

Praying to Saints

Have you ever heard of Saint Joseph? You actually have even if you don't realize it. This is the Roman Catholic way of referring to the earthly father of Jesus. He was a hard working carpenter who did a good job putting a roof over Jesus' head. Therefore, he is considered the patron saint of workers and of real estate. Are you out of a job? Then make an appeal to Saint Joseph, he'll help you get one. Are you trying to sell a house? Then purchase a Saint Joseph home-selling kit and watch your house fly off the market.

This one example highlights the practice of praying to the departed saints in the Roman Catholic Church. Patron saints abound to accept requests from the living in numerous situations. Is your pet sick? Seek the aid of Saint Francis of Assisi. Are you an accountant? Look for the intercession of Saint Matthew. Are you a barber? You have a few options being able to find help from Saint Louis of France, Saint Cosmas, Saint Damian, and Saint Martin de Porres.

The thing we need to understand is this is not quite praying to these saints as some often want to assert. Actually, what is being asserted is the living can pray to saints who have gone on to the perfect home, who have gone to be with Christ, and seek their intercession. Just as you might go to the elders and ask them to pray for you (**James 5:14**), you can go to these departed saints and get them to intercede for you as well. This really sounds awesome. I mean, it really does make sense to try to get the interceding help of saints who have now been cleansed and taken out of these sinful bodies. They are no longer beset by the temptations and sins of the world. They have been perfected. Surely their prayers on our behalf do much more good than the prayers of our living brethren.

However, that is not how God sees it. Consider what He said to Israel in **Isaiah 8:19**: "And when they say to you, 'Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,' should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?" (ESV). God doesn't want us inquiring of the dead on our behalf. He wants us inquiring of Him. Someone will say, "But we can inquire of living individuals to pray on our behalf, why not the saints who have gone on to be closer to God?" The Preacher of Ecclesiastes answers: "Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun" (**Ecclesiastes 9:6**, ESV). There is a difference between living saints and deceased. The living have a share in this world and the dead have gone beyond this world. They no longer have a share or part in it.

Of course, someone will also say that Isaiah is condemning necromancy, not seeking the aid of saints. In one sense that is true. But why is He condemning necromancy? He is not condemning necromancy just for the sake of condemning necromancy. He is condemning it because His people are not seeking His aid, but the aid of the dead. The modern idea of seeking aid of saints may have lost the ritualism of the necromancers, but it is no different than what King Saul tried in **I Samuel 28** as he tried to petition Samuel on his behalf by going through the medium at En-dor. Notice how shocked she was that Samuel appeared. Notice also that Samuel's basic answer to Saul was that if God wasn't responding to him, He wasn't going to respond to Samuel on his behalf.

By the way, this account of Saul, Samuel, and the medium of En-dor addresses the potential objection that Jesus points out Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob aren't really dead, but are living (cf. **Matthew 22:32**). In the sense of who can worship God and who belongs to God, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive forevermore. However, in the sense of their participation in the world, they are like Samuel. They are dead and have no share in it. We must not appeal to them for help. We must appeal to God.

The issue is not simply "dark rituals." The issue is God's people should appeal to God, not to the dead. It makes me sad to report that I once had a Christian tell me the "St. Joseph house selling thing works." He assured me that he struggled and struggled to sell his house and a friend said, "Do you mind if I bury a statue of St. Joseph in your yard and pray for you?" "If you want," he replied. In less than a week, the house had a contract. Doesn't that mean this works? Absolutely not. As **Deuteronomy 13:1-4** explains, if someone encourages us to go against God's will and offers us a sign that comes to pass, we can know that it is merely God testing to see if we will follow Him no matter what. Was the sale of this man's house a coincidence or a test? I don't know. I know this, **Isaiah 8:19** tells us to inquire of our God and not inquire of the dead on behalf of the living. No matter what anecdotal stories proclaimers of falsehood give us, we must put all our eggs in God's basket. He'll care for us whether we are selling a house, doing someone's taxes, or giving a haircut.

Don't be swayed by this falsehood. Take joy that you can go to God directly and inquire of Him. Trust Him to care for you.

—Edwin L. Crozier