

## **JESUS INTERCEDING FOR TRANSGRESSORS**

### **NO. 1385**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1877,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And made intercession for the transgressors.”  
Isaiah 53:12.*

Our blessed Lord made intercession for transgressors in so many words while He was being crucified, for He was heard to say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is generally thought that He uttered this prayer at the moment when the nails were piercing His hands and feet and the Roman soldiers were roughly performing their duty as executioners. At the very commencement of His passion He begins to bless His enemies with His prayers. As soon as the Rock of our salvation was smitten, there flowed forth from Him a blessed stream of intercession. Our Lord fixed His eyes upon that point in the character of His persecutors which was most favorable to them, namely, that they knew not what they did.

He could not plead their innocence and, therefore, He pleaded their ignorance. Ignorance could not excuse their deed, but it did lighten their guilt and, therefore, our Lord was quick to mention it as in some measure an extenuating circumstance. The Roman soldiers, of course, knew nothing of His higher mission—they were the mere tools of those who were in power—and though they “mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar,” they did so because they misunderstood His claims and regarded Him as a foolish rival of Caesar, only worthy to be ridiculed. No doubt the Savior included these rough Gentiles in His supplications. And perhaps their centurion who “glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man,” was converted in answer to our Lord’s prayer.

As for the Jews, though they had some measure of light, yet they, also, acted in the dark. Peter, who would not have flattered any man, yet said, “And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did, also, your rulers.” It is doubtless true that, had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, though it is equally clear that they ought to have known Him, for His credentials were clear as noonday! Our Redeemer, in that dying prayer of His, shows how quick He is to see anything which is, in any degree, favorable to the poor clients whose cause He has undertaken. He spied out in a moment the only fact upon which compassion could find a foothold and He secretly breathed out His loving heart in the cry, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Our great Advocate will be sure to plead wisely and efficiently on our behalf! He will urge every argument which can be discovered, for His eyes, quickened by love, will suffer nothing to pass which may be in our favor. The Prophet, however, does not, I suppose, intend to confine our thoughts to the one incident which is recorded by the Evangelists, for the intercession of Christ was an essential part of His entire lifework. The mountain’s side often heard Him, beneath the chilly night, pouring out His heart in supplications. He might as fitly be called the Man of Prayers as, “the Man of Sorrows.”

He was always praying, even when His lips moved not. While He was teaching and working miracles by day, He was silently communing with God and making supplication for men. And His nights, instead of being spent in seeking restoration from His exhausting labors, were frequently occupied with intercession. Indeed, our Lord’s whole life is a prayer! His career on earth was intercession worked out in actions. Since “He prays best who loves best,” He was a mass of prayer, for He is altogether Love. He is not only the channel and the example of prayer, but He is the life and force of prayer. The greatest plea with God is Christ, Himself! The argument which always prevails with God is Christ Incarnate, Christ fulfilling the Law and Christ bearing the penalty.

Jesus Himself is the reasoning and logic of prayer and He Himself is an ever living prayer unto the Most High. It was part of our Lord’s official work to make intercession for the transgressors. He is a Priest and as such He brings His offering and presents prayer on behalf of the people. Our Lord is the Great High Priest of our profession and in fulfilling this office we read that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears. And we know that He is now

offering up prayers for the souls of men. This, indeed, is the great work which He is carrying on today. We rejoice in His finished work, and rest in it, but that relates to His atoning Sacrifice. His intercession springs out of His Atonement and it will never cease while the blood of His Sacrifice retains its power.

The blood of sprinkling continues to speak better things than that of Abel. Jesus is pleading now and will be pleading till the heavens shall be no more. For all that come to God by Him He still presents His merits to the Father and pleads the causes of their souls. He urges the grand argument derived from His life and death and so obtains innumerable blessings for the rebellious sons of men.

**I.** I have to direct your attention, this morning, to our ever-living Lord making intercession for the transgressors. And as I do so I shall pray God, in the first place, that all of us may be roused to admiration for His Grace. Come, Brothers and Sisters, gather up your scattered thoughts and meditate upon Him who alone was found fit to stand in the gap and turn away wrath by His pleading! If you will consider His intercession for transgressors, I think you will be struck with the love, tenderness and graciousness of His heart when you remember that He offered intercession verbally while He was standing in the midst of their sin.

