**Intervening Prayer, Part Two** May 29, 16

Coffee/Question:

Look at this verse. 1 Corinthians 15:19 – *And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are to be pitied more than anyone in the world.* NLT

As you go for coffee, I invite you to respond to / interact with or talk with someone about this statement made by God through Paul the apostle.

Why do you think God would say this to us?

Feedback

1 Corinthians 15:19-25.

***19****And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are to be pitied more than anyone in the world.* ***20****But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the firstfruits of all who have died.*

***21****So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man.****22****Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.****23****But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the firstfruits; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.*

***24****After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power.****25****For Christ must reign until he puts all his enemies beneath his feet.****26****And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

In this present time, Jesus rules from heaven over the earth, but he does so, ***“in the midst of his enemies.”*** (Psalm 110:2)This reality explains the tension with which we live in this world. Because we can only see the physical, it sometimes appears, as if no one is in control or in charge. But the Bible assures us, this is not the case, nor will it ever be.

In addition, to ruling, at present, in the midst of his enemies, there will come a future moment when Jesus will ***“put under his feet…”*** in the sense of destroying, ***“all dominion, authority and power”*** opposed to him.

So why the wait? Why hasn’t God completely banished evil?

Evil continues to have opportunity to operate, trying to influence men and women to reject Jesus, because God continues to give “opportunity” to human beings to choose to center their lives in him, and in doing so, to change their destiny.

Jesus... is the Victor. Nothing and no one can ever change that.

And at future moment chosen by and known only to God, when this present age ends, and the new one begins, as the Scripture foresaw in Revelation 7 and Isaiah 25, there will be *“a great multitude that no one can count from every nation, tribe, people and language,”* who will cry out in a loud voice, *“Surely this is our God, we trusted in him and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”*

At that new beginning…there will no longer be any question as to why God had waited so long. All will be clear. It will be seen that he had waited patiently in order to save all those who turned their lives to him.

It’s because of “who” Jesus is and what he’s done, and who we are because of him, that we who follow Jesus, are challenged to speak in his name, prayers of intervention, and to act in his name, with grace.

While God gives every person the freedom to choose if they will come home to him; God does not stand on the sidelines of history as an impassive observer.

He prompts his followers to pray and he intervenes in this world, through their prayers and actions, to change circumstances, situations and lives.

God could do everything himself, but he doesn’t.

He involves us.

Additionally, as Jesus’ followers learn to pray prayers of intervention, God trains them and grows them up. Let me explain.

In CS. Lewis’ book, ‘The Horse and His Boy,’ the lost prince of Archenland, Shasta, is returned to his father, the king. But before Shasta can assume his responsibility as a prince, he has to undergo a rigorous training program.

John Eldredge compares Shasta’s situation to what God is doing in the lives of his followers in this present time. He writes: *“We may think this life is simply about getting a nice little situation going for ourselves and living out the length of our days in happiness. I’m sorry to take that from you, but you and I shall soon be inheriting kingdoms, and we are almost illiterate when it comes to ruling.*

*So God must prepare us to reign. How does he do this? In exactly the same way he grows us up – he puts us in situations that require us to pray and to learn how to use the authority that has been given to us. How else could it possibly happen?”* Moving Mountains, chapter 5.

Why does a young woman or man go off to college or university?

It is to study and learn in order to make themselves ready for their life vocation.

In a similar way, these years on earth are preparing us for the responsibilities we will be given in the life to come.

This is what the Bible teaches.

1 Corinthians 6:1-3.

*the Lord’s people will judge the earth*

*the Lord’s people will judge angels*

Matthew 25:14>

*You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.*

Ephesians 2:6

*we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms*

What does that mean?

Jesus rules from heaven. Seated with him explains the reality that he has given us authority to act in his name.

Another of the reasons why Jesus rules in the midst of his enemies in this present time, is that he is teaching his followers the necessary skills that we will need for the age to come. Do you know how we know that?

Revelation 3:21; 5:10

*to sit with me on my throne*

*made to be a kingdom and priests to serve God and to reign on the earth*

This is our destiny.

We are learning and being trained in this present time to rule on God’s behalf.

