

# **LESSONS FROM THE GREAT INTERCESSORS**

## **Why Some Intercessions Succeed While Others Fail**

**Shayne Payne**

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**Why some intercessors succeed while others fail?**

**Can intercession fail? Depending on our understanding of intercession. The most common definition today is to pray or say prayers on behalf of someone else. If that is the case, success is determined by the simple act of saying or offering prayers. But what about getting favorable answers to those prayers?**

**Consider this passage of scripture: ...Then the LORD saw it and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor... (Isaiah 59:15-16).**

**This was a time when the nation of Israel was in great pain. There would have been many crying out in prayer according to the traditions handed down to them; the same as it was in Jesus' day when the leadership made loud prayers in public. God's interaction with that nation was based on a covenant, with specific terms and conditions, blessings, and consequences.**

**As much as His heart longed to rescue them, the covenant had to be honored. Someone needed to rise and stand before God effectively. Consider the great intercessors; those who God Himself considered great. Listen carefully to His heart as prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel stood before Him on behalf of the people.**

*Then the LORD said to me: **Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable towards this people. Cast them out of My sight and let them go forth. And it shall be, if they say to you, where should we go? Then you shall tell them, Thus says the LORD: Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. (Jeremiah 15:1-2).***

*Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness, says the Lord GOD. If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land and they empty it and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, even though these three men were in it, as I live says the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered and the land would be desolate (Ezekiel 14:14-16).*

**Notice how God set apart these five men: Moses, Samuel, Noah, Daniel, and Job. During their days, these men all had significant roles in the work of God. They prevailed to finish their work well. God Himself highlighted these men as peculiar, while at the same time stated, that even if they were to stand to intercede for mercy for Israel, He would not relent with His intentions.**

**If the goal of intercession is to secure a favorable response from God to the prayers, then it is safe to infer that intercession can indeed fail. The act of intercession, therefore, must go**

beyond saying prayers. For the sake of this writing, consider the following definition of an intercessor: a person who stands in the gap to reconcile a broken covenant between God and man.

The gap is the distance between God and man. It is created as He withdraws His presence from the people and hides His face when they violate the terms of His covenant. There are many illustrative examples in the scriptures showing Him hiding His face from His beloved people. Consider the following: Isaiah 57:17; 59:2; 45:15; Deuteronomy 31:17-18; 32:20; Micah 3:4; Ezekiel 39:23-24. Also consider the following withdrawal due to iniquity or sin: Isaiah 59:2, 64:7 Jeremiah 6:8, Ezekiel 14:5, Joshua 7:11-12, Psalms 66:18.

People violate God's covenant when they are drawn away into the ways of the kingdom of darkness. Satan then claims the people legally as his slaves (see Romans 6:16). The intercessor must be able to stand in the gap between God and the people and work reconciliation. Success is gained when people renounce their wicked ways and are reconciled to God.

Throughout this book, we will take a forensic look at some of the powerful intercessors mentioned in the scriptures and seek to uncover the mystery why some intercessions succeeded while others failed.

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## **PART 1 MOSES THE INTERCESSOR**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **GOD AT WORK REDEEMING THE NATIONS TO HIMSELF**

Moses learned firsthand many of the mysteries of God. God Himself testified about His level of interaction with Moses...*if there is a prophet among you, I the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD* (Numbers 12:6-8).

The scene at Mount Sinai was the first time GOD physically revealed Himself to a nation. He came down on the mountain as an earth-shaking, consuming fire that engulfed the whole mountain, then spoke to the nation of Israel in an audible voice.

What was His purpose? Exodus 9:16 provides an amazing window into the work of God. Listen to Him talking to Pharaoh after Egypt had endured 6 plagues. Pharaoh was already willing to negotiate after the 4<sup>th</sup> plague.

*Then the LORD said to Moses, Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: Let My people go that they may serve Me. For at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, **that you may know there is none like me in all the earth.** Now if I had stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. But indeed, **for this purpose, I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth** (Exodus 9:13-16).*

He did not need to send all these plagues on the nation to bring them to submission. He could have sent just one pestilence and wiped them off from the earth. God was working on a much larger plan and He was patient to execute His plan. What was His plan?