Sin heard of and sin seen are two very different things. We read of crimes in the newspapers, but we are not at all so horrified as if we had seen them for ourselves. Our Lord actually saw human sin—saw it unfettered and unrestrained—saw it at its worst. Transgressors surrounded His Person and, by their sins, darted 10,000 arrows into His sacred heart—and yet while they pierced Him, He prayed for them! The mob compassed Him round about, yelling, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” and His answer was, “Father, forgive them.” He knew their cruelty and ingratitude, and felt them most keenly, but answered them only with a prayer.

The great ones of the earth were there, too, sneering and jesting—Pharisee and Sadducee and Herodian—He saw their selfishness, conceit, falsehood and bloodthirstiness, yet He prayed! Strong bulls of Bashan had beset Him round and dogs had compassed Him, yet He interceded for men! Man’s sin had stirred up all its strength to slay God’s Love and, therefore, sin had arrived at its worst point—and yet Mercy kept pace with Malice and outran it, for He sought forgiveness for His tormentors! After killing Prophets and other messengers, the wicked murderers were now saying, “This is the Heir! Come, let us kill Him that the inheritance may be ours.” And yet that Heir of all things, who might have called fire from Heaven upon them, died crying, “Father, forgive them”!

He knew that what they did was sin, or He would not have prayed, “forgive them,” but yet He set their deed in the least unfavorable light and said, “they know not what they do.” He set His own Sonship to work on their behalf and appealed to His Father’s love to pardon them for His sake. Never was virtue set in so fair a frame! Never goodness came so adorned with abundant love as in the Person of the Lord Jesus—and yet they hated Him all the more for His loveliness and gathered around Him with the deeper spite because of His infinite goodness! He saw it all and felt the sin as you and I cannot feel it, for His heart was purer and, therefore, more tender than ours.

He saw that the tendency of sin was to put Him to death and all like He, yes, and to slay God, Himself if it could achieve its purpose, for man had become a Deicide and must crucify his God—and yet, though His holy soul saw and loathed all this tendency and atrocity of transgression—He still made intercession for the transgressors! I do not know whether I convey my own idea, but to me it seems wonderful beyond measure that He should know sin so thoroughly, understand its heinousness, see the drift of it, feel it so wantonly assailing Him when He was doing nothing but deeds of kindness—and yet with all that vivid sense of the vileness of sin upon Him—even then and there He made intercession for the transgressors, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Another point of His graciousness was clear on that occasion, namely, that He should thus intercede while in agony! It is marvelous that He should be able to call His mind away from His own pains to consider their transgressions. You and I, if we are subject to great pains of the body, do not find it easy to command our minds and especially to collect our thoughts and restrain them so as to forgive the person inflicting the pain and even to invoke blessings on his head! Remember that your Lord was *suffering* while He made intercession. He was beginning to suffer the pangs of death, suffering in soul as well as in body, for He had freshly come from the Garden where His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

Yet in the midst of that depression of spirit which might well have made Him forgetful of the wretched beings who were putting Him to death, He forgets *Himself* and He only thinks of them and pleads for them! I am sure that we should

have been taken up with our pains, even if we had not been moved to some measure of resentment against our tormentors. But we hear no complaints from our Lord, no accusations lodged with God, no angry replies to them such as Paul once gave—"God shall smite you, you whited wall!" Jesus uttered not even a word of mourning or of complaint concerning the indignities which He endured, but His dear heart all ascended to Heaven in that one blessed petition for His enemies, which then and there He presented to His Father.

But I will not confine your thoughts to that incident, because, as I have already said, the Prophet's words had a wider range. To me it is marvelous that He, being pure, should plead for transgressors at all! For you and for me among them—let the wonder begin there. Sinners by nature, sinners by practice, willful sinners, sinners who cling to sin with a terrible tenacity, sinners who come back to sin after we have smarted for it—and yet the Just One has espoused our cause and has become a suitor for our pardon! We are sinners who omit duties when they are pleasures and who follow after sins which are known to involve sorrow. We are sinners, therefore, of the most foolish kind—wanton, willful sinners—and yet He who hates all sin has deigned to take our part and plead the causes of our souls!