As a race we forfeited what we were created to do when we said no to God.

But in rescuing us, God will give back to us that lost responsibility.

We unpacked last week the background teachings regarding the prayer of intervention. If you were away, you can go to our website and listen to that teaching on-line or download it from iTunes as a podcast.

This week we want to study the prayer of intervention in action. **Acts 12**.

v.1-3.

Herod’s first act of persecution was to put James to death. And when Herod saw the favor this brought him, he then seized Peter and planned to do the same with him.

Mention is made in v.3 that all this happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. What’s that? Look at **Leviticus 23:4-7**.

v.4.

While James’s death had been swift, Herod planned that Peter’s trial and death would be very much a public show in order to build on the favor he had gained with the Jews. This is why he waited for their festival to be over.

The other detail that we’re meant to take note of is the security assigned to Peter. Four squads of four soldiers!?!?

Why did Herod go to such extreme lengths?

You and I need to remember – Herod knew the story of Jesus.

He knew that a guard of Roman soldiers hadn’t been able to keep Jesus’ dead body in a tomb. He also knew Peter had been with Jesus from the start, and that Peter was one of Jesus’ closest associates. Therefore, he was taking no chances.

As far as Herod was concerned, Peter was going down.

v.5-12.

What a contrast - Peter was in prison sleeping... and the rest of the church was praying...earnestly.

This word ‘earnestly’ is the same word used to describe how Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane - Luke 22:44: *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

The same word is used to describe how Elijah prayed - James 5:17-18: *Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

The word ‘earnestly’ speaks of intensity.

In the story of Acts 12, this word tells us ‘how’ the church prayed.

Let’s pause here and ask, how do we pray?

We pray when we sense our need of God’s help. We pray in trust of God.

We pray in confidence of his ability.

But those three statements speak of “why” we pray, not “how” we pray.

Would our prayers be described as being – earnest and persistent?

We’ve become used to things happening instantly and easily.

Flip a switch and on comes light.

Put a card into a machine and out comes money.

Put a key into an ignition and turn it, and a car runs.

I wonder... do we approach prayer the same way?

As a switch to be flipped; a card to be inserted; a key to be turned?

Peter’s imprisonment required the church to pray intensely, strenuously, and long into the night. As they did so, the church was putting into practice what Jesus had taught his followers years earlier.

Look at **Matthew 16:19**

*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*

*bind and loose*

Look at **Matthew** **18:19-20**

*if two of you agree, it will be done*

*when you gather in my name, I am with you*

Intervening prayer uses the authority of Jesus to bind and to loose.

But what is it that is bound and loosed?

The context of Matthew 16:19 – matters pertaining to the building of Jesus’ church.

The context of Matthew 18:19-20 – matters pertaining to the purity of Jesus’ church.

Look also at **Ephesians 6:18**.

*pray in the Spirit*

*on all occasions*

*with all kinds of prayers*

*be alert*

*always keep on praying*

The context here is standing our ground in the struggle against evil.

The church in Acts 12 prayed like Elijah prayed.

Look at **1 Kings 17:1**.

God had delegated to Elijah authority over the weather – when Elijah said so, the rain stopped and it didn’t fall again, until Elijah said so.

Fast forward 3 plus years.

**1 Kings 18:1**.

Who decided that it was time for the drought to end?

This teaches us that Elijah did not independently use the authority God had given him. I can’t stress enough how important this is when it comes to using the authority of Jesus. We use it for the accomplishing of his will.

Fast forward a few weeks. The showdown on Mt. Carmel – Baal loses.

**1 Kings 18:41-45**.

* After the fire fell from heaven, Elijah climbed to the top of Mt. Carmel to speak into reality what God had already told him would happen. That’s why he could say while the sky was still clear – *“there is the sound of heavy rain.”*
* When Elijah prayed, using the authority God had given him, he did so humbly – *“he bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.”* Elijah didn’t bark out orders, bossing God around. This too is so important for us to not only know, but to practice.
* In praying earnestly, Elijah prayed persistently – he had seven prayer sessions.

If God had already decided to send the rain, why did Elijah have to pray so strenuously? The same question could be asked about the church in Acts 12.

Why did they have to pray into the night?

