

Cruel Mercies

By William J. Schnoebelen ©2010

Someone kidnaps your mother. What a horrifying thought! Then, imagine that you get a ransom note stating that your mother will be tortured until you pay up. Every day they will torment her until you have paid them. *What would you do?*

Of course, you would do whatever you could! If you were wealthy enough, you would pay the kidnappers what they demanded. If you weren't, you might "beg, borrow or steal" enough money to placate them. What if such criminals were caught? What kind of punishment would such wretches deserve?

Now, suppose that these kidnappers were not apprehended. Suppose that they continued to demand more and more money, telling you that they would continue to torment your mother. You keep giving them money until you die, never even knowing if your mother has been released and/or freed from her torment.

This whole scenario is **monstrous**! Yet right now, many thousands of people in this country are subjected to this kind of abominable extortion. You are astonished! *Why isn't this in the news? Where is the media attention? Why are such monsters not brought to the bar of justice?*

The answer (you guessed it!) is that they are not! Instead, the ringleader of the gang is described as "a great spiritual leader." He is Pope Benedict XVI. The kidnapping racket we are describing in the lucrative extortion doctrine known as Purgatory. Yes, folks, the Roman Catholic Church still teaches and affirms this doctrine. (See note 1)

Purgatory is one of the most bizarre systems of salvation in the world. Its cruelty is rivaled only by practices in India and other lands where people must whip or mutilate themselves (**1Kgs.18:28**), or throw themselves alive onto burning funeral pyres to placate their gods. (See note 2)

The Bible says "*the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*" (**Prov. 12:10**) Believe it or not, Catholic theologians see Purgatory as a manifestation of mercy. Otherwise, they say, only a handful of "saints" like Francis of Assisi would be in heaven; and millions of lesser Catholics would simply go to hell upon death, because they are not worthy of heaven yet. What makes them worthy is never entirely spelled out, except that it requires being free of mortal sin and essentially all venial sins as well. (See note 3) However, hardly anyone can be free of all sin, even by the Catholic Church's standard.

The Bible, of course, tells us that, "*there is none righteous, no not one.*" (**Rom. 3:10**) The Catholic Church agrees (sort of). Only those people who have been "canonized" as saints are known for certain to have exhibited the heroic levels of righteousness necessary to achieve heaven. These canonized saints are so declared by the Vatican bureaucracy, and as far as the average Catholic is concerned, they are the **ONLY** ones that are known to be free of Purgatory and in heaven with God.

Impossible Odds!

However, of the untold millions of Catholics who pass into eternity, *only the tiniest percentage* is ever declared to be canonized. Usually only a few a year are even *considered* for this process. In fact, you would have a much better chance of winning the lottery than being canonized a saint. That means that for the rest of the departed, they (or more importantly, their loved ones) are subjected to the doctrine of Purgatory.

The Roman dogma of Purgatory teaches that those people who were not perfectly free of sin at death (*i.e., virtually everyone*) must go through a kind of hell, except that it is not eternal. They suffer in flames and torment for a time until their sins and the “temporal punishment due to sin” are burned away. Then, finally, they are allowed to enter heaven. However, *no one seems to know when they are finally released*. There is no set time frame.

Because your priest or bishop cannot tell when the departed's sentence in Purgatory has been fulfilled, it is entirely possible for this process to go on **indefinitely**. There are instances where deceased loved ones are still being “prayed” out of Purgatory *nearly thirty years after their death*. This practice is even more common in Third World countries where the Catholic Church holds sway with almost total authority. Here in the US, it must be more careful.

Let Us Prey

All of these prayers cost money. The parish priest is “paid” to say masses for the departed. Of course, the Catholic will say that the masses are not really being paid for, that would be the sin of Simony! (See note 4) It is just the priest's time and supplies that are being covered. And besides, we are told; it isn't really that much money. However, \$5.00 or \$10.00 here and there (See note 5) and it begins to really add up.

One cannot but wonder if this is what Yah'shua (the Hebrew name of Jesus) had in mind when he condemned those who “...devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.”— **Matt. 23:14**. Imagine how many poor widows have had their meager pensions pillaged over the centuries by priests reminding them of the tortures that their beloved husbands were experiencing! This is preying upon someone in an area where their sensibilities are most vulnerable!

The Bible Says No!

The ultimate tragedy here is that Purgatory IS a “pretense.” It doesn't exist. This means all of this money, prayers and human suffering is for naught. There is not one scintilla of evidence in the Bible for Purgatory. Even *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* can only lamely cite **1Cor 3:15** (which talks about a person's “works” being burned) and **1Pet. 1:7** (which talks about a “trial of your faith”—nothing at all about the afterlife. One does not need faith once one is dead [**1 Cor. 13:12**]).

They also cite **Matt 12:31-32** that discusses no forgiveness for the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost "*neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" Obviously, that cannot be about Purgatory. The essence of Purgatory is that eventually (?) there IS forgiveness. Most Bible students understand that sin has its consequences both in this world (poverty, death, violence, etc.) and in the world to come (hell!).