### **The big redemptive work of God**

When the nations scattered after the tower of Babel (see Genesis 11:9), they also rejected the idea of serving this great God and instead gave themselves to other gods. His analysis of man at that time remained the same as it was before the great flood: *the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Genesis 6:5). *...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth* (Genesis 8:21).

Humanity needed redemption but free-will afforded man the right to choose God or to continue in darkness. As much as He would have wanted to, God could not have stepped in and forcibly changed man's heart. Man needed to be convinced He was the better choice and be willing to choose Him. God needed to make His case and therefore set Himself to work.

For this, He choose to overlook the established nations in their ignorance (see Acts 17:30) and opted for a new path. He chose to raise a nation for Himself and started with Abram. God separated that man and sent him to a land far from his ancestral home. Listen to the promises God gave to Abram at the time (see Genesis 12: 1-3, 7) and you will see all of them were not for Abram but was the work He was performing for Himself according to His plans.

- *Now the Lord said to Abram, get out of your country from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.*
- *I will make you a great nation*
- *I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing*
- *I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you*
- *In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed*
- *To your descendants, I give this land*

What was Abram's responsibility? Walk throughout the land and raise altars that invited God into the land. This was the process through which God could legally reclaim the land. The LORD also had an assignment for how Abram was to interact with his family.

*...for I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the ways of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He spoke to him (Genesis 18:19).*

The nation of Israel was only part of the gigantic puzzle that represented the work of God. He also needed to raise another nation to display His power and capture the attention of all the rest of the nations at once. Today that would be equivalent to a global media campaign using all its various platforms.

Egypt was raised as the superpower nation of that time for that very purpose. In the peak of Egypt's strength and glory, the eyes of the nations were focused on whatever happened there. This did not happen overnight. He patiently built that nation until it became the envy of all nations. It was in this stage of its glory that Egypt was ready to fulfill its destiny.

After about 650 years of patiently working, God now had His nation before Him in the specific place He chose. It was there at that mountain; we begin to see God personally interacting with this nation. It was there that He began to share with them the purpose they were raised to be a nation.

*And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; you have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation... (Exodus 19:3-6).*

To fulfill His redemptive plans, God needed a holy or set-apart nation that would be a kingdom of priests to serve Him exclusively. That would make them a special treasure to Him above all the other people of the earth.

Moses was sent to make this petition and secure a willing response from the people. That willingness to fulfill His heart's desire was the reason God covenanted Himself with the nation of Israel. In this covenant, the Israelites would not have to figure out anything about Him. He promised that they would hear His voice. His instructions to them would be clear.

It was in the preparation to meet with this God that they began to realize the price. The required two days of consecration was only the beginning. He even required a fence around the mountain as a physical barrier to prevent trespassing. God guards His presence well.

The encounter itself was much more than they bargained for. Moses stood as the mediator among them and started the conversation. God responded by an audible voice then went ahead to speak to His nation, 10 foundational principles that would thereafter govern their lives. He also discussed with Moses a supplementary set of principles that governed how His covenanted people were to interact with Him and with each other.

Note well, even though the experience terrified them, it was still up to them to agree to the terms of the covenant. God would not go further unless they agreed. What was being requested of them? Give up their old lives, identities, and understandings and give themselves wholeheartedly to the new identity being offered to them; to become a kingdom of priests; a holy nation.

Listen to their response after He asked for the leadership to come up to the mountain and covenant the nation to His terms: *So, Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, all the words the Lord has said we will do* (Exodus 24:3).

The very next day Moses built a symbolic altar, gathered the people again and read the terms of the covenant to them a second time. Their reply? *And they said, all that the Lord has said, we will do and be obedient* (Exodus 24). It is with this firm pledge that Moses led Aaron, his sons and 70 of the elders up to the mountain for a meeting that included a covenant meal with God.