Our Lord's hatred of sin is as great as His love to sinners. His indignation against everything impure is as great as that of the thrice holy God who revenges and is furious when He comes into contact with evil. And yet this Divine Prince, of whom we sing, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness," espouses the cause of transgressors and pleads for them! Oh, matchless Grace! Surely angels wonder at this stretch of condescending love! Brothers and Sisters, words fail me to speak of it. I ask you to adore!

Further, it is to me a very wonderful fact that in His Glory He should *still* be pleading for sinners. There are some men who, when they have reached high positions, forget their former associates. They knew the poor and needy friend, once, for, as the proverb has it, poverty brings us strange bedfellows. But when they have risen out of such conditions, they are ashamed of the people whom once they knew. Our Lord is not thus forgetful of the degraded clients whose cause He espoused in the days of His humiliation. Yet though I know His constancy, I marvel and admire! The Son of Man on earth pleading for sinners is very gracious, but I am overwhelmed when I think of His interceding for sinners now that He reigns yonder where harps, unnumbered, tune His praise and cherubim and seraphim count it their glory to be less than nothing at His feet!

I am amazed to think that where all the Glory of His Father is resplendent in Himself and He sits at the right hand of God in Divine favor and majesty unspeakable, He is still interceding for transgressors! How can we hear without amazement that the King of kings and Lord of lords occupies Himself with caring for transgressors—caring, indeed, for you and me?! It is condescension that He should commune with the blood-washed before His Throne and allow the perfect spirits to be His companions! But that His heart should steal away from all Heaven's joys to remember such poor creatures as we are and make incessant prayer on our behalf—this is like His own loving Self—it is Christ-like, Godlike!

I think I see at this moment our great High Priest pleading before the Throne. He is wearing His jeweled breastplate and His garments of glory and beauty—wearing our names upon His breast and His shoulders in the Most Holy Place. What a vision of incomparable love! It is a fact and no mere dream. He is within the Holy of Holies, presenting the one sacrifice. His prayers are always heard and heard for us—but the marvel is that the Son of God should condescend to exercise such an office and make intercession for transgressors! This matchless Grace well near seals my lips, but it opens the floodgates of my soul and I would gladly pause to worship Him whom my words fail to set forth.

Again, it is gloriously gracious that our Lord should continue to do this, for lo, these 1,800 years and more He has gone into His Glory, yet He has never ceased to make intercession for transgressors. Never on Heaven's most joyous holiday, when all His armies are marshaled and, as their glittering squadrons pass in review before the King of kings, has He forgotten His redeemed ones! The splendors of Heaven have not made Him indifferent to the sorrows of earth. Never, though, for all we know, He may have created myriads of worlds, and though assuredly He has been ruling the courses of the entire universe, never once, I say, has He suspended His incessant pleading for the transgressors!

Nor will He, for the Holy Scriptures lead us to believe that as long as He lives as Mediator He will intercede—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." He lived and *lives* to intercede, as if this were the express objective of His living. Beloved, as long as the great Redeemer lives and there is a sinner still to come to Him, He will still continue to intercede! Oh, my Master, how shall I praise You? Had You undertaken such an office, now and then, and had You gone into the royal Presence only once in a while to intercede

for some special cases, it would have been divinely gracious on Your part. But that You should *always* be a Suppliant and never cease to intercede, surpasses all our praise! Wonderful are His words as written in prophecy by Isaiah—“For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.”

As the lamp in the temple never went out, so neither has our Advocate ceased to plead day nor night! Unwearied in His labor of love, without a pause, He has urged our case before the Father’s face! Beloved, I will not enlarge. I cannot, for adoration of such love quite masters me! But let your hearts be enlarged with abounding love to such an Intercessor as this, who *made*, who *does* make and who will *always* make intercession for transgressors! I have said, “will make,” and, indeed, this is no bare assertion of mine, for my text may be read in the future as well as in the past—indeed, as you will perceive upon a little thought—it must have been meant to be understood in the *future* since the prophecy was written some 700 years before our Lord had breathed His intercessory prayer at the Cross!

Although the Prophet, in order to make his language pictorial and vivid, puts it in the *past* tense, it was actually in the future to him and, therefore, we cannot err in reading it in the future, as I have done—“He *shall* make intercession for the transgressors.” Constant love puts up a ceaseless plan! Endless compassion breathes its endless prayer. Till the last of the redeemed has been gathered Home, that interceding breath shall never pause, nor cease to prevail!

