

True Priesthood (through intercessory repentance)

by Don Rogers

For a number of years, I have been concerned about the Church's simplistic definition of the priesthood of the believer. Most of us were taught that our priesthood involved direct access to God; meaning we do not have to approach Him through another human being. We were also taught that we can come boldly into His presence. All of this is true and can be strongly supported from the scriptures. But there is much more involved in our priesthood than that which has been stated.

The Christian's spiritual heritage as a priest can be traced back to the Old Testament where God has provided a very clear model for us. There is a wonderful continuity of revelation in the scriptures. **1 Peter 2:5, 9** *"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

If God does not supersede an OT principle in the New Testament, than the original principle remains valid.

I. The Priesthood Model

God directed that **Aaron** be consecrated as the first high priest of Israel. God established him as the model for priesthood. Priests were to be guardians of the relationship that God wanted His people to honor. The high priest represented Israel before God and they also represented God to Israel.

In Leviticus 16, we are provided with detailed insight concerning the high priest's duties. On the Day of Atonement he prepared himself through physical cleansing and then offered a sin offering to make atonement for himself and his family. Following this, he interceded on behalf of the people as he once again entered into the presence of God. Aaron received from the people two male goats. One goat was sacrificed as a sin offering and the other was made a scapegoat upon which the sins of the people were placed and then sent out into the wilderness to die.

The point that I am making is that the priest first dealt with his own sin and then he came before God with the sins of the people. Not only does our priesthood involve bold, direct access to God, but it also involves bringing their specific sins to God. We stand on their behalf as the priest did and confess their sins and ask for God's grace to be extended to them so they may recognize their sins and repent. As priests we come to our high priest, Jesus Christ, who is God, and we draw upon His grace which is released powerfully because of the shedding of His precious blood.

Jesus, as our great high priest, sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. We follow his model and make intercession for others, confessing their sins to God. In so doing, we actually bless them. We have a term for this practice in our ministry. We call it "**intercessory repentance.**"

Even **Job**, who lived during the period of the patriarchs, before there was a priesthood, performed priesthood ministry on behalf of his family. The biblical records states, ***The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."*** (Job 2:3)

We are told that Job's sons would have feasts in their homes and invite their sisters to eat and drink with them. Job would send and have them purified. ***Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.***

Job was interceding to God on behalf of his family in case they had sinned against God. This is "**intercessory repentance**" being practiced by the head of the family. All through scripture, we see God honoring the priestly headship He has ordained.

II. The Model of Forgiveness and Love

Intercessory repentance is not possible unless there is true forgiveness in our own hearts. We cannot go through the motions of intercessory repentance and be able to minister effectively. We who have received the abundance of God's grace have to let go of judgment towards those who have hurt us no matter what they have done to us or to others, because that is what the Lord would have us do.

Instead, we have to adopt the Lord's way of separating the person from their sin and show them love, because God loves them. It is often difficult at first, because it does not seem fair. Why should we, who have experienced the injustice, intercede on behalf of those who hurt us and show love to them? Why should they get off so easy? Because, it is what Jesus would do. This is what grace is all about. Strange as it may seem, we will also benefit if we are obedient in this manner. Through this act of forgiving grace, we will begin to see the person in a new light and we will also be released from the inner turmoil that has controlled us so powerfully. I am convinced that God provided this approach to bring much healing to His people. The committed practice of intercessory repentance within the body of Christ alone will bring down many barriers and bring about considerable healing and unity that could not be achieved through dialog alone.

In our ministry, we are constantly dealing with various forms of abuse in the lives of the people with whom we are working. The lingering anger, bitterness and unforgiveness connected to tormenting memories of past abuse have been like a yoke hanging around their necks, weighing them down. Each needs deliverance, emotional healing and often physical healing. We always have these people confess the sins of their abusers. These are sins that have been committed against God as well as themselves. As you can imagine, most are not overly excited about blessing their "enemies" in this way. They

want justice! We explain to them about the grace of God which has already been extended to them. Christ provided forgiveness of their sins when they trusted Him. God wants His children to walk in love and show His grace to others who also do not deserve it. When we follow God's principles, we are put on the path that leads to freedom and healing both for ourselves and for others. For those who are willing to accept God's way of love, we have witnessed many breakthroughs, many great deliverances and healings. For those who continue to hold on to anger and unforgiveness do not find the complete freedom and healing they seek.

III. The Model of Burden Bearing

In Paul's epistle to the Galatians, he says, "***My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.***" (Gal 6:1 NRSV) He goes on to say in the next verse, "***Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.***" (6:2 NRSV)

I cannot think of a better way to restore people and bear the burden of those who are sinning than to repent for their sins which are grieving God, so that His grace, through the Holy Spirit, may bring conviction in the area of the sin and hopefully repentance will follow. Often people have blind spots concerning their own sin. Sometimes they do not want to acknowledge them. Through **intercessory repentance** we help fan the fires of conviction as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, because God will honor our priestly work. After a time, a softening and a change of attitude is often detected; an opening is provided in which we will be able to speak to the person in a loving and gentle way concerning the sin.

We have encouraged many parents with rebellious children to undertake a **campaign of intercessory repentance** for them. They begin confessing daily the sins that manifested in the home and then take authority over any spirit that was working on their children in their home. Often a spirit can be identified by the sin that is constantly manifesting. Remember, if the parents are Christians and their home is dedicated to God, they have great authority before God to nurture their children in this spiritual way and resist an enemy that is trying to gain power in their lives.

Children are often extremely vulnerable. They usually act based upon how they feel. It is relatively easy for a spirit to influence a child to feel miserable so they will act miserably. They are often exploited in order to bring divisiveness and chaos into the family. Christian parents need to be discerning; careful not to over-react. Using these spiritual countermeasures will often bring surprising results.

