

INTERCESSION OF SAINTS

What is Intercession?

It is a "**supplication** to God on behalf of another person". Thus, we are not praying to the saints; we are asking their prayers and their support for us.

Isn't Jesus our only Intercessor? (One Mediator.. Many Intercessors)

The Protestants refuse the intercession of saints, claiming that we only have one Advocate before God, Jesus Christ. They base their claim on the verse: "*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1Tim 2:5-6).

However, according to this verse, there is a great difference between the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ and the intercession of the saints.

Meditation of Lord Jesus:

The mediation of Jesus Christ is expiatory. He mediates as an **Atoner and a Redeemer** who sacrificed Himself and paid the wages of our sins.

In His mediation, He is saying to the Father: "*Do not count for them their iniquity for I have laid on Me the iniquity of all of them*" (Is 53:6).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man. He gave the Father His right-fulfilling and divine justice and gave us forgiveness by dying for us as atonement for our sins.

"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1Jn 2:1-2).

Intercession of Saints:

The intercession of the saints for humans has nothing to do with atonement or redemption. However, they are praying for us before God.

It is a **pleading and supplication**, not an expiatory intercession like that of our Lord Christ.

Why have Intercessors when I can pray directly to God?

At the time of distress and trouble, or when struggling against our sins, we cry out to the Lord, praying earnestly and with great diligence.

As humans, we always find power and **strength in our unity** with others. Hence, St. Paul also said: *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"* (Heb 12:1).

Even the great St. Paul felt this need to have others pray for him. He asked the Thessalonians and the Hebrews: *"pray for us"* (2Thes 3:1, Heb 13:18). He also said to the Ephesians: *"...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - and for me"* (Eph 6:18-19). If the **saints ask us to pray for them**, shall we not ask them to pray for us?

Saints care very much for our troubles, because we are all the **one body of Christ**, and they pray for us to the LORD. St. Paul said: *"they should not be made perfect apart from us"* (Heb 11:40). We tend to forget and fall lazy, or we get busy with our daily life, but the saints and the angels are praying for us without ceasing.

In addition, the Bible tells us: *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"* (Jam 5:16). A humble and honest heart will be wise enough to realize that **some people's prayers carry more power and effectiveness** by virtue of their righteousness. St. Mary, the Archangels, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles, the Prophets, the Martyrs and the Saints have one thing in common: they pleased God with their deeds, and thus are acceptable to Him, are present in His Kingdom seeing Him face to face, and their voices are heard. We read in the Book of Revelation that *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things"* (Rev 21:7). If saints inherit all things, it is hard to believe that God would refuse their requests!

God loves us, and He does not need others to pray to Him for the sake of His children! However, our prayers for one another is a **manifestation of our mutual love**; a proof of our belief that those who have departed are still living and that their prayers are accepted by God; and an indication that **God venerates His saints**.

Is Intercession mentioned in the Bible?

The request for prayer is countless in the Holy Bible, both in the Old and the New Testaments.

In the Old Testament:

- Abraham's intercession saved Lot's family from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God even says that He would not destroy the cities for the sake of the righteous living there (Gen 18:23-32).
- Moses' many intercessions for the people of God held back the hand of God from consuming them in His wrath (Ex 32:7-14; Num 21:7-9; Deu 9:8-9, 12-20, 23-27). He even sought the intercession of the saints in His own prayer for the people (Ex 32:13)
- Through the intercession of Isaac, barren Rebecca bore 2 sons (Gen 25:21)
- Jacob's prayer and strive with God changed the heart of Esau (Gen 32-33)
- Elijah prayed and the rain stopped for 3.5 years. He prayed for the woman from Shonum, and her little amount oil and flour lasted for 3 years. He also raised her son from the dead through prayer.
- The prayers of Elisha healed Naman the Syrian. His intercession gave the woman from Seida a child, and also raised the child from the dead.

