

Selah: Intercession

Psalms 28:8-9, 67:1-2, 106:1-23, 122:6-9; Romans 8:26-27, 34; Hebrews 7:25

Today is our last message in our series called Selah. If you have missed any of these weeks, do yourself a favor and go online and get caught up because it has been a rollercoaster of emotions.

Series/Prayer Pattern:

Has anyone noticed a pattern in any of these messages? Every two weeks has been a pair and that has moved us a little further outward.

First, adoration declares who God is. Confession asks Him to deal with who I am in light of that. This is vertical; just me and God. His character exposes my own character.

Thanksgiving declares what God has already done. Lament asks Him to act again, or asks "how long." This is me being honest with God about my actual life: what He's done, and what still hurts. Praise first and request second breaks down the first two pairs.

Supplication and Intercession are *both* petitions. Supplication is asking God for what I need. Intercession is supplication's twin, but pointed in a different direction. Not "God, help me" But "God, help them."

The arc across six weeks isn't just "three balanced pairs." It's God's character, my lived experience, and my neighbor's need. In other words, God's amazing nature causes me to adore Him and confess my faults. When I think about His goodness, I am thankful for the things He has done in the past while I still lament the imperfect world. So I will pray to God for things that I need as Christ stands as an intercessor on our behalf, which inspires us to intercess for others in prayer.

This is where the whole series has been taking us. Adoration ends in confession. Thanksgiving ends in lament. Supplication ends in intercession. Prayer that starts with me does not stay with me. If we're praying the way the Psalms teach us to pray, it eventually has someone else's name in it.

Intercession:

Intercession is going between, acting on behalf of someone else, and stepping up for someone who needs it even if they don't know they do. This is exactly what Jesus does for us. The Psalms model this for us over and over long before we ever needed a definition for it.

For believers today, the intercessory psalms aren't just ancient poetry. They're a training manual. They teach us to look beyond our own needs and pray for others (for leaders, communities, nations) seeking God's guidance, protection, and peace on their behalf. When we intercede, we're not just performing a spiritual discipline. We're participating in God's redemptive work. We're aligning our hearts with His purposes. We're showing His love to people who may never even know we prayed for them.

Psalm 106:

Read Psalm 106:1-23. Did you hear the rhythm of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, lament, supplication, and intercession (v 23)? Moses "*stood in the breach*." That language points back to Exodus 32 in the moment the people had made the golden calf and the Lord's anger was ready to consume them. Moses didn't defend himself. He didn't step back and let it happen. He stood in the gap between a Holy God and a guilty people. He interceded.

Here's what's remarkable about this psalm. Verses 40–48 tell us it was likely written near the end of Israel's exile in Babylon. Hardship was still very present. Deliverance not yet arrived. The psalmist is writing from inside the pain, not looking back on it from safety. And yet, even from there, he doesn't just complain. He remembers what the Lord has already done. On the strength of that memory, he boldly asks God to save Israel from captivity.

The psalmist couldn't control the actions of a nation. Just like you can't control the choices of your family, your coworkers, your city, or your country. But he interceded anyway. He asked the Lord for forgiveness and deliverance for people who weren't asking for it themselves.

That takes faith. Faith that God is merciful and true to His Word. Faith that Jesus loves our broken, sinful communities more than we do. That kind of faith is what lets us step in boldly and pray for our friends, our families and even entire nations to repent and be delivered from sin the same way we have been delivered.

You can't control the choices of the people you love. But you can stand in the gap anyway.

Psalm 20 Model:

Psalm 20 is a prayer for a king's protection and success. It opens with, "*May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.*" (Psalm 20:1) The word "*answer*" in verse 1 is the Hebrew word *anah*. It's a rich word meaning to testify, hear, sing, shout, give account, or beg God to pay attention and respond. The verb form is what's called imperfective, which is why it can be translated "may He pay attention" or "may He respond." When Israel prayed this over their king, they weren't reciting a formality. They were fervently asking God to hear and answer because they genuinely cared about the person they were praying for.

That's the model. Psalm 20 shows us how to come before God for someone we love with the conviction that He is actually listening and believing a promise before we've seen it fulfilled.

Here's a simple framework straight out of this psalm you can use this week for someone on your heart: *May the Lord* _____. *May He send* _____. *May He remember* _____. Fill in a name. Fill in a need. Pray it like you mean it.

Intercession Throughout the Bible:

Read Psalm 67:1-2. The psalmist's ultimate goal is that God's ways would be known among all nations. "*May God be gracious to us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us*" a blessing that was never meant to stay contained. It was meant to overflow to a whole world praising God.

