

What Does The Bible Say About Praying to the Saints?

By Tony Tirse

First, I invite you to get out your Bible, pray for guidance and revelation from the Holy Spirit, and read for yourself the Scripture references in their full context so that you will have a clear understanding of this message. All references are from the King James Version. May God bless you in His Word.

I. Who are the Saints?

In order to understand what the Bible says regarding prayer to the saints, we must first establish *who* they are. Are they special people who had a special access or relationship with God? In a sense, yes, but so are *all* believers who place their trust in God. In the Old Testament, it was the people who were righteous through their belief, acts, trust, and relationship with God.

Romans 4:3 *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

The example of Abraham is just one of many, for there were countless who were unmentioned in the Bible. This is evidenced by the language used in the Scripture whenever it refers to one of the *saints* or *prophets* or people of God in general:

Gen. 6:9 *These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a **just man and perfect** in his generations, and Noah **walked with God**.*

Psa. 4:3 *But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is **godly** for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.*

Psa 16:6 *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a **goodly** heritage.*

Psa. 32:6 *For this shall every one that is **godly** pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found*

2 Sam. 4:11 *How much more, when wicked men have slain a **righteous person** in his own house upon his bed?*

As we can see, there are several examples of people who would fall into this category, but these are just a few. When one is described as *goodly*, or *godly*, and is *well favoured* or *righteous*, they are under God's grace and therefore considered to be saints. The fact that someone is mentioned as a *goodly* person or a *righteous* person rather than *the goodly* person or *the righteous* person implies that they were one of many, not just *the one* of that time. Further evidence is found in the New Testament using the same words:

Mat. 5:45 *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good*

Mat. 13:38 *The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom*

2 Tim. 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

Mat. 13:17 *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

We must remember, not all saints started out that way, consider the Apostle Paul:

Acts 8:3 *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.*

Acts 9:1 *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,*

Acts 9:2 *And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

But he was one of the chosen ones of God, to show that no one is beyond His power to save:

Acts 9:3-6 *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:*

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Then God changed his name from Saul to Paul; the Lord has done this on many occasions as symbolic that they are “new creatures” with a new name:

Acts 13:9 *Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him*
Rev. 3:12b *and I will write upon him my new name.*

The Bible specifically calls these His *saints* and they are the people who are His chosen, the people who have believed Him throughout the ages:

Psa. 31:23 *O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*

Psa. 50:5 *Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.*

Psa. 97:10 *Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*

Dan 7:18 *But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.*

Mat. 27:52 *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose*

Acts 26:10 *Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.*

Rev. 8:4 *And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

Rev. 13:10b *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

Rev. 14:12 *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

Rev. 16:6 *For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

Rev. 17:6 *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

Rev. 18:24 *And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*

So, now that we have established who the saints are, it is clear that the familiar and famous saints we have known throughout the years such as St. Paul, St. John, St. Peter, and many others are no more saints than any other saved person. It is written “*For there is no respect of persons with God.*”(Rom 2:11) That is, God doesn’t care if someone is the President of a nation, the school janitor, or a “saint” as named by a church. What He does care about is what is in a person’s heart: “*for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*”(1Sam 16:7b) We must remember, no matter how great a man may seem, or what feats he has done, he is still a creation of God, and God doesn’t want anyone to exalt men or any creation as higher or even equal to Him:

Rom. 1:25, 32 *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

Exo. 20:5 *...for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God,...*

Deu. 4:24 *For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*

II. Is Praying to the Saints a form of Idolatry?

So what does this tell us about the character of God regarding prayer to the saints, or keeping “innocent” pictures or statues of saints? Well, throughout history, when man has prayed to anything other than God, it is called *idolatry*. And this is a very major sin according to His Word. He gives examples of this all throughout His dealings with His people:

Exo. 20:3-5 *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God

Lev. 19:4 *Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.*

1 Chr. 16:26 *For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.*

Isa. 2:18 *And the idols he shall utterly abolish.*

Isa. 45:6 *That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

Acts 15:20 *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols*

Rom. 2:22 *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*

2 Cor. 6:16a *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?*

1 John 5:21 *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

1 Cor. 10:14 *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

The Bible is very specific about God’s feelings toward people praying to anyone or anything else other than Him. He is a jealous God and rightly so, who can be above Him? Who can do what He can do? He is the Almighty and omnipotent One. In the days of the Old Testament, people needed mediators to pray for them such as Samuel or Moses; and they needed to offer animal

sacrifices for their sins. But in the age of Grace, that is, the New Testament, we are offered direct access to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, what more would we need? That is why it is no longer necessary to offer sacrifices, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and He is enough to cover every sin of every person that believes on Him.

III. The Lord tells us how to Pray

The Bible also gives specific instructions on how to pray, our Lord was more than willing to teach us how to pray and in what order to ask for the things that we need and want. God is not so busy that He needs the help of saints to grant answers to certain prayers, He is the Ever Present and All Powerful Alpha and Omega, He can do it all. It's just up to us to ask for it according to His instructions:

Mat 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Here Jesus says that first of all, if we have a quarrel or grudge against someone, we better go and straighten it out and at least be the one to earnestly forgive them if we want our prayers to carry any weight with God.

