

St. Paul's, Muskego, Wisconsin  
June 18, 2017

## Prayer is Powerful: Stepping into the Breach

### Exodus 32:11-14

*<sup>11</sup> But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup> Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. <sup>13</sup> Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'"<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.*

Being a father is great... until you see your kids in trouble, when you see your kids make mistakes. And they will. Kids sin just like us.

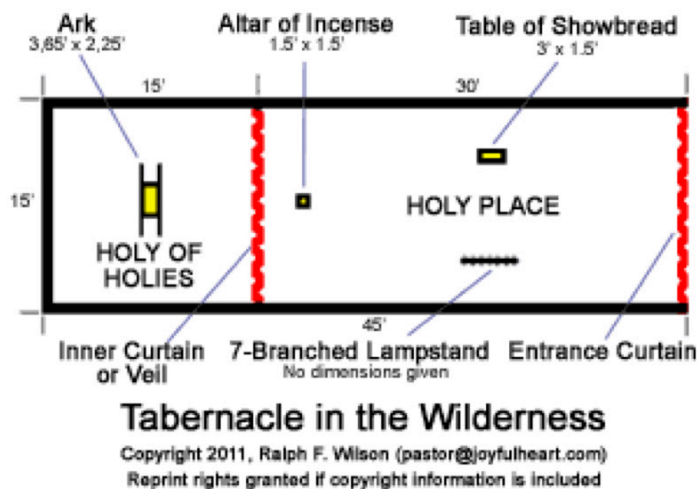
Moses is facing that in our lesson. You can read farther and see how he disciplines "his kids." But before he disciplines them, he first has an interaction with God. Right after the Israelites have worshipped the golden calf, he stands in God's presence. What will he do?

He can disown them. "Those lousy stubborn Israelites! God, bring your judgment down on them." The trouble with that approach is what Jesus said, "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:2). If Moses condemns them, he also deserves to be condemned.

A second option is that Moses can carry the weight of their guilt. He was their leader. If they started to worship the golden calf right away, it must have been because he failed as their leader. As parents, we can have the same feeling. What did I do wrong as a parent that my child is making a sinful choice? After all, none of us is a perfect parent, so we can always find fault with our parenting. So we tend to carry the weight of our children's guilt. King David once said about his own sin: "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear" (Psalm 38:4). If we can't bear the weight of our own guilt, how can we carry our children's guilt? It will crush us!

So what should we do? A third option is to follow Moses' example and step into the breach.

[God] said he would destroy them—  
had not Moses, his chosen one,  
stood in the breach before him  
to keep his wrath from destroying them (Psalm 106:23).



As you come before God, can you come before him like Moses? In the Old Testament, people couldn't just walk into God's presence. In the Tabernacle, God promised to dwell in a cloud between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. They couldn't approach the holy God. Only the priests could come into God's presence. And only the High Priest could step directly into God's presence in the Most Holy Place, and that only on the Day of Atonement.

Moses, on Mt. Sinai, is in this priestly position of being directly in the presence of God. Moses steps into the breach to stand between the just judgment of God and God's people. He steps into the breach as a priest and prays for them.

Now that is great for Moses, but what does that have to do with you and me? Well, look at our worship space. Is there any veil that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place? No, there is no division between you and your God. Peter says that we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9). When did you enter into that priesthood? It was when you came to faith. For many of us, it happened at our baptisms. You are a child of God and that means you are a priest with direct access to God. You are in a unique position to pray for your family.

Many of you are high priests. On this Father's Day weekend, we recognize that God has called fathers to be the high priests in their families. You are called to be the head of the family, to be the spiritual leader, the pastor or high priest who leads the way into God's presence in prayer.

We recognize that many families don't have a father who serves as high priest. So moms and grandpas and grandmas and aunts and uncles may have to step into that high priestly role.

Now how do we pray? As you stand before God as a priest... first remember how Moses addresses him. He is "the LORD his God." What does that mean? LORD in all caps says that our God is the Savior God, the God of unchanging and independent love.

"His God" means that Moses had confidence that the God with whom he spoke not only was the forgiving God but also the God who had bound himself to Moses by promise. Moses could be sure God was "on his side."

That's what Jesus wants us to believe as we pray the Lord's Prayer. God is our God, the God who is on our side. Allow me to read the Address to the Lord's Prayer. Circle the words or phrases that really stand out for you.

Our Father in heaven.

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

What words did you circle? Tenderly? Invites? Boldly? Confidently?

What gives us that confidence? By remembering the great acts of love of the past. That's what Moses did.

*"LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"*

Over and over it comes back to this. How can I have hope as I stand as priest before God for my family? By going back to the great saving acts of the past. Lord, don't come in judgment on your child for whom I pray. He is your child. You created him. You redeemed him by the blood of your dear Son. You sent the Holy Spirit upon him or her in their baptisms.

