Power of Intercessory Prayer

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And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you,
that he may sift you as wheat: **But I have prayed for thee**,
that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted,
strengthen thy brethren.
Luke 22:31-32

Introduction:

A. This subject has several angles we want to consider, but let us emphasize highest our Lord's example.
B. Our Lord is the great Intercessor (mediator and priest), and we want both His legal and practical work.
C. We want to learn what we can for our own use, for its power and powerful examples are in the Bible.
D. With constant prayer, we desire to see all we should on every Bible topic but no more than we should.
E. We trust distinguishing words of the Bible, even if the distinction may seem minor compared to others.
F. All intercessory prayer is prayer, but not all prayer is intercessory in appeal, content, language, length.

The Event

A. Read the full context (Matt 26:20-35; Mark 14:17-31; Luke 22:21-34; John 13:18-38).
B. The Lord's Supper ending, Peter boasted to Jesus that he would follow Him at any cost.
C. All the other apostles made similar boasts, but Peter as leader became more vehement.
D. They also had conflict as to who should be accounted the greatest – pride and ambition.
E. Jesus showed intense care and warning for Peter by repeating his name, Simon, Simon.
F. Not only did Jesus repeat his name for the gravity of the situation, He also used, *behold*.
G. Consider well how thorough Jesus was with Peter to seek his attention for the great trial.
H. The Lord knew Satan's desire (likely a request) to have and sift all the disciples *(you)*.
I. Six second-person pronouns: first two plural *(you)*, four singular *(thee, thy, thou, thy)*.
J. Sifting wheat (not flour in the kitchen) was a violent action to separate wheat and chaff.
K. Pertaining to the apostles, the devil wanted to shake their faith to the point of collapse.
L. Satan's plan to destroy apostolic faith by the sifting was used by God to strengthen faith.
M. The devil's ultimate goal was more than causing Peter's sin but to make him a castaway.
N. Jesus specifically saw danger to Peter and singled him out by name and pronoun *(thee)*.
O. The Lord had already prayed (*have prayed*) as intercessor to save Peter from the trial.
P. Jesus' precious words to Peter should greatly encourage us, ***But I have prayed for thee***.

Q. The Lord did not pray to prevent the trial, but for Peter to survive it and not lose faith.
R. Jesus knew the outcome of His prayer: Peter would be converted from his faithless fear.
S. Peter's courage failed him, but his faith did not, for he repented quickly and thoroughly.
T. Peter would be converted back to full commitment to Christ and lead the apostles after.
U. Not only would Peter be recovered from the trial, but he was to be the apostolic leader.
V. Jesus indicated twice, here and later in John, that His goal for Peter was a larger role.
W. His bold, fearless leadership is seen in Acts 1 to replace Judas and Acts 2 at Pentecost.
X. Jesus, like a pitying father, helped Peter repent by a look during trial (Luke 22:60-62).
Y. He also sent further encouragement by the women after His resurrection (Mark 16:7).
Z. His gentle rebuke of Peter included clear confidence in his leadership (John 21:15-19).

The Lessons

A. This is intercession clearly stated by the Lover of our souls, ***But I have prayed for thee***.
B. The apostles failed two tests – confidence of not sinning and ambitious pride to be great.
C. Get over yourself and any boasting or confidence of Christian godliness (I Cor 10:12).
D. They also argued about being the greatest, giving in to pride and ambition (I Tim 3:6).
E. Satan wanted to sift all eleven, but Jesus saw particular danger or vulnerability to Peter.
F. The devil knows you better than you do, so he can easily pick sifting that will get you.
G. Note careful use of different pronouns to speak directly to Peter; He knows you also.
H. We use the KJV, for it divides second-person pronouns unlike modern versions … here.
I. Satan cannot act independently; he must get permission like with Job and Peter here.
J. Excessive fear of the devil as superstitious cultures often have is foolish and harmful.
K. The devil is not an overwhelming enemy, for resistance will send him packing (Jas 4:7).
L. Trials are tools to separate the good from bad, with sifting a violent action to separate.
M. Like separating grain from chaff, trials are painful but necessary to see and reject faults.
N. Jesus knows exactly how much you can take and limits it to just that much (I Cor 10:13).
O. You may be unaware of the danger, like Peter, yet Jesus prayed in advance for success.
P. Our faith can drop dramatically, like Peter's fleshly weakness, but it does not fail totally.
Q. Conversion is a wonderful thing – turning back to faithful obedience when error is seen.
R. It can occur by our Lord's prayer, Spirit prompting, or help from brothers (Jas 5:19-20).
S. Conversion is a life-long process – learning how to please God with more conviction.
T. The 'R' factor, godly sorrow and repentance, can completely restore (II Cor 7:10-11).
U. Failures do not preclude future kingdom greatness, as Peter here and David elsewhere.
V. Even in David's prayer of confession, he looked ahead to greater usefulness (Ps 51:13).
W. Our safety and security relies on the intercession of Christ, not on our own faithfulness.

