

## LIGHTENING APOLOGETICS



November is a month dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. With that in mind, let's discuss Purgatory. Let's magnify the doctrine.

The objection to Purgatory is that it is not in the Bible and that Heaven and Hell are the only two destinations for the human soul.

It is true that heaven and hell are the only two eternal designations for the human soul. However in 1 Peter 4:6 it states, "For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God." Here Peter says that Jesus preached to the dead who could not have been in heaven since heaven had yet to be opened and it could not have been hell since those in hell would not benefit from hearing the word of God. Therefore, logic dictates that there is a third place. Catholics call it Purgatory; where our selfishness and prideful natures are purged from our soul before entering heaven.

Let's take a look at the Gospels first. We find the following verse in Matthew 12:32. "And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this life or in the life to come." This verse implies that some sins can be forgiven in the next world. If someone dies and goes to hell, they will not be forgiven any of their sins. There is no sin to be forgiven in heaven since nothing unclean may enter. Therefore, the only logical explanation is a third place where sins are forgiven. The Catholic Church calls this place Purgatory.

The word "purgatory" isn't in the Bible but a third place is described in several places. One in particular is 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 which says, "If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." This verse tells us about the suffering one must undergo for purification. Since the Bible doesn't name the third place, the Catholic Church gave it a name for the purpose of discussion. Similarly, the Catholic Church also gave names to the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Hypostatic Union, etc. Purgatory is the final purification for one who is already saved but not purified to enter heaven where nothing impure can enter. ***cont'd in next week's bulletin!***

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Yet there is still more that we can look at. Let's move forward to the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse). In Revelation 21:27 it states, "But nothing unclean shall enter into it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." This shows us again that purgatory is not a Catholic invention. This shows the necessity for purgatory. We are all sinners and will require God's mercy to enter Heaven. Even though we may be forgiven of our sins, there is still a price to pay; "I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny." (Luke 12:59) To stand before God, we must be perfect and pure in every way. Even the smallest "white" lie will require purification prior to our entry into heaven.

This leads us to our last objections to purgatory. It is the thought that praying for the dead is a violation of Deuteronomy 18:10-11 and that praying for the dead is also a waste of time since purgatory doesn't exist. I think we've shown that purgatory does exist, therefore is it a waste of time to pray for those in purgatory?

Our first look will be in the Old Testament. We look to 2 Maccabees 12:46, "Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." The Jews didn't consider it a waste of time. Jesus was a Jew and in all of scripture He never condemned the practice of praying for the dead or offering atonement for them. This was a common practice and this verse shows a situation in which soldiers were found to have worn a type of good luck charm which was forbidden. They were killed in battle and thus died in a state of sin which required atonement for offenses against God. This presumes a third intermediate state where atonement can be made.

We can also turn to St. Paul. It's in 2 Timothy 16-18. "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day, and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Why would St. Paul ask God to grant His mercy to someone who is dead if he knew his prayers would not benefit the dead person? Paul knew his prayers would benefit the dead Onesiphorus. Those who are dead need our prayers just as we need theirs. Only God knows who is in Purgatory but this should not prevent us from praying for deceased family and friends. Those in Heaven and hell do not benefit from our prayers but God disposes and distributes our prayerful intentions according to His Divine Will.

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