

## **Forced Intercession**

Another person's spirit will often force itself upon our spirit more than we desire, whether from intense persecution or from our own overreaching intercession. As long as you do not act upon the emotions and spirit impressed upon you, by surrendering or lashing out, his spirit will not control you. If you have an attitude of forgiveness, your spirit will impact his spirit, eventually changing him and bringing about an easing of the attack.

The Jews tried to force Jesus to become their physical king, (John 6:15) then, in part because He refused, they forced Him upon a cross. The Jews who cried out for Him to be crucified said, "His blood be on us and on our children (Matthew 27:25)!" This took place in one of two different ways. Those who later repented received the glorious exchange of the blood covenant. Those who refused to repent received only the destruction called for by His blood. Graciously, God gave the nation almost the length of that entire generation to repent before their request was granted and their land destroyed.

Because of Christ's forgiving power at the cross, those who attacked Him were changed. Those who refused to change were eventually prevented from ever being able to persecute again. The way that Christ brought about these results, both the positive and the "negative," upon those who persecuted Him (which spiritually includes all of us) is the way we are also now instructed to emulate and is described in 1 Peter 2:19-24:

For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (1 Peter 2:19-24)."

Peter says we find favor and build up credit before God when we suffer unjustly. So

suffering unjustly, in the manner exemplified by Christ, benefits yourself, the persecutor, and/or the Kingdom.

The power of righteous suffering was exemplified by a church deacon named Stephen. As the accusers attacked, rather than defending himself, he preached the gospel of Jesus, whom they had crucified. As they heard his words, “they were cut to the quick, and . . . covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse (Acts 7:54,57).” As he died, he cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them (Acts 7:60)!” Their spirits could not resist the power of his love and their minds could not resist the power of his words, so with brute force they attempted to shut him out, first covering their ears and then silencing the speaker. But it was too late, spirit had impacted spirit, and Stephen had not lost.

One of the persecutors that day was a young man named Saul. Saul could not get rid of Stephen’s words either, though he tried even harder than most, trying to silence the words of every Stephen, going beyond even the borders of Israel to shut down every Christian. His soul continued in turmoil, until years later, this man was knocked to the ground and given a vision of the One whom he had been persecuting. This man, whom we now know as Paul, evangelized the greater part of southern Europe and ended up writing almost two-thirds of our New Testament. Stephen will be given a major portion of the credit for those accomplishments, and all he had to do was stand and continue to love and intercede.

Paul had experienced what he would later write about: “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. ‘But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17-21).” Paul had felt those coals for years. What was begun by Stephen was later finished on the road to Damascus: evil was overcome by good.

Fortunately, Stephen loved rather than condemned. He followed Christ’s instructions to

“not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned (Luke 6:37).” Right next to this verse, Christ said that “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher (Luke 6:39-40).” From the context, Jesus is saying that those who judge have become like the one they are judging, the one who strikes back is becoming like the striker, and the persecuted who responds in the manner of his attacker is being controlled by his persecutor. As soon as you allow anger to control you, you have become like your attacker (who is now your teacher), and Jesus went so far as to say that you would never be any better than your attacker (at least until you repent).

When a person hates you, he pours hate out of his spirit upon your spirit. The normal response is to drink in that hate, increase it, and send it back at the other person, whereupon they, in turn, etc . . . But, if you do not give in to his hatred or anger, but trust in God, those emotions may come upon you, but they will not control you. As soon as you allow those emotions to create even one action, even as small as Moses’ disobedience, you have allowed the emotions from the other person to control you, and your fate becomes tied to his.

When a person uses force against you, then in accordance to the law – an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth – you have a right to use equivalent force against him. The difference in the New Testament is that we take the opportunity to use this right to forcefulness to force blessings upon those who persecute.

The primary blessings we force upon them are holiness and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In this, we are to be just as forceful as they!