

Intercessory prayer is standing in the gap between the pain of the world, and the shalom of our God

The Kingdom of God is both
Now and Not Yet

The pain of the world

The Shalom of God

The pain of the world

[Standing in the Gap in Intercession]

The Shalom of God

If God is so good and so powerful, why does he have to have intercessors to make his shalom enter the pain of the world?

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. He is always wrestling for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills. For I testify about him that he works hard for you, for those in Laodicea, and for those in Hierapolis.

Colossians 4:12-13, CSB

“I so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills”

The Lord spoke to Moses: “Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves an image of a calf.

They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, 'Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.' ”
The Lord also said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone, so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

Exodus 32:7-10, CSB

¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God: “Lord, why does your anger burn against your people you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and eliminate them from the face of the earth’?”

Turn from your fierce anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for your people. ¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—you swore to them by yourself and declared,

‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’ ” ¹⁴ So the Lord relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

Exodus 32:11-14, CSB

‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.’ ” ¹⁴ So the Lord relented concerning the disaster he had said he would bring on his people.

Exodus 32:11-14, CSB

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides—inscribed front and back.

¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was God's writing, engraved on the tablets.

¹⁷ When Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses,

“There is a sound of war in the camp.”
¹⁸ But Moses replied,
It’s not the sound of a victory cry
and not the sound of a cry of defeat;
¹⁹ I hear the sound of singing!

As he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became enraged and threw the tablets out of his hands, smashing them at the base of the mountain. He took the calf they had made, burned it up, and ground it to powder. He scattered the powder over the surface of the water and forced the Israelites to drink the water.

Exodus 32:15–20, CSB

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV

²² “Don’t be enraged, my lord,” Aaron replied. “You yourself know that the people are intent on evil. ²³ They said to me, ‘Make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!’

²⁴ So I said to them, ‘Whoever has gold, take it off,’ and they gave it to me. When I threw it into the fire, out came this calf!”

Ex 32:22–24, CSB

³⁰ The following day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a grave sin. Now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I will be able to atone for your sin.”

³¹ So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh, these people have committed a grave sin; they have made a god of gold for themselves. ³² Now if you would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book you have written.”

The Lord replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will erase from my book. Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about; see, my angel will go before you. But on the day I settle accounts, I will hold them accountable for their sin.” And the Lord inflicted a plague on the people for what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

Exodus 32:30-35, CSB

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

Hebrews 3:3–6, ESV

²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:23–25, ESV

Intercession: An Active Participation of the Gospel

If God is so good, why does he have to have intercessors to make his goodness enter the pain of the world?

intercession changes things

“This text lifts up the extraordinary importance of human speaking and acting in the shaping of the future. Simply to leave the future in the hands of God is something other than what God desires. Simply to leave the future in the hands of the people is not a divine desire either.”

- Terrence E. Fretheim

intercession changes us

“History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being... By means of our intercessions we veritably cast fire upon the earth and trumpet the future into being.”
– Walter Wink

What stood out to you in particular in this message?

Have you ever found yourself saying "I'll pray for you" without truly meaning it? What keeps us from moving beyond surface-level prayer promises to genuine intercession?

What do you think fervent, contending prayer looks like practically? How might we balance passionate prayer with avoiding unhealthy emotional pressure or performance in our prayer life?

When you think about "standing in the gap" for others today, what situations or people come to mind that need this kind of advocacy in prayer? How does Moses's example challenge or encourage you?