

Intercession

by

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But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. Exodus 32: 11,13-14 (ESV)

A friend of mine gave me a book to read. Its name is ***And God Changed His Mind***. If you are interested in intercessory prayer, this is a good one. It will challenge you. It challenged me. Although I agree with many things in it, I am working through the concept of whether my prayers and intercession changes God's mind, or if they change my mind and actions to intercede on the behalf of others. I will share why I am struggling with that concept a few lines from now. However, I will also share that I have been stimulated to pray more specifically and in a dedicated fashion because of the challenges in this book. So first let me say that Brother Andrew is one of those saints whose life speaks for himself, and his purpose and mission has had an obvious anointing on it. His heart and the heart of his organization to be a resource and reminder to pray for and serve the persecuted Church is near and dear to my own heart. I greatly admire what he and his associates have done, and are currently doing. May God continue to use them as He has done so in the past, is doing in the present, and will continue to do into their future.

The "slight" conflict I have with the concept of changing God's mind because of my prayers is that it goes against what I know as the characteristic of God being *All Knowing, or Omniscience*. This begs a question, which is how I, an ordinary guy who doesn't know what will happen five minutes from now, am qualified to help God see things my way, and change His mind? Can I really see things as clearly as God, for He, God, knows all things past, present and future. Those things that are hidden from human sight (and surely mine) are still known by God. He knows His plans, and they are deeper and more complex and better than I could ever know. Therefore, who am I to advise God or hold Him accountable to my point of view? I'm not the man who can do that, nor is anyone. Now we do read in the scripture above that God "*relented*" from the destruction that He was about to bring on Israel. It looks like at first blush, that Moses changed God's mind. On the other hand, did God not know what He would do before Moses interceded? He had to, because *He is omniscience*. So what else may be happening here, for I think there is another scenario involved that applies to what we are seeing? Could it be that God was really testing Moses to see if he would step up and be an intercessor for the lives of the people, and even die for them? Is that what God would want to emerge in Moses? Let me make a case for that particular point, for it sounds so much like the Gospel, and that makes perfect sense to me.

In the story of Abraham and Isaac, we see a similar example of the foretelling of the Gospel. Like Abraham's test, this one with Moses could also be a foretelling of things to come. You remember that God told Abraham to sacrifice his son on an altar? God did this to test Abraham. We know it was a test for it says so in the scripture (Gen 22:12). But this event also represents the *Gospel*, in that God the Father would be the one who would sacrifice His Son instead of Abraham. We connect this event with an important episode that would occur many years later when Jesus, God the Father's Son, was actually sacrificed for our sins by His Father. That's right. It was the Father's plan to do this. It originated with Him. It was mankind's only hope and way for redemption and salvation. So, no matter how Jesus pleaded that the cup be removed from Him, God the Father did not change His mind. Even Jesus couldn't change the Father's mind nor did Jesus want to change His mind. The event we see with Abraham and Isaac was a picture, (or prophecy), that this sacrifice would need to be done to a son by a father. The difference is it would not be Abraham who would have to sacrifice his son. It would be God the Father who would sacrifice His Son. Now this is where the test of Moses looks similar:

In a similar fashion, Moses was tested to see if he would be willing to die for his people, in the same way Jesus was tested. Like Abraham, Moses was tested with this requirement that a son would have to voluntarily die for his people; only it would not be Moses. Like Abraham, Moses was only tested, for Omniscience God knew what needed to be done, and what would be done. The test was only if he was willing to intercede. Like Abraham, Moses stepped up and said yes. But death would not be required of him. It would be God the Son ... Jesus ... who would be "the Son" who would voluntarily die for us. Do you see the parallels?

Throughout the Old Testament, we see these illustrations through events and people and circumstances that connect with the coming of the Christ and His mission. However, what does this mean to you and me now? First, it is clear that Jesus never asks us to do something that He has not already done, or has been willing to do. Next, many of our tests are given to disclose to ourselves where we are in our trust of our King. God is about building trust in Him. Therefore, when we are tested as these men were, we must then entrust those things we cannot see or do not understand, **to Him who is able** to see what we cannot see, and allow Him to walk us through our dilemmas. The reason I take a different view of changing God's mind is that I think God puts us through tests to build our faith, while He knows what He is going to do in those things we are perplexed about. The issue is God knows, but we do not know what we are going to do until we face the tests. Because of the thought-provoking book I mentioned, I have been challenged to look at my own prayer life as an intercessor, and frankly, I see a serious lacking. You see, I have seen many amazing answers to prayers that I have prayed, and many things that I have asked for have been granted. This awareness has driven me to ask God if I need to ask more from Him and to intercede more often and be more specific. I received a clear, "YES!" from God. I didn't think it would be so quick, and clear, and so forthcoming. But I clearly heard in my heart His response to my question, almost as if He was leading me to see the problem and ask the question.

Moses and Abraham were given the ability to see the problem and do their part. However, it would be God who did the heavy lifting with His acts and provision. Understand that we don't need to take on a burden of feeling that it is up to us to make things happen by our prayers, when it is God who chooses to act. In fact, that is my problem and is why I find myself often burdened to pray. I think many of us feel more of a burden to pray than a delight and opportunity to do so, for we feel it is up to us to make things happen by our prayers. I think we feel we are letting God down and we are disappointing Him. But remember that God is

Omniscience. He doesn't get disappointed. He knows we get it wrong a lot, and we fall short of His operating procedures. He is not surprised by our insufficiencies! We can't surprise Him! Therefore, we must instead trust His grace, and consider the test God may be giving us.

I think God looks ahead in our life and because of it, He is inviting us to something really good for us and something needed by the people around us. Like Jesus, we don't want to change God's mind even if we could, for His plan is best. It is not our burden to change God's mind. But, like Jesus, it is our responsibility to embrace what He wants to do for us and through us. It is with our prayers, and then His answers that show us He is listening. We need to ask boldly of God, and not be timid about it. We need to ask big prayers of a big God and then watch His response, even if we have to wait it out and keep on pleading. God is doing something in our life and in the lives of others that is not seen by us. We must trust Him in that He has a plan and we are part of it with our prayers. We might need to be an "Abraham or Moses" and step up to the sacrifice of our time and effort to pray for people, and situations, and needs, and opportunities, and He wants us to intercede in that manner. This is our part and our joyful privilege and it is not to be a burden that we should carry.

Jesus said that His burden is light. This tells me that our burden of intercession is simply a constant tension or reminder that is carried with us wherever we go in life. It is not to be a heavy burden. In all those places we venture in life, we open our eyes, assess the situation, and pray intercession over the people or needs we see, and act when dispatched by the Lord. This is how we step up and step into a situation and become the intercessor that is needed. This is how we become an "Abraham or Moses" for people in our life, as we like them, intercede for those people God brings into our life.