

Radical Prayers: Praying out of the Ordinary

Moses the Intercessor

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Exodus 32:30-35

James says the tongue is a world of evil. It is set on fire by hell. With it we bless God and curse men (Jas. 3:5). However, we can use our tongue to intercede for people instead of talk about people. Moses was a man who interceded for his people when they sinned a great sin.

Exodus 32:30-35 NIVO

³⁰ The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." ³¹ So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. ³² But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

³³ The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ³⁴ Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin." ³⁵ And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

Moses made intercession before the people to save them from destruction. He sought to avert God's judgment because the people had turned to idolatry. God had brought them out of Egypt. God has rescued them by his grace and mercy. God had worked power and wonders to set them free from captivity. The people had taken of the Passover, taking the blood and body of the lamb to secure their freedom from bondage. They had crossed through the waters of baptism. Yet, here they are suddenly turning back to their old ways. They made a golden calf. They even got Aaron the high priest to help them fashion one out of gold. When Moses came down from the mountain of the Lord, he found them dancing in the drunken stupor of paganism. Moses had received the ten commandments written on stones. He threw them down and broke them in his anguish over their sin. The very first commands - You shall have no other gods. You shall not make an engraved image –

they had broken already. How could this people be God's redeemed people to go into the promised land?

1. An intercessors steps between heaven and hell for others.

Moses prays for atonement for the people's sin.

When Moses came down from the mountain after spending 40 days before God, the people had set up a golden calf. Aaron had fashioned a calf of gold. The people were dancing and partying around the camp worshiping the idol. Moses was so upset, he threw down and broke the tablets God had inscribed with His finger. The people had committed a great sin before God. As a result of the worship of the golden calf, Moses burned it in the fire. He then dumped what remained in the water and made the people drink it.

The next day, Moses went up to the Mountain of the Lord and pray for their atonement. It is this prayer that we are interested in. Moses makes intercession before God for the people. He didn't have to do it. He could have just let the people perish in the desert. Instead, Moses interceded for them before God.

As an intercessor, Moses stood between God and the people to spar them from judgment. If you would receive it, Moses stood between heaven and hell.

J. R. W. Stott, has a book on preaching, titled: *Between Two Worlds*. The idea is that when the preacher preaches, he stands between heaven and hell for the people. This is essentially the idea of being an intercessor. An intercessor is someone who goes before God on behalf of the needs of others. You intercede for others when you pray for them. When you pray for them, you are doing what Moses did. Moses climbed back up the mountain to speak to God for the people. He knew the people had sinned and they were subject to God's judgment. So, he went to plea for them that God would not destroy them.

Some people pray for others, others prey upon others. The vowels in those two words are different, and the outcomes are also different. When someone does something wrong, many people love to gossip about them. When you gossip, you prey upon people. You consume them in judgment instead of intercede for them in mercy.

Our task is to learn to turn the energy of talking **about** people into energy of talking to God **for** people. Moses already knew the wrong the people had done. He did not need to talk about it in his tent with Joshua. Moses also knew that God knew what

they had done. Moses knew the only good thing he could do was to go and intercede for them before God.

Moses stood between heaven and hell for the people. Do you realize that God has saved you to be his agent to intercede for others. Don't prey on people. Pray for people!

2. A Christlike intercessor is willing to risk themselves for others.

Moses offers his soul as substitution for atonement.

Moses asks God to forgive the people. Yet, he goes even further. Moses offers to the Lord that if he is unwilling to forgive the people for their sin, then he would offer his own soul to be cursed in their place. Moses was willing to make his own life an atonement for the people's sin.

I call this a radical prayer. The reason I see this as a radical prayer is because Moses is willing to have his name blotted out of God's book of Life forever so the people could be forgiven. Moses was willing to be the sacrificial lamb to save the people.

Francis Frangipane says, "If you want to judge someone, you must first be willing to lay down your life for them." Francis is looking at this example of Moses' prayer with this idea. Moses does not speak about the wrong the people did to others so as to build himself up in self-righteousness. Instead, he knows they are in peril before God. So, he prays for them before God. What is more, he offers to lay his own self in hell if it will save the people.

By offering himself for them in atonement, Moses becomes a forerunner of Christ (Deu. 18:15; Acts 3:22; 7:37). Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophet who is like Moses. Jesus went to the cross to stand between heaven and hell for us. His blood pleaded before holy God so we could be redeemed from sin.

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21 NIVO)

How willing are to pray for the lost?

How much do you care for those who have done wrong to intercede instead of condemn?

3. An intercessor keeps pleading for people.

Moses continued to plea for his people. God sent a plague and destroyed some of the people. Yet, the crisis remained between God and the people. So, Moses continued to plead for the people.

God told Moses that He would not go with the people into the new land because the people were stiff-necked (Exo. 33:3). Yet, God said he would send an angel, but if he went with them he might destroy them because they were such a stiff-necked people. Moses kept pleading for God to go with them. Moses knew they needed God's presence. They needed to be forgiven and renewed in the grace of the Lord enough that God would remain with them. An angel was great, but they needed God.

Later, when Moses asks to see God's glory, God has him go up on the mountain. There, God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock, and God passed by Moses. God proclaimed his name and revealed his glory as he passed by Moses. Here was Moses' mountain top experience with God. You could not get any greater than this. Yet, immediately, Moses prays again to the Lord that the Lord would go with his people.

Exodus 34:8-9 NIVO

⁸ Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. ⁹ "O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes," he said, "then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."

Moses did not make the personal experience to be about himself. He kept pleading for his people to have God's presence.

There are many times we must continue in prayer for people. Some people may change quickly. Others may take years to change.

I remember having a conversation with a former member of our church. He had been praying for a friend for over 25 years. He had several friends he had prayed for like this. His friend had resisted the Lord for so long. Yet, after a long time, this man turned his life over to God. This is persevering prayer!

Today, the great concern of many is the fear of the Coronavirus. As of now, the World Health Organization says that 90,000 people have been infected and 3100 have died. Coronavirus is a group of common viruses which includes the common cold. However, sometimes some of them migrate from animals to humans resulting in greater problems. There have been many such viruses over the last few years, including SARS and MERS viruses. It is a virus which could create a large amount of harm. However, from what I

have read, the virus is not a greater threat than the flu, which this year has already killed 18,000 in the US. The highest fatalities seem to be with those who have weakened immune systems and the elderly. There are calls for prayer for God to overcome this virus. And we should pray to this end. God is able to overcome this virus. However, I will not tell you that God will end it just because we pray. God has to answer His own purposes for why He allows such an event to happen. Do pray. Pray for yourself. Pray for others. Such an event will test us in the realm of our praying.

Moses prayed for God to release the people from judgment. God did not release them from the plague. The plague was a chastisement to remind the people they must not leave God. Yet, God did not allow all of the people to be destroyed, which was an answer to Moses's prayer.

We are living in an age of great rebellion against God. We are a nation in which national leaders have kicked the God of the Bible out of their policies. We are a nation which wants open sexuality. We kill our unborn for profit. Our culture has not regard for God. We do whatever we want and expect churches to go along with it. The people have turned their backs on God. What do you expect God to do? Come rescue us from danger when we turn our backs on God

Pray! Don't Prey!

Our nation needs our prayer. Will you be a intercessor for the nation like Moses?