Intercession of Angels:

- Even Archangels seek each other's help. When God sent Archangel Gabriel to defeat the devil, he said "*But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia*" (Dan 10:13-14)
- Archangel Raphael interceded for Tobit and Sarah: "*I can now tell you that when you, Tobit, and Sarah prayed, it was I who presented and read the record of your prayer before the Glory of the Lord... God commissioned me to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah*" (Tob 12:12-15)
- The angle interceded for Jerusalem that God may have mercy on them (Zech 1:12) even without them asking; how much more if they did!
- An angel of the Lord guarded and saved Jacob several times (Gen 48:16).
- Angels have a work to perform for the people: "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*" (He.1: 14)

God commanded us to seek the Prayers of the Saints:

- When Abimelek took Abraham's wife thinking she was his sister, God appeared to him in a dream saying: *"Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live"* (Gen 20:7)
- At the end of the Book of Job, God said to Eliphaz: *"I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about Me as my servant Job has... My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly"* (Job 42:7-8)
- So many times, when the sons of King David sinned against God, He had mercy upon them: *"for the sake of My servant David"* (1Kng 11:11-13; 2Kng 19:34; Is 37:35)

In all these events, God spoke directly to the erring person, but He did not grant forgiveness directly, rather conditioned it to the prayer of the saints to venerate them in the eyes of the people.

In the New Testament:

- When the four friends brought the paralytic to Jesus, the Bible says: *"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you"* (Mk 2:1-5)
- St. Mary asked her Son, and He provided heavenly wine at the wedding at Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:1-11)
- Jesus heard the intercessions of the people who pleaded on behalf of the Centurion, asking for the healing of his servant (Luk 7:1-10); and the intercession of His disciples for Simeon's mother-in-law (Luk 4:38-41); the prayers of the man whose son was demon-possessed (Mrk 9:17-25); the pleadings of the Canaanite women for her daughter (Mat 15:22-28); etc...
- When Peter was kept in prison, awaiting his death sentence, constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church, and God sent His angel and saved him (Act 12:5-7)
- St. Paul told his disciple St. Timothy: *"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men"* (1Tim 2:1). He also asked the Thessalonians *"Pray for us"* (2Ths 3:1)
- St. James teaches us *"Pray for one another"* (Jam 5:16)

These are Intercessions of living people, what about departed Saints?

The real question is: Are the departed Saints really "dead" that they cannot pray for us? Jesus answered this question clearly in (Mat 22:32) when He confronted the Sadducees.

The Saints are spiritually alive! S.Mary, St.George, St.Philopateer, etc... are people who have attained a high degree of "Theosis" (likeness to or union with God, being restored into His image).

Thus, if we ask the prayers of living humans who are still struggling with a nature like ours, shall we not seek the prayers of the saints who completed their struggle and departed to Paradise to live with Lord Jesus?

Biblical Examples:

- The dry bones of Prophet Elisha raised a dead man by mere contact, without prayer (2Kng 13:21). How much more effective would his living soul be?
- If St. Paul's aprons healed the sick and drove out many demons (Act 19:12), how much more could his soul and that of other souls have in heaven?
- The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ proves that their souls did not die, but are in Paradise, seeing and knowing more than we do.

Do Angels and Saints know our condition? Do our prayers reach them?

- The Lord said: "...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Lk 15:7). This means that the news of earth reaches the inhabitants of heaven.
- The angels know our prayers because they carry them to God's throne. It is written: "...the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev 5:8). Likewise, in the story of Tobit.
- In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham said to the rich man: "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things" (Lk 16:25). Abraham knew the deeds of both.

Some Final Remarks

- Intercession is a fellowship of love between the members of the One Body. Jesus Christ asked the Father: *"...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us"* (Jn 17:21-23)
- Intercession entails meekness of heart. The person who asks for intercession is a humble person, who is not conceited about his personal relationship with God, but takes the position of the sinner and the weak who requests the intercession of others for his sake.
- Intercession is proof of God's justice in the principle of equal opportunities. If God permits Satan and his demons to fight and tempt us, He also permits the angels and the saints to help and support us.
- The intercession of the saints for us is not merely a theological research that is text-proved from the Holy Bible, but a living reality we experience. It is a living history throughout the generations, narrating the amazing relationship between people and the saints (e.g. St.Mina and Pope Kirolls, St.Philopateer and Tamav Irini, etc.)

Read the life-stories of the saints and you will come to know about the intervention of the angels and saints in people's lives. As far as these people are concerned, the subject of their relationship with the saints is not a one day and night acquaintance but it is an age-long relationship.