Finally, the Catechism cites 2 Maccabees 12:46 which talks about prayers for the dead. However, *don't search your Bibles for that one, because it isn't part of the canon of scripture.* It is the Apocrypha that are dubious Old Testament scriptures rejected by the historic Christian church (and most Jewish rabbis as well) for two millennia! Otherwise, you can search your Bible from stem to stern without finding any references to: (a) Purgatory, (b) masses or prayers for the dead, or (c) paying someone else to pray for your dead!

What you WILL find is a profoundly simple equation. Belief in Yah'shua equals instant access to heaven upon death (**Acts 16:31, 1 John 5:13**). Paul says "*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*"— **2Cor. 5:8**. He says nothing about Purgatory. Paul says we are saved by grace through faith without works (**Eph. 2:8-9**).

When Yah'shua discussed the afterlife in great detail in **Luke 16:20ff**, He never mentioned Purgatory. Isn't that odd? The rich man simply went to hell! Surely if there WAS such a thing as Purgatory, that would have been a perfect time to mention it as a ray of hope for the rich man. But Yah'shua said nothing.

When Yah'shua said, "*It is finished*" (**John 19:30**) on the cross, He meant it. The bill was paid in full at that moment. There is no Biblical evidence that anything people can do could add anything to the all-sufficient work of Calvary.

The sad irony is that even if there were such a place as Purgatory, the prayers of the priest at mass could have no more effect on people getting out of there than the priest watching "*Rocky and Bullwinkle.*" Yah'shua ALONE is our great mediator (**1Tim. 2:5, Rom. 8:34**).

The Bible tells us "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*"— **Hebr. 7:25**. If we are saved "to the uttermost" simply by coming unto our Heavenly Father through Yah'shua who intercedes for us, what can some priest muttering prayers possibly add to "the uttermost?" You cannot get anymore saved than that! Praise the Lord!

Becoming a Saint

The desire to avoid the pains of hell is completely understandable. But the Almighty has made it so easy *and inexpensive*. In fact, it is a FREE gift (**Rom. 6:23**). If you are Catholic, please know that there is nothing you can do for your departed loved ones now. They may be in heaven, or they may be in hell. If they are in hell, *realize it is partially the fault of the Catholic Church for denying them the simple truth throughout their whole lives.* They are in the hands of a merciful, just Creator and He will treat them fairly. **Gen. 18:25** says: "*Shall*

not the Judge of all the earth do right?" However, there is something you CAN do about your own eternal destiny. Don't let your loved ones' fate distract you from your own vital issues. **If you do not know for certain** that you are going straight to heaven when you die, you need to pay very close attention now!

As a Catholic, you probably believe that Yah'shua the Messiah is Almighty YHWH and that He died on the cross for your sins. What you may not know is that Calvary was complete then and there. **Hebr. 10:10** says: *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

Note that word *"sanctified."* It is the root of our word "saint" – it means to make someone a saint, holy and **set apart** for YHWH. It is in the past tense. That means that when you are Born Again, **you are made (past tense) a saint and are on your way to heaven in that second!** Nothing the pope or that Vatican can do will bring you any closer to heaven than the simple act of trusting in our Messiah. However, it must be in Yah'shua and Him alone! To become Born Again and achieve heaven, you must:

- 1.) Admit that you are a sinner (Rom 3:10, 3:23)**
- 2.) Repent of your sins and turn away from them (Luke 13:3)**
- 3.) Believe and confess that Yah'shua Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead to give you eternal life (Rom. 10:9-10)**
- 4.) Ask Yah'shua to save you from your sins and be the Lord of all your life (Rom. 10:13).**

If you have done these things sincerely as best you understand them, then God has promised you are INSTANTLY on your way to heaven. (**1 John 5:13**) At this point, you have as much use for the Catholic Church and its rituals as a sheep has for a bicycle. It will just drag you down and keep you from growing as a Christian. You need to leave it behind (**2 Cor. 6:17**) and find a good church where the true gospel and Word of YHWH are preached. If you are confused, write us and we will try and help you find one.

Endnotes:

1.) *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Doubleday, 1995, *Imprimi Potest* Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, p. 291. Ratzinger is today (2010) Pope Benedict XVI.

2.) Actually, many Catholics have been known to whip or mutilate themselves to please God. Such practices go on today in Third World nations. They are also common in some religious orders of nuns and monks and also within the lay society of the Church, Opus Dei. This was made well known by the book and film, THE DAVINCI CODE where a main villain was a member of Opus Dei (Latin for "Work of God.") and he is savagely whipping himself and wearing a barbed wire "garter" around his thigh. He did this in between murdering innocent people.

3.) Catholics make a distinction between really evil sins (mortal) like murder, adultery, homosexuality, impure thoughts or missing MASS on Sunday; and little sins (venial) like lying about doing your homework or stealing a book from the library.

4.) Simony is named after Simon in **Acts 8:18**. It is the buying or selling of prayers, spiritual gifts or "sacred objects." Of course, the Vatican is not the only church that "sells" prayers. Watch many Christian TV shows and you will see something similar. The only difference (which is significant) is that on Christian TV, ministers are not getting money to pray loved ones out of semi-eternal torture chambers.

5.) These are 1970's "prices" for regular masses, high or solemn masses cost more. Adjust for inflation!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the author through:

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