II. Thus have I called you to feel admiration for His Grace. And now, secondly, I do earnestly pray that we may be led of the Holy Spirit to view His intercession for transgressors as to put our confidence in Him. There is ground for a sinner’s confidence in Christ and there is abundant argument for the Believer’s complete reliance in Him from the fact of His perpetual intercession. Let me show you this, first, because, Beloved, His intercession succeeds. God hears Him, of that we have no doubt, but what is the basis of this intercession? For whatever that is, seeing it makes the intercession to be successful, we may safely rest on it.

Read carefully the verse—“Because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors and He bore the sin of many.” See, then, the success of His plea arises out of His *Substitution*. He pleads and prevails because He has borne the sin of those for whom He intercedes! The main stay and strength of His prevalence in His intercession lies in the completeness of the Sacrifice which He offered when He bore the sin of many. Come, then, my Soul, if Christ’s prayer prevails because of this, so will your faith! Resting on the same Foundation, your faith will be equally secure of acceptance. Come, my Heart, rest on that Truth of God—“He bore the sin of many.” Throw yourself with all your sin upon His substitution and feel that this is a safe resting place for your believing, because it is a solid basis for your Lord’s intercession. The perfect Sacrifice will bear all the strain which can possibly come upon it—test it by the strongest faith and see for yourself! Plead it with the boldest requests and learn its boundless prevalence! You may urge the plea of the precious blood with the Father, seeing the Lord Jesus has urged it and has never failed.

Now, again, there is reason for transgressors to come and trust in Jesus Christ, seeing He pleads for them. You never need be afraid that Christ will cast you out when you can hear Him pleading for you! If a son had been disobedient and had left his father’s house and were to come back, again, if he had any fear about his father’s receiving him, it would all disappear if he stood listening at the door and heard his father praying for him. “Oh,” he would say, “my coming back is an answer to my father’s prayers! He will gladly enough receive me.”

Whenever a soul comes to Christ it need have no hesitancy, seeing Christ has already prayed for it that it might be saved. I tell you transgressors, Christ prays for you when you do not pray for yourselves! Did He not say of His believing people, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word”? Before His elect become Believers they have a place in His supplications! Before you know yourselves to be transgressors and have any desire for pardon—while as yet you are lying dead in sin—His intercession has gone up even for such as you! “Father, forgive them,” was a prayer for those who had never sought forgiveness for themselves! And when you dare not pray for yourselves, He is still praying for you! When, under a sense of sin, you dare not lift so much as your eyes toward Heaven. When you think, “Surely it would be in vain for *me* to seek my heavenly Father’s face,” He is pleading for you!

Yes, and when you *cannot* plead. When, through deep distress of mind you feel choked in the very *attempt* to pray. When the language of supplication seems to blister your lips because you feel yourself to be so unworthy. When you cannot force, even, a holy groan from your despairing heart—He still pleads for you! Oh, what encouragement this ought to give you! If you cannot pray, He can! And if you feel as if your prayers must be shut out, yet His intercession

cannot be denied! Come and trust Him! Come and trust Him! He who pleads for you will not reject you—do not entertain so unkind a thought—but come and cast yourself upon Him. Has He not said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Venture upon the assured truth of that Word and you will be received into the abode of His love.

I am sure, too that if Jesus Christ pleads for transgressors as transgressors, while as yet they have not begun to pray for themselves, He will be sure to hear them when they are, at last, led to pray. When the transgressor becomes a penitent. When he weeps because he has gone astray—let us be quite sure that the Lord of Mercy, who went after him in his sin, will come to meet him, now that he returns! There can be no doubt about that! I have known what it is to catch at this text when I have been heavy in heart. I have seen my sinfulness and I have been filled with distress, but I have blessed the Lord Jesus Christ that He makes intercession for the transgressors, for then I may venture to believe that He intercedes for *me* since I am a transgressor beyond all doubt.

Then again, when my spirit has revived, and I have said, “But yet I am a child of God and I know I am born from above,” then I have drawn a further inference—if He makes intercession for transgressors, then depend upon it—He is even more intent upon pleading for His own people! If He is heard for those who are out of the way, assuredly He will be heard for those who have returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. For them, above all others, He will be sure to plead, for He lives to intercede for all who come unto God by Him! In order that our confidence may be increased, consider the effect of our Lord’s intercession for transgressors. Remember, first, that many of the worst of transgressors have been preserved in life in answer to Christ’s prayer.