Mat 6:1-2 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Mat 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

This means that we should not pray in an overly lavish and eloquent way when we are in front of people so that they may see what a good “prayer-maker” we are, and we don't throw ourselves into a frenzy and make all kinds of sounds as though we were in a sideshow. These prayers may bring us fame and even fortune if we gather up a following, but they have no value with God and our only reward will be that some people think we're a “good Christian” because of the way we pray.

Mat 6:3-4 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Mat 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Here Jesus tells us that when we pray, we are to do so in private and in silence, no one needs to know the conversation we are having with God, and He will answer according to His will and for His glory. Then when good things start to happen in our lives we can say that it is all due to answered prayer and give Him the glory.

Mat 6:7-8 *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

Mat 6:8 *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

This refers to those who think that because they pray a certain prayer over and over again it will so impress God that He will give according to the repetitions. He knows what we need before we even ask Him, but He wants to hear our earnest prayer and supplication. Imagine a parent that has a small child who sees a puppy in a pet shop. Now, the parent knows that this child is going to ask for a puppy. If the parent can find no reason for the child not to have a puppy, he will joyfully give what the child has asked for, but what joy to hear the child come and innocently ask for that puppy! What if the child had simply looked up at the parent and repeated the entire alphabet fifteen times? Wouldn't that be annoying? So the parent knew that the child wanted that puppy before the child even asked for it, but there still came a joy in hearing the child's wish and then being able to grant that wish.

Phil 4:6 *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

“Be careful for nothing” means don't worry about it, place your trust in God and let Him worry about it.

Now Jesus gives us a model on how to pray, the order of things as they should be requested, and a few points that should go into each prayer. This is often called the Lord's Prayer.

Mat 6:9-13 *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

This is a model prayer and we are to insert our personal requests into the body of it when we pray. (This prayer also appears in Luke 11:2-4) As mentioned earlier, we should make sure that we are as earnest in our hearts as possible when we pray, so that God will have mercy on us. So if we are to humble ourselves before God for Him to have mercy and forgive us of our sins, we also must humble ourselves and forgive others who have wronged us in our lives.

Mat 6:14-15 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Mark 11:25-26 *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

Luke 6:28 *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

IV. We must Pray with Faith

God tells us that when we pray, we must do so with faith. We must believe that He is going to answer, maybe not *when* we want, but His will be done. Placing our trust in the Lord may seem increasingly difficult as life's problems become more complex or as more and more things pile up, but we must have faith that He can take care of it all, and that He will answer (or not answer) our prayers according to His will. For, just like He knows what we want before we ask for it, He knows what is good for us before, or even whether, we know it or not. Remember, not placing our trust in Him is just as much a sin as praying to idols. He wants us to "*Be still, and know that He is God,*" (Psa 46:10) so pray with faith:

Phil 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Luke 11:9-13 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

John 14:13-14 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 15:16 that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

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

James 1:5-6 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

So we see, there is plenty of evidence that all we are to do is ask in Jesus' precious name and that will be enough.

V. Wait a minute, Not all Prayers are Answered.

That's right, not all prayers are answered. Only our Heavenly Father knows what, when, and why certain prayers are answered. We may never know until we see Him in heaven why some or many of our prayers weren't answered. I can only offer a few guidelines in the Bible to be careful of when we pray so that at least we are on the right track when in prayer. The Bible tells

us that we must be “right” with God when we pray, as mentioned earlier; but we must also be careful of our motivations when we pray. Sometimes we may not be aware that we are praying for selfish reasons; out of habit; or even in revenge. We must make sure that we are keeping His commandments and are living our lives according to how Jesus taught. He was and is God so to heed the words of His teachings is everything. It’s not by any means easy, but that’s why we have Jesus to constantly look to and when we fall short (which we always do) we need to ask forgiveness first, then He washes us anew for that session.

1 John 3:22 *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

James 4:3 *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

In conclusion, we need to understand that *what* we ask for is often not as important as *how* we ask for it, as the old saying goes. Perhaps that old saying is part of a moral that was imparted to us a long time ago by the very One Whom we need to ask for everything. For it is only by His grace and mercy that we take our next breath. These things are hard to hear as we humans are given more than our fair share of ego. Even the most humble of us has a hard time bowing down to the majesty of God. It is very hard to accept that we are in no way self-sufficient and that without Him, nothing is possible. It should be at least a little easier for us believers but it often isn’t. An important lesson is the parable of the publican and the Pharisee praying in the temple (see Luke 8:10-14).

As to the saints, again, are we willing to put our trust in the spirits of humans rather than in the Living God? How would a saint be able to take care of or oversee any problem without God? Why would God want to have His rightful glory imparted to anyone other than Him? The only servants of God that we see that do work here are angels, but even they are only servants, as we are, and not to be worshipped or exalted in any way: “*And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*” (Rev. 22:8,9) Until we fully accept that God is the only one that can take care of all of our problems, we will not have a very successful prayer life. God is only waiting for us to trust in Him and ask Him for all things, he wants to have the joy of granting our wishes. May God richly bless you in all of your life.