



Week 3: Jesus—Our Intercessor, Advocate and Friend

Based on “Gentle & Lowly” by Dane Ortlund

NCAC Adult Sunday School

January 30, 2022

What do you picture Jesus doing right now?

Course Goal: To reflect on not just what Jesus has done or is doing, but on who he *is*—and to then find encouragement, strength and rest as we delight in the deepest affections of Christ for his people.

Want to Read Along? *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* by Dane Ortlund (Crossway, 2020)

- January 30: Chapters 8-12
- February 6: Chapters 13-16
- February 13: Chapters 17-21
- February 20: Chapters 22-23

Christ has revealed to us his true heart:

*“²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for **I am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)*

Christ is now our sympathetic high priest who can deal gently with us:

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to **sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4:15)*

*“**He can deal gently** with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.” (Heb. 5:2)*

Christ will never cast out his own:

*“³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and **whoever comes to me I will never cast out**. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.” (John 6:37-39)*

God has cautioned against remaking him in our own image. Instead, we must let God tell us who he is:

*“^{9b} ...for **I am God and not a man**, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.” (Hosea 11:9b)*

What is Christ doing now? He is interceding for us! Christ's heart is drawn to his people now as much as it ever was during his time on earth. One way Jesus demonstrates his ongoing love and concern is through his ceaseless intercession for us, as seen in both Romans 8:33-35 and Hebrews 7:23-27.

*“³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.** ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” (Romans 8:33-35)*

*“²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ 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.** ²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.” (Hebrews 7:23-27)*

“What is intercession? In general terms it means that a third party comes between two others and makes a case to one on behalf of the other. Think of a parent interceding to a teacher on behalf of a child or an agent interceding to a sports franchise on behalf of an athlete.” (*Gentle and Lowly, p. 79*)

Given the context of Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25, in what sense is Christ interceding for us?

“The atonement *accomplished* our salvation; intercession is the moment-by-moment *application* of that atoning work. In the past, Jesus did what he now talks about; in the present, Jesus talks about what he then did...Intercession is the constant hitting ‘refresh’ of our justification in the court of heaven.” (*Gentle and Lowly, pp. 79-80.*)

Verse 25 tells us that Christ “is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God.” How is this truth meant to affect us?

What is implied by the phrase “always lives” in verse 25?

“We all tend to have some small pocket of our life where we have difficulty believing the forgiveness of God reaches. We say we are totally forgiven. And we sincerely believe our sins are

forgiven. *Pretty much, anyway.* But there's that one deep, dark part of our lives, even our present lives, that seems so intractable, so ugly, so beyond recovery. 'To the uttermost' in Hebrews 7:25 means: God's forgiving, redeeming, restoring touch reaches down into the darkest crevices of our souls, those places where we are most ashamed, most defeated. More than this: those crevices of sin are themselves the places where Christ loves us the most. His heart willingly goes there. His heart is most strongly drawn there. He knows us to the uttermost, and he saves us to the uttermost, because his heart is out to us to the uttermost. We cannot sin our way out of his tender care." (p. 83)

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 4

In addition to being our Intercessor, Christ is also our Advocate:

"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." (1 John 2:1)

What does 1 John 2:1 teach us about Christ, the Advocate?

How is an advocate different from an intercessor?

"A closely related notion to intercession is that of advocacy. The two ideas overlap, but there is a slightly different nuance to the Greek words underlying each. Intercession has the idea of *mediating* between two parties, bringing them together. Advocacy is similar but has the idea of *aligning* oneself with another. An intercessor stands between two parties; an advocate doesn't simply stand in between the two parties but steps over and joins the one party as he approaches the other. Jesus is not only an intercessor but an advocate. And like intercession, advocacy is a neglected teaching in the church today, and it flows straight from the depths of Christ's very heart." (Gentle and Lowly, p. 87)

How should it impact us to know Christ is advocating for us in this way?

"What if we never needed to advocate for ourselves because another had undertaken to do so? What if that advocate knew exhaustively just how fallen we are, and yet at the same time was able to make a better defense for us than we ever could? No blame shifting or excuses, the way our self-advocacies tend to operate, but perfectly just, pointing to his all-sufficient sacrifice and sufferings on the cross in our place? *We would be free.*" (Gentle and Lowly, p. 93)

It should bring rest to our souls (Matthew 11:29) to know that Christ is not only our Intercessor and Advocate, but also our Friend:

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (Matthew 11:19)

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 5

What does it mean that Jesus is “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19)? Does this mean that Jesus condones sin?

How is Jesus a better friend to us than any human friend could ever be?

“Here is the promise of the gospel and the message of the whole Bible: **In Jesus Christ, we are given a friend who will always enjoy rather than refuse our presence.** This is a companion whose embrace of us does not strengthen or weaken depending on how clean or unclean, how attractive or revolting, how faithful or fickle, we presently are. The friendliness of his heart for us subjectively is as fixed and stable as is the declaration of his justification of us objectively.”
(Gentle and Lowly, p. 115)

Jesus also spoke of his friendship with his disciples in John 15:15: *“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”*

What point is Jesus making about the nature of his friendship with us in this verse?

How do we hold the truth that Jesus is our friend in proper tension with other biblical truths?

“To be sure, Christ is indeed our ruler, our authority, the one to whom all allegiance and obedience are reverently due...But equally, and perhaps less obvious or intuitive to us, the condescension of God in the person of his Son means that he approaches us on our own terms and befriends us for both his and our mutual delight.” *(Gentle and Lowly, p. 119)*