Read Psalm 28:8-9. Psalm 28 is David interceding for his people's provision and strength — a prayer for those who need the Lord's guidance when they can't provide it for themselves.

Read Psalm 122:6-9. "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you prosper'*" This is intercession for communal well-being not just individuals, but the whole place. The neighborhoods. The streets.

Do you see the shape of this? It keeps widening. A person. A leader. A people. A city. A nation. A world. This isn't a pattern that shows up once. It's threaded through the whole Bible:

- Abraham interceded for Ishmael and God promised to bless him and make him a great nation (Gen. 17:17–22).
- Moses interceded for the nation of Israel when they rebelled and God did not destroy them (Num. 14:11–22).

- Esther interceded for Israel's deliverance, at the risk of her own life (Esther 4:16).
- Job interceded for the very friends who had failed him and God spared them and blessed Job abundantly (Job 42:7–12).
- Jesus interceded for the people who were crucifying Him (Luke 23:32–34).
- Jesus interceded for Lazarus and Lazarus walked out of the tomb (John 11:38–44).

Every single one of those people stood in a breach that wasn't theirs to close. And God moved.

“I Don’t Have the Words”:

What happens when we don’t even know what to pray about or how to intercede on someone’s behalf? If you haven’t been to our men's group recently I would encourage you to come sometime. Jared writes down things on a piece of paper, puts them in a jar, and then we randomly select something to pray for or to intercede for. Last meeting, Steve drew the word *Enemies*. I don’t think Steve has any enemies, but he thought about it for a moment, closed his eyes and said ‘God, I don’t know how to even pray about this.’ It was then that Steve started to hear words from God and began to pray. I believe his exact words were ‘God told me to shut up and use His words.’

When we don’t have the words, we need to shut up and we borrow God’s words. We intercede for others because Christ intercedes for us and He’s given us His Spirit to help us pray. We are not powerless in this. And the Lord genuinely wants us praying on behalf of other people. Watch how clearly this shows up:

"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

"Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." (Romans 8:34)

Charles Spurgeon put it this way: *"He seems to have thought of all [His people's] wants, of all their needs, of all their weaknesses, and in one long stream of intercession, he pours out his heart before his Father's throne."*

Jesus isn't just petitioning on our behalf. He already took on the punishment we deserved. Without His intercession and advocacy, we would have no gospel at all. Intercession isn't a technique we borrowed from somewhere, it's God's idea, and it's Jesus' mission. And we're called to be like Him. That means it's a privilege, not a burden, to shadow the role Jesus Himself fills. Every time you intercede for someone else, you're becoming a little more like Christ.

And it's not Jesus alone. When the Father sent the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension, He gave us power for prayer. Read Romans 8:26-27.

So before you pray for someone this week, remember, you're not doing this alone. Ask the Spirit to form and empower the words you don't have.

Intercession for You:

Let’s flip this around. There will be days when you need someone to intercede for you and you won't have the words to even ask for help. On those days, remember two things.

First, Jesus knows exactly how you feel. Rejection. Disappointment. Ridicule. Exhaustion. Heartbreak. Frustration. Poverty. Temptation. Hebrews 4:15 tells us we don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin. You are in the care of an empathetic God.

Second, Christ is constantly interceding for you, right now, bringing you back to Himself. He loved you enough to become a man and lay down His life so you could be united with Him. With love that deep, you can trust He's speaking for you in the moments you feel speechless.

Conclusion:

That's the God we've been praying to this whole series. The God who is worthy of adoration and hears our confession. The God who receives our thanksgiving and doesn't turn away our lament. The God who answers our supplication and now today invites us to stand in the breach for somebody else.

Don't just think about intercession in the abstract. Give it a name. Who is someone in your life right now who needs somebody to stand in the breach for them...maybe even someone who doesn't even know they need it? Your neighbor? Your coworker? Someone in your family who's far from God? Your city? This church?

Take the framework from Psalm 20 and finish it in your head right now:
May the Lord _____. May He send _____. May He remember _____.

That is a prayer you can pray at any time. When you do, you're not just checking a box. You're doing exactly what Jesus is doing for you, right now at this very moment, at the right hand of the Father.

Prayer with someone else's name in it that's where all of this was always headed.

Reflection Questions:

- Who is someone in your life that God may be asking you to “stand in the gap” for right now?
- What person, family, community, or nation do you need to begin praying for instead of simply worrying about?
- What makes it difficult for you to intercede for someone else?
- When you don't know what to pray, are you willing to ask the Holy Spirit to give you the words?
- How does knowing that Jesus is constantly interceding for you change the way you approach God?
- Who is one person you will intentionally intercede for this week?