



## God's Love – God Interceding for Us

- Many of you have read the trilogy by J.R. Tolkien entitled Lord of the Rings, or perhaps the foundational book to the series entitled The Hobbit...
- if you've never done so, I would encourage you to read them...
- they really are great books and some of them have now been made into movies which have several very important spiritual lessons and teaching points...
- The Hobbits live in a place called the Shire...
  - and one of the beauties of their existence is its simplicity...
  - they are insulated from outside influences...
  - in fact, even when they hear news of wars or battles, they often shrug it off as legend and folk tales...
  - so they spend their time eating multiple meals every day and enjoying the simple things of life...Hobbits are the ones who invented the idea of "second breakfast" which I've always thought was a marvelous idea...
  - they tend their gardens – they get together for parties and gift-giving
  - they love to smoke their pipes...it's the beauty of simplicity...
- what the Hobbits don't know is that they have always been protected by outside leaders including Gandalf the Grey who is deeply concerned for their safety and well-being...
- this protection is also provided by a group of Rangers of the North led by a man named Strider...later revealed to be Aragorn, the rightful heir to the throne of men...
- at a crucial point when Strider first meets a group of four hobbits, he tells them..."**I have often kept watch on the borders of the Shire the last few years. Gandalf seldom left it unguarded.**"
- here's a group of creatures who have friends interceding for them – standing between them and the dangers they face – and they don't even understand it, or recognize it, or appreciate it...
- now, what's the point?...
- this probably isn't going to sound very complimentary, but it really is true...
  - sometimes we Christians can be a lot like Hobbits...
  - where we are receiving protection and watch care from a marvelous Friend and we don't always understand it, or recognize it, or appreciate it...and our friend provides it anyway....
- that's why this morning I'd like us to think about **God Interceding for Us**...
  - now, we are going to look at a number of passages of Scripture this am, but for starters, I'd like to ask you to open your Bible to two of them...Romans 8 and Exodus 32
- let's start in Romans 8, and then we'll circle back around to the book of Exodus...
- **read Romans 8:12-27...**

- we'll talk about this in much more detail in a moment, but this passage already spoke to us about 2 ways the Lord intercedes on our behalf...
- that is very consistent with what the Scripture says in many other places about the ministry of Jesus Christ for those who have trusted Him as Savior and Lord...
  - **Hebrews 7:25 - Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**
- there it is – being a friend with God means a lot of things, including the fact that various members of the Godhead relate to us in ways that are very similar way to how Gandalf the Gray and Aragorn related to the Hobbits...
  - they bring us into the family knowing full well in advance that we are going to cause all kinds of trouble...
  - and then they stand in the gap...
  - they always live to make intercession for us...
- please let that thought sink into your mind this morning...
  - you have a Trinitarian friend standing up for you at times often when you don't even know it's occurring...
- now, here's the hundred dollar question...when and how does that happen?...
  - my guess is that if I had asked you this morning – do you believe that God intercedes for you?...you would probably say yes...
  - but how far have you ever thought down that trail?...
    - when do you really need God to intercede for you?...
    - and what does that intercession look like?...
    - and what are the practically out-workings in the life of a person who realizes and appreciates that God does this?...
    - and how should it impact the way we relate to one another as part of the family of God as we live life together?...

- now, here's how we're going to divide the rest of our time...

### **I. An example of God's Intercession**

### **II. The Way Your Friend Intercedes**

### **III. The Duration of Your Friend's Intercession**

#### **I. Example of God's Intercession**

- we'll be back in Romans 8, but please look now at Exodus 32...
- this is the story of what happened while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the first copies of the ten commandments...
- if you know your Bible, you know that Moses was delayed in coming down from the mountain...(feel free ladies, to say – under your breath – yea, he wouldn't ask for directions)...
- that's not exactly the reason...
- but in the intervening time, Aaron and the people committed a very serious sin...they took some of their jewelry they had received from the Egyptians and he fashioned it into a golden calf...

- which is significant for a lot of reasons, including the fact that the first two commandments they were about to receive were that they were to have no other gods besides the Lord, and that they were not to make any graven images...
- then Scripture tells us that... **Exodus 32:6 - ...the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.**
- and you understand that rose up to play didn't mean they had a volleyball tournament on the front lawn...
- **“The Hebrew word allows for the inclusion of drunken and immoral activities so common to idolatrous fertility cults in their revelry. Syncretism had robbed the people of all ethical alertness and moral discernment” (MacArthur Study Bible).**
- now, what was our Holy God's response to this?...**read Exodus 32:7-10...**
- and that's exactly what you would expect from a God who is Holy...
- and by the way, please don't say – well, that's the god of the OT, I worship the God of the NT...
- that is a lethal mistake theologically...there is plenty of love and mercy in the OT and there is plenty of judgment and wrath in the NT – just ask Ananias and Saphira...
- and that's where this part of the text ends...with the Israelites in their sinful condition...and God prepared to exercise wrath that they had without a doubt earned for themselves...
- now please tell me this – because if you can answer this – you're well on your way to understanding where all of this is going...
- what did the children of Israel definitely need at that very moment?....
  - they needed an intercessor...they needed a mediator...
  - someone to stand between themselves and their God and cry out for mercy and grace on their behalf...
- and that's why what Moses did next was such a marvelous thing...
- **read Exodus 32:11-14...**
- now, is there any question in your mind why the subsequent generations of Jewish people would revere Moses?...
- the nation never had a closer friend...
  - he had every reason to be angry at them too...
  - he had every reason to ask God to judge them immediately and completely...
  - but he loved this nation...and he functioned just like a real friend would...
  - when they needed it most – he stood in the gap and pleaded their case, not on the basis of its own merits...but on the basis of the glory of God and His eternal covenants...
- please tell me that you find what is unfolding in this text to be amazing?...is that an understatement?...

