

## **A Return to Love The Lord's Intercession on Our Behalf**

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*And He bore the iniquities of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*  
(Isaiah 53:12)

Of all the promises about His advent, the tale of the Man of Sorrows in Isaiah 53 is the most poignant. It is true that the Lord came to earth in power and might. He was a prophet and a leader; He was the King of glory to those who afterward believed. He was and is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Yet during His life on earth He was, more than anything else, despised and rejected, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was indeed wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His bruise has health been given to us. How infinite is the Divine love that the God of heaven and earth should suffer Himself so to be treated by His own creatures so that He might work salvation for us. How little all people deserve this mercy, yet it is His to give.

The truth of this promise—its literal fulfillment in the life of Jesus Christ—is impressive. He did indeed come, not in majesty, but in a simple way—“He has no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that men should desire Him.” “Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” His sufferings at the hands of evil people took place, as also did His death, though He merited no censure. “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was the stroke upon Him.”

One part of the prophecy, however, has long been misunderstood, and that is a pity, for it is the most moving of all when we see it both in the letter and in the spiritual sense. It is stated that the Lord bore our sins, and made intercession for us. “Surely He has borne our diseases and carried our sorrows: yet did we esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities...and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...and He bore the iniquities of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Many have believed that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, bore the sins of the human race. Humankind had offended God the Father, and God the Son took on Himself all the sins of the human race. Now, sitting on the right hand of God the Father, He pleads for people, intercedes for them, comes between them and the Divine wrath, using His sacrifice as the atonement for our iniquities. To a degree this error was understandable, and was shared in part even by the disciples (see *Arcana Coelestia* 8705:2).

Yet this is not the way that He bore our sins. It cannot be, for the Lord is not different from the Father; He is the Father. It is impossible to intercede with oneself in this manner. To bear the iniquities of humankind means that the Lord took on the sins of the whole human race when He came on earth. They were not His sins, for He was without sin. Yet He took on a human heredity

and let the hells approach Him and inject their evils, the evils to which all people are subject. He fought these hells and overcame them (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9937:2). He bore our sins by conquering them (see *Doctrine of the Lord* 15). And so He bears them in us today, for we don't fight and overcome evils in ourselves; He does it. He takes our iniquities upon Himself if we do our part, and He conquers their power in us (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9937:2-5). "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His bruise health has been given us."

What, then, is the intercession of the Lord which is spoken of when it says, "He bore the iniquities of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"? The root meaning of the word *intercession* is to "pass between," giving the idea of one who comes between two adversaries, and the dictionary definition is "to act between two parties with a view to reconciling differences" (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). There was no need for intercession while humankind was good, for there was no rift between God and people. But when evil arose, then there was separation, and that was very bad—for us. After all, our only chance of happiness is through conjunction with the Lord.

From the Lord's standpoint there was no need of intercession, for He is Divine love, and love, we are told, always intercedes of itself. That is, when there is division, love always seeks to bridge differences, overlook the mistakes of the past, and forge a unit once more. The Lord's love continually intercedes on a person's part, making excuses, pleading for him, seeking to forgive and overlook his faults and lead him back to the happiness he is fleeing.

There is intercession in all love. This is beautifully described in the *Arcana Coelestia*:

*As regards intercession, the case is this. There is intercession in all love, consequently in all mercy, for mercy is of love. That he who loves or who feels compassion continually intercedes can be seen from examples. A husband who loves his wife wishes her to be received kindly by others, and to be treated well; he does not say this in express terms, but continually thinks it, consequently is in silence continually entreating it, and interceding for her (8573).*

Because he loves her, he wants her to be happy. Gently, from love, he is hoping for and guiding toward this. It does not show itself unless she is somehow not well received, and then he actively intercedes for and pleads for her. A wife does the same for her husband.

The Lord's infinite love intercedes for us all the time. If we make mistakes, He forgives—which is the same as pleading our case, for the amnesty is His to give. So does an earthly father in mortal ways—he does not condemn his son if he transgresses. He intercedes for him, tries to come between him and his misery, tries to build a bridge of love for him to return to happiness.

But what happens if the son refuses the helping hand of love? What if he is indifferent and contemptuous of his father, and time and again refuses all offers of love? Then there is a very grave separation. But does the father give up? Not if he loves truly. He looks for other ways to help, other modes, less direct than the offer of love, to try to build a bridge across which the son may return to a state of happiness.