X. Be especially vigilant after a spiritual high, like Peter and apostles after the Last Supper.

Y. Do not judge Peter or yourself harder than Jesus, for Peter's failure was put behind him.

Z. Failure is not final with an Advocate, for Jesus is already praying for recovery (I Jn 2:1).

The Doctrine

A. Intercession is one person pleading for another person to the Judge hearing the case.

B. **Intercession.** Action of interceding or pleading on behalf of another; mediation.

C. **Intercede**. To interpose or intervene on behalf of another or for the help of others.

D. Bible usage: *intercession* (9 occurrences), *intercessions* (1), *intercessor* (1), found here: Is 53:12; 59:16; Jer 7:16; 27:18; 36:25; Rom 8:26-27,34; 11:2; I Tim 2:1; Heb 7:25.

E. It is not strictly mediation, or reconciling two parties, but pleading for one to the other.

F. Recall Abraham appealing to the Judge of all the earth to do right about Lot and family.

G. Our chief example for this study is Jesus praying for Peter to survive and be great again.

H. It can be prayer for another person, by pleading to God for them (Jer 7:16; 27:18), which is quite different from most prayers, which are for the person praying, rather than others.

I. The Lord not only allows praying for others but encourages and expects it (Eph 6:18).

J. It can be prayer against another person, as Elijah prayed against Israel (Rom 11:2-3).

K. Jesus made intercession, literally prayed, for His murderers (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34).

L. The Spirit by intercession helps our prayers in fervency and content (Romans 8:26-27).

M. Not many are called to preach or lead, but every believer can choose to be an intercessor.

The Distinction

A. Can we identify the difference between praying or interceding for a person or group?

B. Here are four: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks (I Tim 2:1-3).
   1. **Supplication** = humble begging and imploring beyond ordinary language of prayer.
   2. **Prayer** = ordinary language to ask God for His blessing upon a nation and its rulers.
   3. **Intercession** = represent or stand in for another person to appeal to God for them.
   4. **Giving of thanks** = express appreciation and gratitude for government and officials.
   5. We choose to make distinctions in these four forms of address to God to be thorough.
   6. While others make psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs all the same, we do not do so.

C. Most prayer without proper care is personal about the one praying rather than for others.
   1. So one of the first steps to become an intercessor is to focus prayer more on others.
   2. Just as in writing we are to limit sentences starting with 'I', let us reduce it in prayer.

D. Prayer for another person/group has at least appeal, content, language, length, fervency.
   1. Appeal is calm concern for some need without too much attention on the individual.
   2. Content is usually for lighter things like health, job, house, marriage, children, etc.

3. Language is ordinary prayer speech making mention of needs and then moving on.
4. Length is short and to the point like Paul's description of making mention of things.
5. Fervency is ordinary passion only without unusual emotion or conscientious energy.

E. Intercessory prayer may be different from ordinary prayer in at least the five measures.
1. Appeal is desperate pleading with great personal care for the object maybe with vow.
2. Content is something drastic and very important with various reasoning employed.
3. Language is dramatic and emotional to garner God's attention by use of any reason.
4. Length is longer and well beyond just mention as if appealing repeatedly to a judge.
5. Fervency is intensely passionate with extreme effort to intervene for the need/object.

F. Intercessory prayer may be further defined or described by other subjective measures.
1. It is standing in the gap in a strong way by prayer to invoke God's help (Ezek 22:30).
2. While all intercession is prayer, most prayers are not the intercessory kind as here.
3. Rather than ask for a simple fix or need, intercession wants to break through to God.
4. Not just a mild request, it is intense and violent effort against evil or appeal for help.
5. It is less about our desires and more for God's desires or need for God by a person.
6. It is the most spiritual content and form of prayer and cannot be done without Him.
7. It may be seen as bringing about God's will in a situation rather than asking for ours.
8. It requires spiritual maturity from selfishness to sacrificial love for those not praying.

G. Examples might help, though getting this specific may cross boundaries between them.
1. *Lord, thank you for today; help John Doe get over his sickness to get back to work.*
2. *Glorious God, do not linger to apprehend our children's hearts to turn them to thee.*

H. Can we move from easy, passive, casual prayer to passionate, sacrificial, violent prayer?

I. It can be confession of the sins of others e.g. Job for children, Daniel for Israel, etc., etc.

J. Job went to God with sacrifices for his children, much more than asking for a better job.

More Examples

A. God listed five intercessors when saying it was too late for Judah (Jer 15:1; Ezek 14:14); these five warriors that could not save Judah were Moses, Samuel, Noah, Daniel, Job.