Had it not been for His pleading, they would have been dead long ago. You know the parable of the fig tree that cumbered the ground, bearing no fruit and impoverishing the soil? The master of the vineyard said, “Cut it down,” but the vinedresser said, “Let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well.” Need I say who He is that stops the axe which, otherwise, had long ago been laid at the root of the barren tree? I tell you ungodly men and women that you owe your very *lives* to my Lord’s interference on your behalf! You did not hear the intercession, but the great Owner of the vineyard heard it—and in answer to the gracious entreaties of His Son, He has let you live a little longer!

Still, are you where the Gospel can come at you and where the Holy Spirit can renew you? Is there no ground for faith in this gracious fact? Can you not trust in Him through whose instrumentality you are yet alive? Say to your heavenly Father—

*“Lord, and am I yet alive,  
Not in torments, not in Hell!  
Still does Your good Spirit strive—  
With the chief of sinners dwell?”*

I do not doubt but that between the prayer of Christ for His murderers and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, there was an intimate connection. As the prayer of Stephen brought Saul into the Church and made him an Apostle, so the prayer of Christ brought in 3,000 at Pentecost to become His disciples. The Spirit of God was given “to the rebellious, also,” in answer to the pleading of our Lord!

Now, it is a great blessing to have the Spirit of God given to the sons of men. And if this comes through Jesus’ prayers, let us trust in Him, for what will not come if we rely upon His power? Upon sinners He will still display His power—they will be pricked in their hearts and will believe in Him whom they have pierced. It is through Christ’s intercession that our poor prayers are accepted with God. John, in Revelation, saw another angel standing at the altar, having a golden censer, to whom there was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the Throne.

From where did all the incense come? What is it but Jesus’ merits? Our prayers are only accepted because of His prayers. If, then, the intercession of Christ for transgressors has made the prayers of transgressors to be accepted, let us, without wavering, put our trust in Him and let us show it by offering our supplications with a full assurance of faith and an unstaggering confidence in the promise of our Covenant God! Are not all the promises, yes and amen, in Christ Jesus? Let us remember Him and ask in faith, nothing wavering.

It is through the prayers of Christ, too, that we are kept in the hour of temptation. Remember what He said to Peter, “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not,” when Satan desired to have him and sift him as wheat. “Father, keep them from the Evil One” is a part of our Lord’s supplication—and His Father always hears Him! Well, if we are kept in

the midst of temptation from being destroyed because Christ pleads for us, let us never fear to trust ourselves in His kind, careful hands! He can keep us, for He has kept us! If His prayers have delivered us out of the hands of Satan, His eternal power can bring us safely home though Death lies in the way. Indeed, it is because He pleads that we are saved at all! He is “able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

This, also, is one grand reason why we are able to challenge all the accusations of the world and of the devil, for, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who, also, makes intercession for us.” Satan’s charges are all answered by our Advocate! He defends us at the Judgment Seat when we stand there like Joshua in filthy garments, accused by the devil and the verdict is always given in our favor— “Take away his filthy garments from him.” Oh, you that would bring slanderous accusations against the saints of God, they will not damage us in the court of the great King, for, “if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.”

Think, my dear Brothers and Sisters, of what the intercession of Jesus has done, and you will clearly perceive great inducements to place your sole reliance in your Lord. You who have never trusted Him, will you, this very morning, begin to do so? Come, weary Heart, take the Lord Jesus to be your confidence—what more do you need? Can you desire a better Friend than He is, a more prevalent Advocate before the Throne? Come, leave all other trusts and yield yourselves to Him this morning! I pray you, accept this advice of love! And you, you saints, if you are foolish enough to have doubts and fears, come, see how Jesus pleads for you! Give Him your burden to bear, leave with Him your anxieties at this moment that He may care for you. He will carry your case before the Eternal Throne and carry it through to success!