This is what happened with the human race. People sinned, and the Lord offered forgiveness and the hand of love. Yet time and again it was struck aside, and people plunged further and further away from the Divine love until it seemed that there was total separation. People didn't want what the Lord had to offer. They didn't want His love and the priceless gifts it brought. They despised them. The Lord always offered, for love always intercedes and pleads on behalf of the sinner. But people didn't care for the offered forgiveness.

Therefore the Lord sought a new approach, a new form of intercession. Where love is refused, He intercedes through truth. Truth is the intercessor, and the Lord on earth, who taught Divine truth and therefore *is* Divine truth, was the intercessor, the medium through whom fallen humankind could return to the Divine love.

Take, once again, the example of an earthly father who is wise. His son transgresses—seriously. He offers forgiveness and love if the son changes his way. His offer is rejected, not once but many times, and with it the love. There is separation. Then the government of the father is through law, through truth instead. He points out the consequences of evil, threatens with punishment, administers it perhaps. He speaks the truth about good and evil, and leads the understanding, where possible, to see the dangers and the sorrows which follow evil. And finally he tries to show his son ways to get back into a good state of mind. From his greater wisdom he points out pathways through which the wrong can be rectified, and the boy learns to hold up his head once more. The father leads, through truth, back to love.

The Lord on earth taught the way of truth. Humankind had fallen. It had ceased to love even though love was freely offered all the time. People had made a great chasm between themselves and the Divine love. So the Lord God came down to earth and built a bridge across that chasm. He built the way of truth. On earth, and in His holy Scriptures and in the New Word, He taught people how to come back to heaven. He took upon Himself, and fought, and conquered every evil state which was threatening us, thus forever commanding the obedience and servility of hell. And He showed the way out of every evil state there is—the way of truth.

His truth is the mediator between a person and the Divine love. When people sin, and bring misery and the threat of judgment upon themselves, the Divine truth acts as a mediator. It says: "You have sinned, and to every sin there is a punishment. But here is how you may escape eternal unhappiness. Follow this path and you can return to your God." Every truth is a pathway leading to the Divine love. Each teaching in the Word comes between a person and his judgment, pleads his cause, shows him a way out of hell. There is mercy in every truth, no matter how stern it may seem.

This is the intercession of the Divine truth. But isn't it true that just as people refused to listen to the Lord on earth, so we all too often reject the way of truth? The Lord came on earth to save us. Yet people didn't think Him wonderful for His salvation, and they rejected and despised and thought they had killed Him. The Lord shows us ways out of our unhappiness and our potential hell, yet to us also His Word is sometimes not interesting or exciting: "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? ...He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that men should desire Him." This often the way the Word seems.

When love is rejected, the Lord leads by His truth. By His Word He shows a way to find our happiness once again. Yet we are tempted to give scant respect to that Word. Its truths don't seem beautiful at times. They seem hard to read, uninteresting, far less exciting than what some other people say. We are tempted to leave the books on the shelf. "And we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not."

Yet the infinity of the Divine love never ceases. However many times we may forget the Lord, He never stops interceding on our behalf, striving to show us yet another truth, trying to bring to our minds one more awareness of the path of life. Intercession, we are told, is continual remembrance from love (see *Apocalypse Explained* 805:7, 810:5). The Lord never forgets; He never "writes us off". No matter how deep the sin, no matter how we treat His Word in our hearts, He comes between us and eternal ruin. He cannot, and will not, stop all punishment. But He shows a new pathway, through the sight of some truth. And if we won't follow that path, then He walks with us, even closer, toward hell, and provides another pathway—and another one, and yet another. He opens up in our minds some way to return and bridge the gulf between ourselves and the Divine love, for He has no delight in the death of the wicked.

The Lord was born on earth solely to provide a path to heaven—innumerable paths—for each soul that ever will be born in His creation. The ways of the Divine truth are His intercession on behalf of fallen humanity. As He suffered on earth, so at times He suffers rejection at the hands of most of us—in the quietness of our hearts. But still He intercedes and finds ways for us. There is no day in our lives when we cannot turn. As is written in book of Isaiah:

*I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord  
And the praises of the Lord,  
According to all that the Lord has bestowed on us,  
And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,  
Which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies,  
According to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.*

*For He said, "Surely they are My people,  
Children who will not lie."  
So He became their Savior.*

*In all their affliction He was afflicted,  
And the angel of His Presence saved them;  
In His love and in His pity He redeemed them;  
And He bore them and carried them  
All the days of old (Isaiah 63:7-9).*

Amen.

Lessons: Isaiah 53; John 1:1-14; *Arcana Coelestia* 8573