#### **A. Amazing that Moses would be willing to function in this way.**

- Moses was generally a meek man, but he had a temper...think “striking the rock instead of speaking to it”...
- plus this event must have disappointed him terribly, especially from the perspective of Aaron's involvement in the fiasco...
- he could have run over to God the Father's side – remember, his face was still glowing...and distanced himself from the people, or screamed out for complete, absolute, and immediate judgment on the people for their sin...

- but he stood in the gap...one hand here, and one hand here...he identified with them, risking suffering the consequences for the choices they made right along with them...but that's what intercessors do...

This reminds me of the Hobbits settled in their small world of sin that they had no appreciation for someone protecting them and standing up for them in the midst of the immediate judgment they so clearly deserved...**GENERALLY SPEAKING, WE ARE NOT VERY GRATEFUL...**

- now, it's with that kind of context that we enter into the NT...and think about how amazing it also is that God offers the kind of friendship with you and me where various members of the Godhead intercede for us, His children...
  - now, here's what I want to ask you to think about...
  - in what senses do you even need an intercessor?...
  - we really need to answer that now...

## II. The Way Your Friend Intercedes

- here's at least four ways...

### A. Between you and your adversary.

- do you know that Satan does not have unfettered access to you?...
  - if you say – well – but I'm facing all sorts of trials right now...you very well may be...
  - but do you realize what you would be like if Satan had his way with you right now?...
  - that's part of the point of the book of Job...
    - it was a test of Job's faith and more importantly, a test of God's ability to change a man or woman at the level of the heart apart from immediate physical blessings...
    - but God put limits on what Satan could do...He stood between Job and his adversary and said... **Job 2:6 - So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."**
    - this is one of the ways that people like you and me can be like hobbits...
    - when's the last time you can remember thanking the Lord for protecting you and interceding for your safety and health and that of your loved ones...
    - you better believe that if you know Christ as Savior and Lord, your Friend has his finger in the face of your adversary, saying on a regular basis – no further – no further...
- and that's why you and I can go through even the trials of life with a level of peace and security...
- it's because we're not dualists...we don't believe that God and Satan are on some kind of equal footing and it's anyone's guess who's going to win today...
  - Satan is powerful, but **1 John 4:4 - ...greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.**
  - and because you have an intercessor – you have someone always standing between you and your adversary...
- here's one that might sound a bit strange, but it actually came up in the verses we read in Romans 8...God is also willing to be an intercessor...

### B. Between you and yourself.

- do you know who the biggest obstacle to your spiritual growth is on a fairly regular basis?...
- it's the person you see in the mirror in the morning...- and one of the ways that dynamic plays out is a the man or woman who says over and over in their heart...you're not a Christian, you're not a Christian...you've messed up too badly...your past is too wicked, what if everyone knew everything you've thought or done...
- and did you see what Romans 8:16 says?...**Romans 8:16 - The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,**
- now I realize that some people might say – but wouldn't it be best if God always kept us guessing?...wouldn't that keep us on our toes?...
- wouldn't it be best if He never gave us assurance of our salvation in this life?...wouldn't that motivate us to greater faithfulness just in case?...
- humanly speaking that makes sense...but that is not the way God chooses to relate to us...
- He has designed the salvation process to something that you can know for sure...
- **1 John 5:13 - These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.**
- and this passage in Romans 8:16 goes so far as to say that the Holy Spirit will intercede in this matter of doubting ones salvation...He testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God...

### C. Between you and your pain.

- were you astonished at verses 26-27?...
- **Romans 8:26-27 - In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.**
- have you ever felt like you were alone in your pain?...
- I want to say this gently – but do you realize if that was the case, that you were thinking like a hobbit?...
- and if you asked me this am, exactly what does that look like – I honestly can only imagine that – this fits under the heading of “the secret things belong to the Lord...”
- but let me just say it this way – shame on me for thinking at times that I was alone in my suffering...probably many times at the exact moment my friend was interceding on my behalf within the trinity with groanings too deep for words...
- that's how much our intercessor loves us and is concerned for our spiritual well being (praying according to the will of God)...

### D. Between you and your Father.

- in my mind, this may be the most amazing aspect of this entire discussion...
- and it comes down to this...
- do you remember when the children of Israel really blew it...and God was angry with them...

- we find ourselves in that position from time to time...is there anyone here who would want to argue that?...
- and at that moment...it's not Moses who stands on our behalf...it's...Jesus...

**- 1 John 2:1-2 - My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.**

- but what if all of this is only temporary?...
- that brings us to one more piece of great news...

### **III. The Duration of Your Friend's Intercession.**

**Hebrews 7:23-25 - The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

**IF you are a Christian, don't be a hobbit**

**If you are not a Christian, let God's love sink deeply within your heart.**