He who engages a solicitor to manage his legal business among men leaves his affairs in his hands. And he who has such a pleader before God as Christ Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, has no need to torment himself with anxieties! Rather, let him rest in Jesus, and wait for the result with patience—

*“Give Him, my Soul,  
Your cause to plead,  
Nor doubt the Father’s Grace.”*

So much, then, for the duty of exercising confidence in Him. May the Holy Spirit fill you with faith and peace!

**III.** And now, in the third place, I pray that our text may inspire us with the spirit of *obedience* to His example. I say obedience to His example, for I take the example of Christ to be an embodied precept as much binding upon us as His written commands. The life of Christ is a precept to those who profess to be His disciples. Now, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may I put a few practical matters before you and will you endeavor, by the help of God’s Spirit, to carry them out?

First, then, your Lord makes intercession for the transgressors—therefore imitate Him by forgiving all transgressions against yourself. Have any offended you? Let the very recollection of the offense, as far as possible, pass from your minds, for none have ever injured you as men injured Him! Let me say as *you*, yourself, have injured Him! They have not nailed you to a cross, nor pierced your hands, feet and side. Yet, if He said, “Father, forgive them,” well may you say the same. Ten thousand talents did you owe? Yet He forgave you all that debt, not without a grievous outlay to Himself—your brother owes you but a hundred pence—will you take him by the throat? Will you not, rather, freely forgive him even to 70 times seven?

Can you not forgive him? If you find it to be impossible, I will not speak to you any longer as a Christian, because I must doubt if you are a Believer at all! The Lord cannot accept you while you are unforgiving since He, Himself, says, “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.” If peace is not made, you will not be accepted! God does not hear those in whose hearts malice and enmity find a lodging! Yet I would speak to you in tones of love rather than with words of threats—as a follower of the gentle Christ, I beseech you imitate Him in this and you shall find rest and comfort for your soul.

From the day in which Christ forgives you, rise to that nobility of character which finds pleasure in forgiving all offenses fully and frankly for Christ’s sake. Surely, the Atonement which He offered, if it satisfied God, may well satisfy

you and make amends for the sin of your brother against you as well as against the Lord! Jesus took upon Himself the transgressions of the second table of the Law, as well as of the first—and will you bring a suit against your brother for the sin which Jesus bore? Brothers and Sisters, you must forgive, for the blood has blotted out the record! Let these words of Scripture drop upon your hearts like gentle dew from Heaven—“Be you kind, one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you.”

Next, imitate Christ, dear Friends, in pleading for *yourselves*. Since you are transgressors and you see that Jesus intercedes for transgressors, make bold to say, “If He pleads for such as I am, I will put in my humble petition and hope to be heard through Him. Since I hear Him cry, ‘Father, forgive them,’ I will humbly weep at His feet and try to mingle my faint and trembling plea with His all-prevalent supplication.” When Jesus says, “Father, forgive them,” it will be your wisdom to cry, “Father, forgive *me!*” Dear Hearer, that is the way to be saved! Let your prayers hang like the golden bells upon the skirts of the great High Priest! He will carry them within the veil and make them ring out sweetly there. As music borne on the breeze is heard afar, so shall your prayers have a Listener in Heaven because Jesus wafts them there. Since your prayers are feeble, yoke them to the Omnipotence of His intercession! Let His merits be as wings on which they may soar and His power as hands with which they may grasp the priceless blessings.

What shall I say to those who refuse to pray when they have such an encouragement as the aid of Jesus? Tones of tenderness are suitable when addressing the ungodly when we would persuade them to pray. But if they refuse the intercession of Jesus Christ, Himself, then must we add our solemn warnings! If you perish, your blood is on your own heads—we must say, Amen, to your condemnation and bear witness that you deserve to be doubly punished! Rejecters of great mercy must expect great wrath. The intercession of your Savior, when refused, will be visited upon you most terribly in the day when He becomes your Judge.

Let us imitate our Lord in a third point, dear Friends, namely, if we have been forgiven our transgressions, let us now intercede for transgressors, since Jesus does so. He is the great Example of all His disciples, and, if He makes it His constant business to supplicate for sinners, should not His people unite with Him? Therefore would I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance to come together in your hundreds and in your thousands to pray. Never let our Prayer Meetings decline! Let us, as a Church, make intercession for transgressors and never rest from seeking the conversion of all around us. I trust that every day, so often as you bow the knee for yourselves, you will make intercession for the transgressors!