With that level of Covenant secured, God now began to reveal over the next 7 chapters (see Exodus 25-31) to Moses the mysteries of drawing His presence and creating a place for His abode among man. This level of revelation was only available within the confines of this level of a covenant. It was while relaying these instructions to Moses the people grew restless and raised for themselves a golden calf to worship.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BREACH THROUGH THE EYES OF THE PEOPLE

How could they do such a wicked thing you say? Look at the scenario through their eyes. They for the first time in their lives were facing transition on several levels. They had just experienced freedom from slavery and were now out in the wilderness. While serving in Egypt, they had a structure for the allocation of their time. Their days were not wasted being idle. Now they were on the way to an unfamiliar, promised land. They had met the God of their fathers and were terrified of Him.

Israel at that time did not remember how to serve God the way their fathers did. The practice of offering a sacrifice on an altar and calling on the LORD was an abomination in Egypt and was strictly forbidden. Note the following scripture: *Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Go sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, it is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us* (Exodus 8:25-26)?

At the base of the mountain, the children of Israel were in a quandary. For 40 days they were subjected to the relentless onslaught of an enemy who wanted nothing more than to thwart this plan of God and steal the people for himself. The job of the leadership (Aaron) was to restrain them. This was part of the reason, God invited Aaron to go along with Moses. During the plagues, God was speaking to both Moses and Aaron. Aaron also learned God's voice and was in the position to restrain the people, reminding them of their covenant and or purpose with God.

Moses was away for a long time and the multitude in unison prevailed on Aaron with their request. They wanted to worship...to somehow interact with the great God who demonstrated power before their eyes...but how were they to worship? They were never taught how. Instead of restraining them, Aaron submitted to the demand. He, like them, was raised in Egypt and saw firsthand how the other people worshipped their gods. To address their demands, he made a golden calf; raised an altar before it; and, then proclaimed a feast.

Note in Exodus 32:5 Aaron dedicated a feast to the LORD. In his mind, the calf was a representative of the same God he experienced moving in power as he walked with Moses. It was something the people could relate to and worship without fear. Moses was gone and no one knew his fate. Aaron was reluctantly rising to take on the senior leadership role of this nation. This is often the case when man serves God with his best intentions, in his way.

#### What was Aaron forgetting?

To prevent such a blunder, God made sure to speak clearly to the people the following instructions. All the congregation heard and agreed to it. *...you shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments* (Exodus 20:3-6).

Just in case they did not fully understand the above-mentioned commands, God instructed Moses to tell the people, *you shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep, and your oxen. In every place where I record My name, I will come to you and I will bless you* (Exodus 20:23-24).

### **How were they being deceived?**

Exodus 32:4 shows it was the people who declared the calf to be the god who brought them out of Egypt. They followed the above instructions about the requirements for sacrifices but seemed to ignore the rest of the commands. They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, sat down to eat the meal offered to the calf then rose to play (see Exodus 32:5-6).

The multitude as a community accepted this as their god. Since no man can serve two masters (see Matthew 6:24) it means that they were also renouncing their newly minted covenant with the LORD. As part of the process, they offered a burnt offering to the idol to atone for their sins. What sins? The sins of abandoning their idols of Egypt and giving themselves to the LORD.

After the burnt offerings, they offered peace offerings. That would indicate that their sin offering or the atonement for their sins has been accepted. With the peace offerings, the multitude gave themselves to the spirit accepting it as their god. The spirit could now come among them legally and claim them as its people.

Spiritual transactions are always secured or bound with a covenant. These covenants are sealed with a covenant meal where both are seated at the table having agreed with the terms of the covenant. With a fully executed covenant, the spirit can then begin to command allegiance. The first would always be to publicly abandon the ways of the previous god and celebrate a new path. The spirit will also blind their eyes making it almost impossible for people to see another path. Israel immediately rose to debauchery. This was the way of that spirit.

### **What was being hidden from Aaron?**

Look at this from another vantage point. How did God see them? *They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped the molded image. Thus, they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their savior who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea* (Psalms 106:19-22).

