and that they would see His glory which the Father had given to Him given the fact that the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world.

Jesus wants us to be with you in order that you might behold His messianic glory. Jesus wants us to see what heaven is like and what He is truly like. We will understand Him and His glory more and more as we are transformed into His image and likeness. There will be a complete transformation one day and Glory will be amazing.

CONCLUSION

Let us remember that Glory is the manifestation of God. God’s glory therefore is present in us for the purpose of oneness for we are with the Father and the Son. We are in union with Christ and with each other. We might not see it very well but as we are already in His body we are partaking in His Glory.

We might be disappointed with each other because of the sin of others and our own sins and our sinful expectations but nevertheless God dwells in each of those that belong to Him, those that worship in spirit and in truth and who dwell in His spiritual temple.

Our life as believers therefore should show the world something about God. The relationships among those who come to be in the body of Christ must reflect their relationship with God.



We therefore clearly need each other, and the Apostle Paul will pray in Ephesians 3: 18 that we will come to be able to comprehend the depths of Christ's love "*with all the saints*".

Remember therefore that the Son is in us and the Father is in the Son. This means that both Love us, and we will know this is true because the Holy Spirit who comes from the Father and the Son lives in us according to John 14: 26 and 15: 26. The Spirit will keep on revealing the deep things of God and we will be increasingly assured of our position in Christ.

There is therefore to be a unified body with each spiritual individual Temple combining to form the total Temple of God, which we know is a temple in progress for the work is not finished given that we are being built together into the Temple of God in the Spirit.

When we develop spiritually so that we will show the grace and mercy of God this will enable the world to see that the Father loves us as He loves His Son, and that He loves everyone in the world that wants a relationship with the Son and with those that belong to Him.

It is an amazing thing that Jesus wants us to be with Him. When you consider that we have been in enmity with God and to some extent are still in enmity with God because of our fleshly desires, we know that the love of God is absolutely amazing. Remember that Jesus is with the PERFECTLY HOLY Father and through the Spirit we can see the glory of God even if our face has a veil over it. But remember also that we are being transformed from glory to glory and the Spirit within us loves to show us the Glory of the Lord and who the Lord is.

So, let us make every effort to get rid of our self-centered patterns of thought and reject all the things that are outside of the design of God. These things will keep us from closer intimacy with God and with each other.

We should make some attempt to look at the patterns of sin that are in us and then pray that God will remove these patterns so that we will begin to see God more clearly and will allow God to transform us even more rapidly. We cannot do this by ourselves. The work of Jesus and His work of intercession is therefore vital for us. We should take full advantage of it and as 1 John advises, go to the Cross as frequently as needed for the blood of Jesus Christ will keep on cleansing us from all sin.

Never forget therefore who you are, and the Spirit will lead you so that you will be able to better and better see the glory of our Lord and the Father. Remember you are loved and that you are KEPT BY GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, AND GOD THE SPIRIT.