Poor things, many of them are sinning against their own souls, but they know not what they do! They think to find pleasure in sin! In this, also, they know not what they do. They break the Sabbath. They despise the sanctuary. They reject Christ. They go downward to Hell with mirth, singing merry glees as if they were going to a wedding feast! They know not what they do! But you know what they are doing. By your humanity—scarcely shall I need to urge a stronger motive—I say, by mere humanity I beseech you, do all you can for these poor souls and especially pray for them! It is not much you are asked to do—you are not pointed to the Cross and bid to bleed there for sinners! You are but asked to make intercession.

Intercession is an honorable service. It is an ennobling thing that a sinner like yourself should be allowed to entreat the King for others. If you could have permission to frequent the Queen’s courts, you would not think it a hardship to be asked to present a petition for another. It would be a delight to be enjoyed, a privilege to be snatched at eagerly that you should be permitted to present requests for others. Oh, stand where Abraham stood and plead for sinners! Sodom could scarcely be worse than many portions of the world at this hour. Plead, then, with all your hearts! Plead again and again, and again with the Lord, though you are but dust and ashes—and cease not till the Lord says, “I have heard the petition. I will bless the city. I will save the millions and my Son shall be glorified.”

I have not quite done, for I have a further duty to speak of, and it is this. Let us take care, dear Friends, that if we do plead for others, we mix with it the doing of good to them, because it is not recorded that He made intercession for transgressors until it is first written, “He bore the sin of many.” For us to pray for sinners without *instructing* them, without exerting ourselves to *awaken* them, or making any sacrifice for their *conversion*—without using any likely means for their impression and conviction—would be a piece of mere formality on our part. According to our ability, we must prove the sincerity of our petitions by our *actions*. Prayer without *effort* is falsehood—and that cannot be pleasing to God. Yield up yourselves to seek the good of others and then may you intercede with honest hearts.

Lastly, if Christ appears in Heaven for us, let us be glad to appear on earth for Him. He acknowledges us before God and the holy angels—let us not be ashamed to confess Him before men and devils. If Christ pleads with God for men, let us not be backward to plead with men for God. If He, by His intercession, saves us to the uttermost, let us hasten to *serve* Him to the uttermost. If He spends eternity in intercession for us, let us spend our time in intercession for His cause. If He thinks of us, we ought, also, to think of His people and especially supplicate for His afflicted. If He watches our cases and adapts His prayers to our necessities, let us observe the needs of His people and plead for them with understanding.

Alas, how soon do men weary of pleading for our Lord! If a whole day is set apart for prayer and the meeting is not carefully managed, it readily becomes a weariness of the flesh. Prayer Meetings very easily lose their flame and burn low. Shame on these laggard spirits and this heavy flesh of ours which needs to be pampered with liveliness and brevity or we go to sleep at our devotions! “Forever” is not too long for Him to plead and yet an *hour* tries us! On and on and on through all the ages His intercession rises to the Throne of God and yet we weaken and our prayers are half dead in a short season!

Look, Moses lets his hands hang down and Amalek is defeating Joshua in the plain! Can we endure to be losing victories and causing the enemy to triumph? If our ministers are unsuccessful. If our laborers for Christ in foreign lands make little headway. If the work of Christ drags, is it not because in the secret place of intercession we have but little strength? The lack of prayer is the weakness of the Church! If we awakened ourselves to lay hold upon the Covenant Angel and resolutely cried, “I will not let You go, except You bless me,” we should enrich ourselves and our age! If we used more of the strong reasons which make up the weapon of all-prayer, our victories would not be so few and far between!

Our interceding Lord is hindered for lack of an interceding Church! The kingdom comes not because so little use is made of the Throne of Grace. Get to your knees, my Brothers and Sisters, for on your knees you conquer! Go to the Mercy Seat and remain there! What better argument can I use with you than this—Jesus is there—and if you desire His company you must oftentimes resort there. If you want to taste His dearest, sweetest love, do what He is doing—union of work will create a new communion of heart. Let us never be absent when praying men meet together! Let us make a point of frequenting assemblies gathered for prayer, even if we give up other occupations. While we live, let us be, above all things, men of prayer! And when we die, if nothing else can be said of us, may men give us this epitaph, which is, also, our Lord’s memorial—“He made intercession for the transgressors.” Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.