John Eldredge says, *“Effective prayer is often like the felling of a great tree – it takes repeated blows.”* Moving Mountains, chapter 6.

Hampton Keathley writes: *“It simply impresses upon us what perseverance and unwavering faith accomplishes. It emphasizes the principle of* [*Luke 18:1*](javascript:%7B%7D)*, “that they should always pray and not give up.” The need... is to keep praying until we see the evidence of an answer.”* bible.org

Arthur Pink writes: “*This passage teaches us that the Lord waits, not because He is tyrannical, but "that He may be gracious." It is for our good that He waits: this is how he matures our faith and character. We must wait for His time and, in waiting, refuse to be discouraged, continuing to earnestly pray, until He appears on our behalf.”* pbministries.org

There simply are situations when God’s people must earnestly pray together.

Peter’s impending trial and execution was one of those situations.

Look also at **Acts 4:23-24, 31**.

In response to the prayer made in Acts 4, the believers were filled afresh with the Holy Spirit and spoke God’s word boldly.

In response to the church’s earnest prayers in Acts 12 Peter was miraculously released.

Let’s read what happened after the angel left Peter. **Acts 12:13-17.**

It is a very human story, isn’t it? It is one that each of us can identify with.

We pray…earnestly…and then we’re shocked when God answers.

Aren’t you glad God is so patient with us as he grows us up?

**Let’s summarize**.

\* Prayers of intervention are done by those who understand the authority of Jesus.

\* To pray prayers of intervention require us to be clear about who we are – we are God’s adopted children, his friends and allies.

\* Those who pray prayers of intervention believe Jesus has entrusted authority to them, and are bold enough to use that authority in agreement with others of like mind and faith.

\* Intervening prayer is not just a cry to God for help; it is a confident assertion and insistence that the will of God be done.

\* Prayers of intervention verbally speak the truth and the kingdom of God in and over an immediate and pressing need.



On Monday, June 27th, I’m planning a prayer time, from 7-8pm, here at the church. I believe with all my heart, God is calling us to learn how to pray such prayers of intervention for our town and the families who live here.

In anticipation of this, it is important that we be a people consecrated to God.

Psalm 15; James 4:7-10; 2 Peter 3:14; Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1

Please read through this passages on your own and as you do ask the Spirit,

“Is there anything you want to say to me?”

“Is there anything you want me to deal with?”

In John 15:4-11, seven times Jesus said “remain in me.”

He told his followers to remain in him for the same reason we are told to continually be filled with the Spirit.

We are prone to wander; to subtly move away.

We are prone to smother the Spirit.

Consecration to God is an important part of our individual and corporate worship because it’s how we deal with any obstacle(s) that would restrict the life and power of God flowing into and out through our lives.

If we are to use Jesus’ authority rightly, our lives must be clean.

Our closing song is both a declaration of who God is and a commitment to him that all of our life is his. This is what consecration is - I am yours Lord.

Sovereign

**The Blessing**

Romans 8:1:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

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**Meaning of Numbers in the Bible: The Number 7**

Used 735 times (54 times in the [book of Revelation](http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/what-is-key-to-understanding-book-of-revelation.html) alone), the number 7 is the foundation of [God's word](http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/how-did-we-get-the-bible.html). If we include with this count how many times 'sevenfold' (6) and 'seventh' (119) is used, our total jumps to 860 references.

Seven is the number of completeness and perfection (both physical and spiritual). It derives much of its meaning from being tied directly to [God's creation](http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/numbers-and-creation-of-the-universe.html) of all things. According to Jewish tradition, the [creation of Adam](http://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/learn-basic-bible-timeline/life-of-adam.html) occurred on October 7th, 3761 B.C. (or the first day of Tishri, which is the seventh month on the [Hebrew calendar](http://www.biblestudy.org/godsrest/biblical-calendar-program.html)). The word 'created' is used 7 times describing [God's](http://www.biblestudy.org/theplainertruth/how-can-you-know-there-is-a-god.html) creative work (Genesis 1:1, 21, 27 three times; 2:3; 2:4). There are 7 days in a week and [God's Sabbath](http://www.biblestudy.org/godsrest/why-do-people-attend-church-on-sunday.html) is on the 7th day.