Here is a secret. God wants to be beaten in prayer! Yes, he threatens punishment on those who reject him. But he desires to be merciful. In Ezekiel he says, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11). So let's go back and see his love to his people in the past, and his love specifically for our children. And let's remind him of that. And then remind him of his promises.

*<sup>13</sup> "Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'"*

God, you swore by yourself. Keep this promise because your reputation depends on it! That's what we pray in the first petition. Hallowed be your name. Let your name or reputation be honored in all things.

What promises of prayer come to mind? I've listed three of them on the back of the worship folder. Let's read them together.

<sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

<sup>13</sup> "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

<sup>14</sup> This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him (1 John 5:14-15).

I'll be honest. Part of me says these promises are not true. Oh, I know people will say, "I prayed for this or that, and God gave it to me. Therefore, I know prayer works." But what about all those times you and I have prayed for what we thought were the "no brainer" solutions that God could give us, and there was no answered prayer.

How do I know that these promises of prayer are worth anything? The place to which I always go back is the Easter morning tomb. If Jesus rose from the dead "just as he said" (Matthew 28:6), then he can fulfill these promises about prayer. That's why we celebrate Easter every Sunday. Every Sunday is a time for us to go back to the tomb and be assured that it was empty Easter morning.

Every week there are lots of events in our lives that make us wonder, "Is God really in control? Is he really answering my prayer?" That's why we are making an effort to help all of you, and today, especially fathers, to think of Every Sunday as Easter. Make that commitment to see every Sunday like Easter and worship every week. Our online presence makes that possible for all of us. (See [www.stpaulmuskego.org](http://www.stpaulmuskego.org).)

Then celebrate that your prayers make a difference! "*Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.*" The LORD relented. That is the same word that is used of humans as "he repented" or "he changed his mind." God promises that our prayers change things! The LORD relented. He "changed his mind" in answer to Moses' prayer.

On this Father's Day I want to think about our children... whether they are children by birth, or your children whom you love and care for because they are your friend's children or simply your little brothers and sisters in the faith like Yohannes and Mia who were baptized this weekend.

I wish that our children would grow up in a sheltered world where everything would go perfectly for them. But that isn't the world any of us live in. And they inherited from us a sinful nature. So they are going to sin. They are going to rebel. Just like us. We will have to have hard heart-to-heart talks with our children. Our younger children, we'll have to discipline. Our older children, we may have to call them to repentance. But before those conversations, let's have the kind of conversation that Moses had. Let's come into God's presence in our roles as priests of God.

On this Father's Day, I want to remind every father present that your primary task is to be a remember'er and pray'er. To lead the way for your family in remembering the promises of the Savior... to join us in an Easter Every Sunday commitment... to step into the breach and pray for your children.

To help you step into the breach, we have bought 300 copies of a book that several of our staff have read. *The Power of a Praying Parent* can help you get into a habit of powerful praying for your children. Even if you don't read the entire book, I would encourage you to use the next 31 days praying the 31 prayers for our children at the end of each devotion.

I want to close today by assuring you that you are not alone in your role as priests praying for your children. All of us are praying for you. So I'd ask the high priests of our families to stand... first all the fathers present. Could you please stand? Then all the moms present. Could you please

stand? Now all of us, who have the call to pray for the children in our families and in our family of believers, please stand. See. You are not alone. We are joining together in prayer.

We close praying the first prayer in the book *The Power of a Praying Parent*, page 28. Not surprisingly, it is a prayer for us priests... that we might step into the breach for our children. Let's pray this together.

Lord, I submit myself to you. I realize that parenting a child in the way you would have me to is beyond my human abilities. I know I need you to help me. I want to partner with you and partake of your gifts of wisdom, discernment, revelation and guidance. I also need your strength and patience, along with a generous portion of your love flowing through me.

Teach me how to love the way you love. Where I need to be healed, delivered, changed, matured, or made whole, I invite you to do that in me. Help me to walk in righteousness and integrity before you. Teach me your ways, enable me to obey your commandments and do only what is pleasing in your sight.

May the beauty of your Spirit be so evident in me that I will be a godly role model. Give me the communication, teaching, and nurturing skills that I must have. Make me the parent you want me to be and teach me how to pray and truly intercede for the life of this child. Lord, you said in your word, "Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22). In Jesus' name I ask that you will increase my faith to believe all the things you've put on my heart to pray for concerning this child.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Prepared by Pastor Peter Panitzke  
414-422-0320, ext. 122  
[ppanitzke@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:ppanitzke@stpaulmuskego.org)

### **My Next Steps to Stand in the Breach**

- Meditate on the promises of prayer: Matthew 7:7-8, John 14:13,14; 1 John 5:14, 15.
- Commit to standing in the breach by praying for "your" children, either those biologically related to you or to those whom you know.