B. Some examples of intercessory prayer changed history, nations, or similar large things.

C. Moses saved Israel during 40 years with them (Ex 32:11-14,31-32; Numbers 14:13-20).

D. Samuel burned a sucking lamb to intercede against the Philistines (I Sam 7:7-12; 12:23).

E. Noah saved his family by righteous living / preaching (Gen 7:1; Heb 11:7; II Peter 2:5).

F. Daniel confessed Israel's sins and prayed God to end 70 years captivity (Dan 9:1-19).

G. Job prayed to save his three friends and constantly for his children (Job 42:7-10; 1:4-5).

H. Abraham failed negotiating but saved Lot and family anyway (Gen 18:20-33; 19:1-23).

I. David paid for sacrifices to interpose himself to stop a terrible plague (I Chr 21:13-30).

J. Jesus before the cross prayed the greatest intercessory prayer (Jn 17:1,9,11,15,20-21).

K. Our Lord on the cross made intercession for His enemies (Luke 23:32-37; Isaiah 53:12).

L. Stephen followed his Lord's example to intercede for those stoning him (Acts 7:59-60).

M. Jerusalem Church prayed continuously (intercession?) for Peter's release (Acts 12:5).

N. Paul's prayer for elect Jews to be converted is hard to fully grasp (Rom 9:1-5; 10:1-5).

O. Paul prayed for the churches of the N.T., but Ephesus was special (Ephesians 3:14-19).

P. Epaphras labored fervently in prayers for the Colossians' spiritual perfection (Col 4:12).

Legal & Practical

A. It is important to rightly divide our Lord's legal intercessory work from His practical.

B. As our great high priest after the order of Melchisedec, He intercedes for us both ways.

C. Jesus is the only legal mediator between God and man, and He makes legal intercession for us before God with His precious blood and perpetual life and personal sympathy.
   1. There is only one way to heaven and only one name for it (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
   2. He paid an infinite price to justify and redeem us by death (Rom 5:9; Hebrews 9:12).
   3. He pleads our case as High Priest before God (Romans 5:10; 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:24).
   4. His legal intercession is part of His death and resurrection to put away sins forever.
   5. If His death accomplished great legal things, His life will guarantee them forever.
   6. The Holy Spirit used "much more" and "yea rather" for the superiority of His life over His death in some respect, and we see the guarantee of all needed blessings.
   7. Jesus' intercession is His guarantee to the uttermost – the farthest and most extreme reaches of our need for a Savior – by His perpetual life for us (Hebrews 7:25).
   8. Forever our high priest and sacrifice assures final salvation (Rom 5:9-10; 8:29-37).
   9. For much more about this saving work of Jesus from a legal, forensic angle … You Need a Lawyer (2 Sermons).

D. His practical intercession is for us on a daily basis (I John 2:1; Heb 4:14-16; 2:17-18).
   1. He is our Advocate with the Father, which is precisely the role of an intercessor.
   2. **Advocate**. One whose profession it is to plead the cause of any one in a court of justice; a counselor; a counselor. One who pleads, intercedes, or speaks for, or in behalf of, another; a pleader, intercessor, defender.
   3. We use lawyer or attorney for mediator, advocate, counselor, intercessor, etc., etc.
   4. He was made like us to understand us and our temptations (Heb 2:17-18; 4:15-16).
   5. This is priestly work to stand between God and people (Num 16:46-48; Heb 5:1-5).
   6. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, prays for us and with us as intercessor (Rom 8:26-27).

The Objects

A. We should pray for our enemies, which would be intercessory prayer (Matt 5:43-48).
B. We should pray for all saints, those in and out of our own church (Ephesians 6:18).
C. We should pray for ministers, those known and unknown to us (Col 4:3; Eph 6:19).
D. We should pray for rulers and all that are in civil authority over us (I Timothy 2:1-2).
E. We should pray for our church and the kingdom of Jesus worldwide (Psalm 122:6-9).
F. We should pray for each other for mutual healing after confessing faults (James 5:16).
G. We should pray for our children as Job did continually for his children (Job 1:4-5).

The Importance

A. Prayer is one of the marks of higher ground and growth in grace for churches … Higher Ground (20 Sermons).
B. If prayer is the most power thing you can do, then true love would intercede for others.
C. If prayer changes things in God's disposition and actions, then benefit others by it.
D. Prayer can turn away God's wrath, heal in various ways, and bring God's will on earth.
E. Intercession is love in action, a selfless concern for others, as Jesus did and does for us.
F. It blesses and strengthens the intercessor as shown by Job for his friends (Job 42:10).

The Obstacles

A. Carnality, minding earthly things, is a great enemy of prayer in general and intercession.
B. Unconfessed sin means that God will not hear you, no matter how or how well you pray.
C. Selfishness is thinking about yourself way too much that ignores great benefit to others.
D. Laziness falls back on habits and routines in prayer to neglect conviction for this topic.
E. Impatience is ungodly haste in prayer that does not take time to slow down for others.

Conclusion:

A. Let us not complicate this topic. The goal is to appreciate our Lord and to learn to pray more like Him.
B. His life after His resurrection is given great importance in the Bible for saving us by His intercession.
C. If prayer is as powerful as we believe to change things, then we want to always remember intercession.
D. Admit now before God that prayer is important, you need to do more of it, and make some intercessory.
E. As a church we have prepared before and again now a list of our names to give you some for each day.

For Further Study:

A. *You Need a Lawyer* … You Need a Lawyer (2 Sermons).
B. *Effectual Prayer …* Effectual Prayer (8 sermons).
C. Power of Prayer

D. Wrestling with God.
E. *Fasting …* The Doctrine of Fasting.
F. *Facets of Salvation* … Facets of Our Salvation (12).