

*and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the Lord, valiant men. They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful, and will have no honor from the Lord God.*

*'But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the Lord had smitten him. King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death...'*

Now let's combine these two accounts and pull out principles regarding intercessory prayer in today's church. Interestingly, Isaiah 6 begins with King Uzziah's death. "In the year of king Uzziah's death..." Once again we are reminded that while a good start is important in the Christian life, it's how we finish our race that really counts. How many well meaning runners (believers) have almost been disqualified with their finish line in full view? I'm not necessarily speaking of eternal loss as much as "what could have been" in this

life. Sadly, king Uzziah's name and actions became synonymous with rebellion and disobedience. Pride drove him to a leper's fate, He spent his final days away from the mainstream of society, ostracized from the house of the Lord.

But notice something else. Isaiah writes, "In the year of king Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted.." Note the correlation. When we die to self, we see the Lord. We dethrone ourselves and we enthrone Jesus! Intercessory prayer is not about us, it's about lifting up the Lord. "I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up..." What's the first thing Isaiah said after seeing the Lord's greatness, majesty and power? "Then I said, woe is me, for I am ruined" (verse 5). Coming into God's presence first reveals our sinfulness and encourages us to confess our sin. When we recognize how great our God is, how sinful we are, and the depths of his forgiveness, we then receive power to do His work.

*(Continued in Part 2)*



## PRAY OR PREY? (PART 1)

Intercessory Prayer

Roger Loomis

# PRAY OR PREY? (PT. 1)

Passion driven prayer is often referred to as intercessory prayer. The word intercessory describes its nature and purpose. "Inter" means between, and "cession" means "something, such as territory that is surrendered." Such prayer grants us the privilege to stand between God and any given need, or territory. Such praying is mediatory in purpose. Moses demonstrated this concept when he stood between the Lord and the complaining, rebellious Israelites, who were dying after fiery serpents had been loosened in the camp.

*"Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food (manna).' The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you; intercede with the Lord, that he may remove the serpents from us.' And Moses interceded for the people" (Numbers 21:4-7).*

Moses stood between the Lord and the people. He did what intercessors do, and here's what happened: *"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live'" (verse 8).*

Centuries later, Jesus drew from this experience when talking to a spiritually hungry Pharisee named Nicodemus. *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes in him will have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).* Jesus is our Mediator! *"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).* Jesus is also our High Priest and bids us to *"draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).* He intercedes on our behalf! As you can see, intercessory prayer is a wonderful privilege.

Someone said, "Prayer is to the Christian what breathing is to the body." It's our life connection. Without it, we become passionless, even lifeless. Prayer reminds us to whom we belong and reinforces our absolute dependence upon the Lord. One of the chief characteristics of prayer is brokenness. Pride dies in the presence of His presence!

In Isaiah 6:1-5 we read of such an experience. *"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple, Seraphim stood above him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of his glory. 'And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'" The King James Version renders verse 5 this way: "Woe to me, for I am undone..."*

This passage conveys a story behind a story. Not only does God commission Isaiah, but he correlates what happened to King Uzziah to Israel's on-going disobedience. King Uzziah died around 740 B.C. He died of leprosy for trying to take over the high priests' duties. Although he was generally a good king and his reign was long and prosperous, many of his people turned away from God. His story is recorded in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21a.

*"But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly,*