

Christ's Ascension: Why We Rejoice—His Intercession.

Hebrews 7:25; John 17:1-26

“To intercede” is *to plead or make a request on behalf of another or others; to intervene for the purpose of producing an agreement, to mediate.*

Jesus is in the presence of God on our behalf. This is His present ministry. Hebrews 7:25

He is continuously interceding before God for all whom the Father has given to Him

We will explore this question morning: *What is the relationship between Jesus saving sinners by his sacrifice on Calvary's cross and His intercession for them?*

I want to ask three questions of this text this morning.

First, what is Jesus' intercession?

Secondly, what is the content of His intercession?

And then thirdly, for whom is He interceding?

What is Jesus' present intercession?

Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34

His intercession is not Him on bended knee before the Father, pleading for the salvation of the Father's elect. He is not asking the Father to save His people nor to bless them. He is not doing this. *because Jesus is our salvation. He Himself is the gift of the Father's love to us. He is our blessing.* If He must plead to the Father to save us, then what was His work on earth all about? Then nothing He did was of any consequence. He has no need to persuade the Father to bless us or to do anything good for us. His work is sufficient.

His present intercession is His presence at the right hand of His Father. Our Savior's nail-pierced hands and feet are His intercession.

As the Father beholds the atoning glory of His Son, He sees a life that has won everything good for all His people. He beholds His Son, and in His Son He beholds His elect people, those believing sinners in all the ages of history, and He sees them united to the One who by His obedience to death has won every conceivable blessing in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

In Christ, we lack nothing. In Christ, we have everything. And as the Father beholds the risen glory of His Son, He inevitably, without vocal cries or tears from His Son blesses His people, for the Son has won all things good for His people. That is His intercession.

What was His pre-ascended intercession and what was the content of it?

While on earth, Jesus intercedes (prays) for the apostles and for all believers in His High Priestly Prayer. John 17:6-19 and 20-26.

There are three things that the Lord Jesus Christ prays to His Father. Three things that clearly lay heavy on His heart.

First, he prays in verse 15 that His Father will keep the apostles from the evil one. The Lord Jesus prays this because very soon His embodied presence will no longer be with them, and they will become an increasing prey to the wiles and the stratagems of Satan.

Our greatest enemy is not this seductive passing world nor is not your indwelling sin, though that is a great enemy. Your great enemy and my great enemy is the evil one, the devil who was bold enough to confront the Son of God in the wilderness and tempt Him to turn away from His Father and to abandon the saving obedience He had pledged to give in the covenant of redemption in eternity.

By His sin-vanquishing sacrifice on Calvary's cross, He has vanquished Satan. Colossians 2:15

And as the Father beholds the nail-pierced body of Christ—it will be the only disfigured body in the heavenly glory throughout all eternity—He sees in those nail prints the triumph of the crucified over the prince of hell.

We will be kept by the sin-vanquishing sacrifice of Christ our redeemer. That's His intercession, and He prays, “Father, keep them from the evil one.” And as the Father beholds the Son at His right hand, He says, “Son, they will be kept.”

Second, Jesus prays that the disciples will be sanctified in the truth. "To sanctify" is *to be set apart or to separate*. Jesus is praying that the Father will separate the disciples from the world and separate their sinful selves to Himself. We are called to live for God, to love God, to keep His commandments. He is praying that these men and those who will come to faith through their witness, would live distinctively different lives from the world into which God had planted them. *He does not pray they will be taken out of the world, but equally he is not asking them to live like the world, because Christian believers are sanctified in Christ Jesus.*

The church is to be relevant, but *we are to be relevant by proclaiming to the world in all its fallenness, the eternal gospel of God - we are to proclaim Jesus Christ.*

J.I. Packer - "Evangelism is a Christian living as a Christian in the world." Packer is not saying there shouldn't be concerted outreach to the lost. But what turned the early world upside down *was Christians living for God.*

When Jesus prays, "Father, sanctify them *in the truth*," He does not think immediately of sanctification by Bible knowledge. *We are sanctified in the truth. He's thinking about lives shaped and styled by God's infallible and inerrant Word.* Romans 6:17

We are to teach new converts to obey *everything that Jesus has commanded*. Christians are called to live distinctively different lives so that people will say to us, "Why do you do that?" or "Why do you not do that?" *Sanctification is the likeness of Jesus Christ. The sanctified life is a Christ-like life.* Romans 8:29

Why does God sanctify His people?

To make us ultimately perfect in righteousness, but also that we might reflect eternally the glory of His Son. The gospel is ultimately about the glory of Jesus Christ, not your salvation and not mine. We are saved to bring added glory to the Son of God in whom the Father has delighted from times eternal.

Third, in vs. 20-26, He prays that all His people will be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You. Jesus is praying that His people, those who confess Him and profess Him, who belong to Him, for whom He shed His blood, that they will be one. And in their oneness, the world will look and see something they see nowhere else in this world. They will see people from all colors and cultures and backgrounds and denominations united in confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord in all the fullness of what that name "Jesus Christ" means and what that word "Lord" means.

This is what we confess.

It's a hard thing when Christians who essentially are one in Christ behave as if they were enemies. I don't mean that we should soft-pedal our differences or forget our distinctives. But brothers and sisters in Christ, we want to embrace with all our heart every blood-redeemed brother or sister, whoever they are. We want to tell them that first we are family. We will have differences, and we can discuss them, but before they're anything, they're blood-bought sinners. That's our fundamental identity in Jesus Christ. Our fundamental identity is that Jesus Christ has redeemed us by His own blood.

For Whom is Jesus Interceding?

He is interceding for those who draw near to God, for those who have received Him. If you have drawn near to God and received Jesus Christ as He is offered to you in the gospel, it's for you He is interceding, however weak and shaky and trembling your faith in Jesus Christ might be.

Remember this great thing: *it's not your faith that takes you to heaven, it's faith in Jesus Christ that takes you to heaven. It's better expressed, "Jesus Christ in whom I have faith."*

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." My faith will at times fail me, but Jesus Christ will never fail me. He saves to the uttermost all who come to God through Him. You see, *our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the gospel.* He is the good news. It's not that God gives us salvation as a gift apart from His Son. He gives us His Son, who is our salvation. Every time you are tempted to look at yourself, stop and take ten looks to Jesus Christ, because all our hope lies outside of ourselves.