

Intersec (t) ion

We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Christ's life intersects with our life when He intercedes for us. Intercession also occurs whenever our lives, in turn, intersect with others. But we must only reach out to the degree that Christ has reached us! Even if we have only accepted Christ as Lord and Savior, we can help others receive Christ. After we receive the faith that brings about healing, we impart this faith to others. To the degree we have received holiness in our life, we pass it on!

We cannot help others win battles we have not yet been willing to fight!

Paul concludes the passage about putting on our spiritual armor by describing one of the times of its most important need, during intercession. He says, "To this end keep watch and persevere, always interceding for all God's people (Ephesians 6:18 NEB)." But we must receive power from Christ before we engage in this battle! "Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-11)," says Paul in his introduction to this section. People without armor do lose in this warfare, and the risk is potentially more serious than mere physical death!

During the 1980s, an intercessory movement swept this country, a powerful movement, but one in which also a great many people became flaky and ultimately destructive to themselves and others. The reason: interceding for others beyond the praying person's ability to handle, warring for a soul without first putting on armor, and trying to pour into others what had not yet been poured into the intercessor.

The intercessory power we have been given is immense. Intercessory prayer births a person spiritually in the same way that a mother births her child physically. Paul said to the believers in Galatia, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (Galatians 4:19 KJV)." Through the power of prayer, we can dramatically change people's character and nature.

Because of the incredible power of intercessory prayer, many weekend warriors have attempted to play soldier. But Jesus' instruction to the disciples, even though they had been personally trained by the Commander-in-chief Himself, was that until they had been baptized with the power of the Holy Spirit, they were "not to leave Jerusalem, but to *wait* for what the Father had promised, 'which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me; . . . you shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:4,8).'" We wait until we have been empowered. To the degree we have been empowered, and only to that degree, we wage war.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds (2 Corinthians 10:4 KJV)," but they are useless until we put them on. Armored, we cannot be defeated; unarmored, we are prey for our enemy. In the power of Christ, we cannot fail; but those who go forth in their own power, seek destruction. "Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31)," but those who trust in their own strength are destined to fail miserably.

To wait requires humility and trust, an implicit acknowledgment of the need for God's help. Those who march forth armed only with pride will quickly find it a poor weapon with which to fight off the attacks of the enemy, and will discover instead shame and defeat.

All this has been said, not that the believer should *beware* of intercession, but rather that the soldier should *be aware* of the dangers. There is no such thing as a battle with no danger of loss. There is, in Christ, the certainty of victory, *if* we wage war according to His plan and guidance, using His armor and power. We are Christian soldiers, and as such, commanded to fight, but according to His instructions and in alignment with His empowerment.

We are commanded to intercede for others, despite the inherent risks which are present if we deviate from the guidelines. In Galatians 6:1-2 (NKJV), after Paul reminded the Galatians that he had interceded for them until Christ was formed within, Paul then commands that, in response to the grace given them, "if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual

restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Christ bore Paul's burden; Paul bore the Galatian believers' burdens; in the same way, the Galatian believers were to bear the burdens of others. But when interceding for others (through prayer, counsel, or both), there is risk involved, which is why the believer is to consider, or watch, himself. With cautious prudence, we are commanded to intercede for others, for this is the law of Christ.

The law of Christ is loving others. Interceding for others is the supreme form of love. It is pouring yourself into another person and giving what you have been given. Which is why only those who have been empowered are commanded to intercede. Only those who are spiritual are instructed to bear the burdens of others; the rest are commanded to wait (expectantly) for the empowering.