*What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and yet You have crowned him with glory and honor* (Psalms 8:4-5). Israel could not see from this vantage point what they had become. That glory of God that once covered Israel was now replaced with another glory; the glory or likeness of the one they serve.

Aaron had little to no understanding of the principle of the prince. (This will be covered in the next chapter). Their protection was in obeying the instructions as given to them. God said to Moses; *Oh that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me always and keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and their children forever* (Deuteronomy 5:29)!

### **God's Assessment and Conclusion:**

As God did during the work in creation, He continually assesses His work to ensure it is good. Here He made an assessment and came to a startling conclusion.

His assessment:

- They are no longer my people (they gave themselves to the spirit behind the golden calf)
- They have corrupted themselves (their glory has been exchanged for another)
- They have quickly turned from the way they were commanded into another way
- They have made for themselves a molded calf and worshiped it
- They are offering sacrifices to the calf and attributed the deliverance from Egypt to it
- For sure they are a stiff-necked people

His Conclusion:

Because they are a stiff-necked people, He purposed to destroy them and raise another nation. (see Exodus 32:7-10). *Let Me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven, and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.* (Deuteronomy 9:14)

Raising another nation, one that would be mightier than the one before Him currently was going to take a considerable investment of time. It took Him approximately 650 years to raise this nation counting from the call of Abram to the day they left Egypt. God knew this and therefore was willing to wait another few hundred years for a new nation that would fulfill His heart's desire.

This new nation was to be mightier or perhaps of a greater population, but it would be vastly different in one sense. Instead of growing up in Egypt under the shadow of the demon gods, this new nation would be birthed and nurtured under the tangible cloud of God's presence. He stayed hovering over them showing the observing nations that the LORD encamps around those that fear Him.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PRINCE

This same principle is as true today as it was the day Moses brought the nation of Israel to the meeting with God at Mount Sinai. God demands complete obedience but does not always discuss the consequences of disobedience.

As an intercessor, I have heard many I consider to be great men or women of prayer stand and make an incredible prophetic declaration to the applause and agreement of the many in attendance. One of those prayer points that I found quite fascinating is where they bind the prince or principality over a given region. I often wondered what results they were expecting. Was the prince now dethroned and bound with chains after their prayer?

A study of the life of the ministry of Jesus Christ according to the Gospels reveals many of the principles He adhered to. One of which was whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven... (see Matthew 18:18). When discussing this kind of spiritual engagement, Jesus was careful to share the following: *When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils* (Luke 11:21-22, also found in Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27).

This is an amazingly loaded parable that is unpacked through the scriptures. We call this the principle of the prince. Who is this prince or strongman? He is a personality or spirit being who sits on a throne and rule over a given jurisdiction. The throne is established on covenants, including the necessary sacrifices and rituals, and is powered by a network of altars within the jurisdiction. When the altars are functioning as they should, the prince sits as the strongman guarding his house and enforcing his will over his subjects also called his goods. He sets up and enforces the way of life in the territory through an elaborate network we refer to as the System.

This System determines the customs conventions of territories and enforces them. Major cities such as New York City, Los Angeles and Miami all have a unique way of life, with their unique custom and codes even though they are all part of the same nation. These cities are different jurisdictions ruled by different princes.

I know people who lived in Africa as powerful men or women of prayer. There, it is normal for prayer meetings to last 4 to 6 hours without effort. When they moved to the western world, after a while they noticed their intensity of prayer waned, only to settle at a platform parallel with the prayer warriors in their new home. For sure they longed for deeper levels of prayer, but the System sets demands that weeds out this kind of prayer.

When they moved from one place to another, initially they held on to the ways of their previous residence but soon find out that that way is not acceptable in the new jurisdiction. They eventually begin the process of assimilation, submitting to the new way of life without realizing it.

This System is extremely powerful. It has the power to take captive, blind the people of God and harden their hearts. It allows people freedom in one area while restricting them in the areas that

have eternal value. This System, no matter how entrenched it is within a region, it can never serve the purposes of God. God's ways or opposing system is completely different.

