

Some thoughts on Prayer

The question comes up from time to time about the proper mode of prayer. Or rather, the recipient of such prayer. Should it be directed to God only. Or is it okay to attempt the intercession of others such as Mary or some of the saints that have gone before us.

This is not intended to be a philosophical dissertation or an exhaustive study of all the ramifications involved in such a broad subject. So, consequently, we will basically let the Bible speak for itself. We understand, going out the gate, that you cannot prove a negative. If, from a biblical standpoint, one can prove that it is alright to try to involve Mary or the saints in our prayer life, then, bon appetite! I stand corrected.

In my brief studies, so far, I have learned a few broad guidelines regarding prayer. We should always pray. Prayer is always & only directed to God. We are encouraged to pray for & with each other. But I cannot find a single instance in the Bible where we are encouraged, told or made to think that we should in any way involve those who have passed on before us in our prayer life. On the contrary, the Bible has a lot to say & has some very opinionated thoughts as to having anything to do with the dead! They are not pretty & the consequences can be disastrous!

Here we have a dilemma. In the absence of any direct command or even indirect suggestion that we involve the dead (whether it be to 'focus' or to fulfill the promise of '2 or 3 being gathered together' or gain some intangible "support" for our petition) where do we stand from a biblical perspective? It boils down to a philosophical attitude or approach to the scriptures. Do we stand on what the Bible reveals & no more. Or do we add tradition & exceed the bounds of scripture? Is that a 'can of worms' that I see sitting on the counter? Yep!

Well, let's get into a few verses. Remember, I cannot 'prove a negative'. If someone says, 'we have always done this or that' (& it is not mentioned in the Bible) then I have no comment other than the fact

fact that 'it may be the way that you have done it for centuries, but it is not biblical!

Rom. 8:26 *...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

If ever there was a 'wake up' call this is it. We are not nearly as spiritually sharp as we think we are. Are we? Thank God for the Holy Spirit to cut thru all the garbage & get down to the nitty-gritty.

Lk. 18:1 *...that men ought always to pray, & not to faint.*

2 Chron. 7:14 *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, & pray, & seek my face, & turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, & will forgive their sin, & will heal their land.*

Notice, the prayer is directed to God. Not the dearly departed saints, Moses, Noah, etc. And notice who it is that hears the prayer, God, & He alone.

Jn. 14:16 *And I will pray the Father, & He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.*

The precedent is set. Jesus does not invite or ask or intimate that we use a series of intermediaries in our approach to God. We have one. And this is the one that He is praying that we should receive. Not a saint or fellow believer that may already be in God's presence, to pull strings for us, or aid us in our attention. But rather, the Holy Ghost. Remember? The one back in Rom. 8:26?!

Eph. 2:18 *For through him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

Any wild guesses as to what verse He may be referring to?

The Psalmist David surely had a lot of heroes in his past. There was Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses & the list goes on. Some of these guys had a much more intimate relationship with God than any of the 'saints' that we could name. Yet when it came time for David to pray or pour out his heart to God can we find one instance where he went to one of these guys for a little help? Not!

Ps. 5:2-3 *Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, & my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, & will look up.*

Acts 7:59 *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God (Stephen calling, not the stoners?) & saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

This was a big event in the life of Stephen, to say the least! He definitely could have used all the help he could get his hands on at this point. But notice, in the last seconds of his life he does not call on saints, moms or buddies - but, rather, on God! Period. If there is something I don't know please help me out. But so far, the BIBLICAL precedent has been set. Notice I did not say 'tradition', I said BIBLICAL precedent.

1 Jn. 2:1 *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

When we get right down to it, what is an advocate? Webster defines it as "to plead in favor of". When all is said & done what is the purpose of going to the saints or Mary or whatever? I'll let you fill in the blank! We could play word games all day. But when the dust has settled didn't we go to them in some form of advocacy? Yes. The very nature of the exercise has defined the purpose. And in no uncertain terms the Bible has shot it down. We have an advocate with the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ. And the notion of our advocate needing an advocate is straight out of Alice & Wonderland! It is not to be found, hinted at, inferred or referenced in any passage of any version of the bible! It is tradition. Pure & simple. And as such, you have to decide for yourself how much emphasis & weight you give it.
Mt. 15:6-9; Mk. 7:3-13; Col. 2:8; 2 Thes. 3:6.

Heb. 9:14-15 *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

You see, the saints did not atone for us. Mary did not atone for us. Our mom's, dad's & buddies did not atone or shed their blood for us. Their blood was not good enough in the eyes of God. There was always that small matter of sin that keeps onmessing us up! God will accept only one persons blood -based on a sinless life. And that person is the Lord Jesus Christ. And by virtue of the status, goes the perks. And one of the biggies is that it is He & He alone that gets to be the Mediator. And I would not even want to be on the same block as the person that is so bold as to suggest that He could use a little help in that role! By the way, just what would the resume of that 'helper' have to look like anyway? Rom. 3:10, 20 & 23.

1 Tim. 2:5 *For there is one God, & one mediator between God & men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Nuff said?

Jn. 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth & the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Ditto. If they (the saints or his mom) were viable, don't you think that anywhere in here would be a good time to mention that little fact? It appears to me that He is just a tad adamant & sensitive about this chain of command.

Jn. 16:23 *...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

Whose name? I won't belabor the point. We can use philosophy, sophistry, logic or anything else that we choose to use to justify our position but from a biblical perspective it is this: from us (thru the leading of the Holy Spirit) to Jesus, to God.
Period.

