

Contending with God in Prayer

He wants us to plead our case before Him.

Isaiah 43:26 ESV – “Put Me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right.”

Isaiah 43 is such a powerful passage in the Bible. The nation of Israel/Judah is in exile in Babylon and God is ready to move on their behalf. He says things like this: (43:1) “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine.” And He tells them, (v.4) “you are precious in My eyes, and honored, and loved...” He also encourages them to (v.18,19) “remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing.”

Notice how God is giving them all these promises and yet He says I want to hear from you. I want you to stand before Me and plead your case. Tell Me why I should act on your behalf.

Pleading Your Case with God

1) Jesus taught us about the power of pleading our case with God.

*Luke 18:1-8 – “And He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. **2** He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. **3** And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, “Give me justice against my adversary.” **4** For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, “Though I neither fear God nor respect man, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.” **6** And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge says. **7** And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? **8** I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”*

a) Jesus uses a judicial situation to illustrate how prayer some time requires you to state your case before God Almighty the Judge of all flesh.

(v.7) “will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night?”

b) Jesus is equating faith, with a person arguing his case fervently before a judge in order to pronounce sentence, to punish or to litigate.

2) Jesus is our Advocate.

*1 John 2:1, 2 – “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

- a) Here Jesus is spoken of as our defense attorney who takes us into the holy heavenly courtroom and pleads our case.
- b) Jesus is the grace-giving advocate who points to the sacrifice of His cross. He argues our freedom not by our merit but by the promise of redemption through the substitutionary offering of His body.
- c) Propitiation? The Cross has indeed propitiated (or satisfied) God because the cross has met God's judicial demands so thoroughly that grace, mercy, and power are available to everyone who goes after it in prayer.

Isaiah 43:26 – “Put Me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right.”

KJV – “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.”

3) Four Biblical characteristics of Intercessors

Biblical intercessors are...

- a) Reminders: they remind the Lord of promises and appointments not yet fulfilled.

*Isaiah 62:6-7 – “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in **remembrance**, take no rest, **(7)** and give him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.”*

- b) Interveners: they take up the case of justice before God on behalf of another.

*Isaiah 59:15-16a – “Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. **16** He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede...”*

- c) Protectors: Intercessors are called to build spiritual walls of protection for others.

Ezekiel 13:4-5 NLT “O people of Israel, these prophets of yours are like jackals digging in the ruins. ⁵ They have done nothing to repair the breaks in the walls around the nation. They have not helped it to stand firm in battle on the day of the Lord.”

- d) Mercy Lovers: They stand in the gap between God's righteous judgment which is due and the need for mercy on the people's behalf.

Ezekiel 22:30-31 – “And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God.”

So can you see that God is looking for people who are filled with faith to step before Him and plead a case?

No Whining Allowed: The holy act of arguing a case before God is not to be done in a negative, complaining spirit. In fact, a critical spirit will get you nowhere with God.

Instead, our hearts should be burning with the (1) love for God, (2) love for His name, (3) love for His people and (4) love for His glory. Successful intercessors are passionate about these four things!

4) Intercession is about connecting hearts (Genesis 18:17-32).

One of the first great intercessors in the Bible was Abraham and his most famous intercessory prayer was for one of the most sinful places in the ancient world. In fact, Sodom and Gomorrah have become synonymous with sin and sexual debauchery.

Would God **sweep away the righteous with the unrighteous (v. 23)**? Abraham was convinced there were righteous people in Sodom—he did not pray merely for Lot—so he appealed for Sodom on the basis of God’s justice.

Abraham’s great character is revealed by his intercession. He prayed that all in the cities—the wicked as well as the righteous—be spared for the sake of the ... righteous (v. 23).

Abraham’s “bargaining” with God can mess with our theology!

But Abraham’s prayers were made with genuine humility and extreme reverence.

It was for justice that he pleaded: deliverance for Sodom if there were as few as **50.... 45.... 40.... 30.... 20**, or even **10** righteous people **there** (Genesis.18:24–32).

a) Abraham’s intercession reveals the goodness of God’s heart.

- i) He is open to a plea.
- ii) He doesn’t want to destroy.
- iii) He spares for the sake of righteousness.
- iv) He does righteously as a judge of the earth.

b) Abraham’s intercession reveals the necessity of the intercessor’s heart.

- i) Boldness – He’s talking to God. Wow!
- ii) Humility – so respectful when He speaks... not whining in prayer
- iii) Persistence - Abraham fought in the natural and the spiritual.

Earlier he had personally rescued these people in battle. Now he pleads for them with the same boldness, perseverance, and generosity with which he had fought for them.

Sometimes it is necessary to physically act with mercy, but don't neglect to intercede in the spirit.

- 5) Effective intercession begins with knowledge and understanding.
 - a) Understand why the promises of God haven't been fulfilled.
 - b) What is the sin to avoid? What is the promise to claim?
 - c) Spend some time communing with Jesus and get His heart on the matter.