When God asked His followers to come out from among them and be separated (see 2 Corinthians 6:17), this is what He was referring to. Set yourself apart from the grip of this System. The only way to do this is to submit to God. Only God knows the true power of the System and can see His people free from its holds.

God unfolded this mystery to the nation of Israel through the prophet Isaiah. At the time, they considered themselves God's people. As far as they understood, God was pleased with them. The temple and its sacerdotal activities were being conducted according to the teachings of Moses. Yet, He said, *Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For **My thoughts are not your thoughts nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD*** (Isaiah 55:6-8). Of course, this was not easily understood by people who considered themselves right before God.

If we are to carefully begin a thorough examination of our ways, it would be easy to see where the ways of the System have influenced us. Ultimately, it shapes the way we think about God and acts as a filter to the Word of God so we can bend it to suit our convictions. God calls this our wicked ways and demands that we turn from them.

Confession without the repentance, or act of turning away from that way, does not help at all. Why? It is not in man to direct his steps. He must be led. Whosoever he chooses to follow, he does so as a bondservant or slave. No slave has the authority to command their master. Rather, they submit to the will of the master (see Jeremiah 10:23 and Romans 6:16).

It is this premise Jesus used to challenge the religious leaders of His day. They claimed they were children of God and subsequently, children of Abraham. Jesus responded you are children of the devil and his desires you follow (see John 8:44).

Did they repent? No! Did they humble themselves? No! instead, they allowed their hearts to well up with pride and vehemently argued their position, calling the Son of God a demoniac who used demonic powers to minister to the people. This is what it looks like when the System blinds and hardens the hearts.

### **How the prince claims a region**

As said previously, the prince's throne is established on covenants, including the necessary sacrifices and rituals, and is powered by a network of altars within the jurisdiction. He cannot arbitrarily claim any region he wishes.

The land was given to man to have dominion. The scope of the dominion covered, the fish of the seas, the birds of the air, all cattle and beasts that walk the earth and everything that creeps. Man was given the power to rule over and to subdue it. That authority covered all aspects of creation. Nothing was exempted (see Genesis 1:26-28).

Adam and Eve stood in that authority and gave themselves to obey Satan. Manipulation? Yes. But the principles still stood. Their protection was in obedience. Their actions transferred the authority over all things to Satan to rule over them. Note his conversation with Jesus recorded in Luke 4:6. All the authority and their splendor over the kingdoms of the earth have been given to him and he now has to the power to give it to whomsoever he wishes.

Satan is very much aware that his rule is subject to man remaining subservient to him. Whenever man decides to reject him and turn to God, Satan power over the people breaks. To prevent this, he blinds the eyes so man cannot find his way back to God. He hardens the hearts so that even if a man can see the way, he will choose to remain in stubborn rebellion and demand that God come to terms with him.

Here, I want to reiterate, Satan and his kingdom has no power nor can exercise authority over a people unless they submit to his rule. Getting the people to walk away from the ways of God is the open door. How does he open that door?

Consider Cain and Abel's interaction with God. Abel offered a worthy sacrifice by faith. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that Abel heard God and knew what sacrifice would be accepted. God said to Cain if you do right, won't you be accepted? The question suggests Cain knew what was right and chose another path. That other path opens the door. God warned him of what he could not see. Sin had set its desire on Cain and was crouching at the door waiting for the right opportunity.

*Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. **But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death*** (James 1:13-15). Death here refers to separation from God and into the dominion of Satan.

According to the ways of the LORD, there are certain things a man can do that will defile the land. A defiled land is conducive to the reign of the kingdom of darkness which ultimately drives God's presence away. He is continually Holy and can never tolerate sin. Consider these two extremely specific examples He gave about the shedding of innocent blood and sexual immorality, and how prevalent they are in our communities today.

Always remember; to reject the way of God is to choose another's way. Cain rejected the opportunity to humble himself and be accepted by God. Instead, he chose to leave the presence of God and dwelled in darkness. He raised a family and built a name for himself. All of which were submitted to the prince of darkness.