[The Bible](http://www.biblestudy.org/bible-study-by-topic/the-greatest-events-in-the-bible.html), as a whole, was originally divided into 7 major divisions. They are 1) the Law; 2) [the Prophets](http://www.biblestudy.org/prophecy/minor-prophets.html); 3) the Writings, or [Psalms](http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/who-wrote-the-psalms.html); 4) [the Gospels](http://www.biblestudy.org/maturart/how-are-the-gospels-different.html) and Acts; 5) the General Epistles; 6) the Epistles of Paul; and 7) the book of Revelation. The total number of originally inspired books was forty-nine, or 7 x 7, demonstrating the absolute perfection of the Word of God.

**Appearances of the number seven**

There are at least seven men in the Old Testament who are specifically mentioned as a man of God. They are [Moses](http://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/learn-basic-bible-timeline/life-of-moses.html) (Joshua 14:6), [David](http://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/learn-basic-bible-timeline/life-of-king-david.html) (2Chronicles 8:14), Samuel (1Samuel 9:6, 14), Shemaiah (1Kings 12:22), Elijah (1Kings 17:18), [Elisha](http://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/list-of-important-people-in-old-testament.html) (2Kings 5:8) and Igdaliah (Jeremiah 35:4).

In the book of Hebrews, written by [the apostle Paul](http://www.biblestudy.org/apostlepaul/main.html), he uses seven titles to refer to Christ. The titles are 'Heir of all things' (Hebrews 1:2), 'Captain of our salvation' (2:10), 'Apostle' (3:1), 'Author of salvation' (5:9), 'Forerunner' (6:20), 'High Priest' (10:21) and the 'Author and finisher of our faith' (12:2).

In Matthew 13 Jesus is quoted as giving seven parables (Matthew 13:3 - 9, 24 - 30, 31 - 32, 33, 44, 45 - 46, 47). Seven Psalms are ascribed to David in the New Testament (Psalm 2, 16, 32, 41, 69, 95 and 109).

In the [book of Revelation](http://www.biblestudy.org/prophecy/why-study-bible-prophecy.html) there are seven churches, seven angels to the seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpet plagues, seven thunders and the seven last plagues. The first resurrection of the dead takes place at the 7th trumpet, completing salvation for the Church.

**How is number seven linked with God's annual Feast Days?**

There are [7 annual Holy Days](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/overview-of-holy-days.html), beginning with Passover and ending with the [Last Great Day](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/what-is-the-feast-of-tabernacles.html) (the day after the Feast of Tabernacles ends in the fall). The cycle of the holy days is completed in 3 festival seasons by the 7th month of the sacred calendar: [Passover and Unleavened Bread](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/passover-and-feast-of-unleavened-bread.html), 1st month; [Pentecost](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/message-of-pentecost.html), 3rd month; and [Trumpets](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/day-of-trumpets.html), [Atonement](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/day-of-atonement.html), [Tabernacles and Last Great Day](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/holy-days/what-is-the-feast-of-tabernacles.html), 7th month.

**Additional info on the Biblical Meaning of 7**

Jesus performed [seven miracles](http://www.biblestudy.org/bible-study-by-topic/new-testament-miracles.html) on God's holy Sabbath Day (which ran from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset), thus affirming its continued sacredness to God and necessity in the life of the believer.

1. Jesus healed the withered hand of a man attending synagogue services (Matthew 12:9)
2. At a Capernaum synagogue he casts out an unclean spirit that possessed a man (Mark 1:21)
3. Right after the above miracle Jesus heals Peter's wife's mother of a fever (Mark 1:29)
4. A woman attending synagogue, who was made sick by a demon for eighteen years, is released from her bondage (Luke 13:11)
5. At a Pharisee's house eating a meal with the host and several lawyers, Jesus heals a man with dropsy (Luke 14:2)
6. A man who is disabled and unable to walk is healed at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:8 - 9)
7. Jesus heals a man born blind at the [pool of Siloam](http://www.biblestudy.org/biblepic/picture-of-pool-of-siloam-where-jesus-healed-blind-man.html) (John 9:14)