To be a **burden bearer** requires an ability to empathize with a person, to put yourself in their place. To do this, you must first be willing to love them and then you will begin seeing people as God sees them. If you seek God sincerely on this issue, you truly will begin seeing people in a new light and be able to understand them better. Be aware that the other side of burden bearing is experiencing the pain that others are going through.

Do not let this deter you, for God will supply the grace to minister to those who are hurting.

IV. The Model of Discernment and Warfare

Paul said to the Ephesians, *"Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints."* (Eph. 6:18)

As we intercede for those who are bound by sin, the Spirit will give insight as to the nature of the sin and also the activity of Satan related to it. Binding the power of a demonic spirit's activity in a person's life is difficult unless the sin claim is addressed through intercession, especially through intercessory repentance. Sins are what give a spirit power and freedom to operate. **It is my practice to confess the sin that has entrapped the individual and then bring God's power and authority against the spirit without the individual even being aware of what is happening.** This is a much more effective approach because intercessory repentance attacks the evil spirit's claim, which is his source of power. It troubles me to see people going around binding the powers of darkness and not dealing with or attacking the sin issues. The results will not be as effective or long lasting.

V. The Corporate Model

It is difficult for Americans to understand **our corporate accountability before God,** because we are culturally very independent and individualistic people. In the scriptures we witness the sin of an individual affecting future generations in a family (**2 Kings 5:26-27**) and also affecting a nation (**Joshua 22:20**). In many respects, we are our brother's keeper (**Genesis 4:9**). God considers us accountable for how we feel about others, and how we treat and relate to others. Corporately our sins affect others and their sins affect us. **Nehemiah** understood the corporate implications of God's covenant with Israel. He served as cupbearer at the court of Artaxerxes of Persia. Israel had been taken into captivity because of their sins. When he heard about the dire conditions of Jerusalem he went into mourning and fasted. Then he prayed to God.

And I said: "I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses." (Nehemiah 1:5-7)

Following this corporate confession, Nehemiah went on to pray, *"O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray,*

and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." [For he was the king's cupbearer.]
(Nehemiah 1:11)

As a result of this corporate intercession, Nehemiah received favor with the king and was sent back to rebuild Jerusalem as governor. After Jerusalem's walls were repaired and gates rebuilt, **Nehemiah and Ezra**, who had also been confessing Israel's sins (**Ezra 9:5-15**), witnessed God's Spirit bring conviction and repentance to the people following the public reading of God's word (**Ezra 8 & 9**). God honored Nehemiah's and Ezra's obedience and faithfulness with a spiritual revival!

Like Nehemiah, we should remember that God has established a covenant with all who are truly a His people. In our covenant relationship with Him and as the corporate body that He has ordained, we have a family responsibility to love one another. We demonstrate our love through intercession, burden bearing and caring for each other's needs in various practical ways. We need to personally identify with the present condition of the body of Christ and come before God in repentance so that He may sanctify us and bless us with healing.

Stephen was a man full of God's grace and power. He did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. He was brought before the Sanhedrin where he spoke eloquently but was condemned to death. **Acts 7:59-8:1 - While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.**

Shortly after Stephen's intercessory prayer and death, Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was converted. God had honored Stephen's prayer.

On the Cross, just before His death, **Jesus** said, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** The book of Acts is a record of the many that came to believe in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior. They became the basis of the Church that God called into being to become the body of Christ continuing His work here on earth.

Both **Jesus and the Holy Spirit** continue to make intercession for us. (**Romans 8:26, 34**) This is part of God's wondrous plan of grace.

Summary of the principles of intercession:

- 1. Adopt a Christ-like attitude toward the person for who you are interceding.**
Realize God's desire to see people free. Ask God to show you any wrong attitudes or motives which remain in you. Pray for God's love to overcome your prejudices and judgmental attitudes.
- 2. Ask God to show you the sin areas in a person's life that need to be addressed.**
Make a list of these areas so that you can intercede daily concerning them.

3. Address every act of sin that occurs around you immediately. Do not allow the enemy any freedom to work. This can be done by going immediately into another room for privacy or through silent prayer.

4. Use your believer's authority in Christ to attack demonic activity and bind up the spirit that is working at that time. Command that the spirit's power be broken and order the spirit to release the person to whom you are ministering. Mental commands can be effective in circumstances where you cannot speak aloud. Spirits communicate on a mental level anyway and the Holy Spirit anoints our commands with the authority and power of God. Always learn to act on the basis of faith, because you will not always see an immediate reaction in the natural. If Christians only realized what really happens when they pray or exercise spiritual authority, they would truly be amazed!

5. Test the spirits (1 John 4:1). Do not assume that your problems are always natural ones. Pray for spiritual discernment. It is possible to test situations by confessing any sin connection and then exercising spiritual authority against any demonic activity associated with the problem. You will be surprised by the number of times your situation will change as a result.

In closing, I just want to reiterate each individual's accountability to deal with the sins in their lives. Intercessory repentance does not relieve anyone of the accountability. Rather, it is an act of love and grace that God honors through extending His grace to the sinner in such a way that they are temporarily freed up and brought to awareness of their sinful ways and given the choice to either repent or continue to live in rebellion. **This principle of intercession** could be summed up by the words that God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel concerning Jerusalem's sins. ***"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none"*** (Ezekiel 22:30 NIV) Imagine what one person can do if he is willing to come before God on behalf of others. ***"So he [God] declared he would destroy them. But Moses, his chosen one, stepped between the LORD and the people. He begged him to turn from his anger and not destroy them."*** (Psalm 106:23 NLT)

Copyright 1990 Spiritual Warfare Ministries, Inc.