



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone  
who asks you for a reason for your hope"  
1 Peter 3:15

# Purgatory

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The doctrine of Purgatory is one of the most misunderstood teachings of the Catholic faith. There are so many misconceptions, myths and ***flat-out lies*** regarding Purgatory, it's difficult to keep track of them all.

First of all, Purgatory isn't necessarily a place, but a state of being. It ***might*** actually be a place, but primarily, it is a state of final cleansing before entering into heaven.

According to the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, it's a "***final purification of the elect***" (1030-1032).

## Catechism of the Catholic Church:

### II. THE FINAL PURIFICATION, OR PURGATORY

**1030** All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

**1031** The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.<sup>606</sup> The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:<sup>607</sup> As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.<sup>608</sup>

**1032** This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."<sup>609</sup> From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God.<sup>610</sup> The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.<sup>611</sup>

One might compare the reality of Purgatory to taking a *“hot shower”* before going to Heaven – a *really* hot shower. In **1 Cor. 3:10-15**, this is how the process is described:

"According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for **the Day** (judgment) will disclose it. It will be revealed with *fire*, and the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. **But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss**; the person **WILL** be saved, but only as through fire."

This cannot be **Heaven** because the person will **SUFFER** - and there is **NO** suffering in Heaven.

This cannot be **Hell** because the person will be **SAVED** - and there is **NO** salvation in Hell.

This is describing a **THIRD** state – a state of **Final Purification**.

It's interesting how God is described in the Old Testament. There are **MANY** verses that describe God handing out his justice as a **Refiner**. A refiner is someone who takes the raw material for metal and actually gets the gold and silver and iron from that material - and he does it with **FIRE**. We see in **Malachi 3:3, Jeremiah 6:27-30, Ezekiel 22:18, Psalm 119:119, Psalm 37:20, Zech. 13:9, Isa 48:10**, where God is the **Refiner** who burns away the impurities to get to the precious metal – the gold and silver.

Since **Revelation 21:27** tells us that *nothing* unclean or impure can enter heaven, a final purification or purgation is necessary for some *before* entering heaven. Every single person who goes through Purgatory will indeed make it into heaven.

There was a Protestant author in the earlier part of the 20th century named, **C.S. Lewis**. This is the man who wrote *Mere Christianity, The Chronicles of Narnia*, and many other beloved literary classics. His best friend was a Catholic author named **J.R.R. Tolkien**, who is famous for having written *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogies.

Although a Protestant, Lewis believed in Purgatory - which is pretty rare because virtually every Protestant denomination rejects the idea of Purgatory as ***unbiblical***. But, because Lewis knew the Catholic Canon of Scripture, which has **7** more books than the Protestant Bible, he came to understand the Scriptural basis for Purgatory. This led him to comment, "***The mercy of God demands purgatory.***"

The mercy of God **DOES** demand Purgatory because, as we already saw in **Revelation 21:27** - nothing unclean can enter heaven. This means that **NOTHING** imperfect or impure can enter heaven. Nobody on earth is perfect. Some people **THINK** they're perfect, but that's another story. If you're not as perfect as Jesus – you're **not** going to make it in without a final purgation – a **SPIRITUAL** "hot shower".

It must be understood that the Catholic Bible has **7** more books than non-Catholic Bibles. This collection, called the ***Deuterocanonical Books*** (or 2nd Canon), includes **Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch** and **1 & 2 Maccabees**, as well as portions of **Esther** and **Daniel**. Here is how it happened:

About 40 years after Jesus died and rose from the dead, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The Temple was desecrated and **completely** destroyed. Jesus foretold that this was going to happen in **Mark 13: 1-4**. Not long after this, a group of Rabbis asked permission from the Roman authorities to hold a Rabbinical school at **Jabneh (or Jamnia)**.

One of the things discussed was use of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (***the Septuagint***) by early Christians. The name, "**Septuagint**", comes from the number of scholars (**70**) who translated the Hebrew texts into Greek.

At this gathering, they decided to eject **7 Books (and portions of *Esther* and *Daniel*)** that they felt were uninspired. They provided a new Greek translation because the early Christians were converting the Jews using the Septuagint, which was compiled about 200 years before the birth of Christ. According to historical sources, the rabbinical gathering at Jabneh was not even an "**official**" council with binding authority to make such a decision. It can be clearly shown that Jesus and the Apostles studied and quoted from these 7 Books. In the New Testament, we see over **100** references to them.

The main advocate for removing the 7 Deuterocanonical Books was **Rabbi Akiva**, who was also known for proclaiming that a man named **Simon Bar Kohkba** was the *real* Messiah during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish revolt (circa 132 AD).

The Church doesn't hold to this *post*-Christ, *post*-temple canon because the mantle of authority under the New Covenant had been passed from Judaism to Christianity. The old wine (the Mosaic Law) and wineskin (Judaism) was now replaced by new wine (the Gospel) and new wineskins (the Church) (**Matt. 9:17, Luke 5:37, Mark 2:22**).

After the **Protestant Reformation** in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, you had denominations popping up everywhere. They chose to go with the unofficial Rabbinical Jewish canon. Do you know **WHY?** It's because *that* canon, which removed the 7 Books got rid of some Books with very **Catholic** teachings.

For example, guess what is talked about in **2nd Maccabees 12?**  
Prayers for the **DEAD**.

Since Protestants reject the Doctrine of Purgatory and praying for the dead, they couldn't have the Bible talking about it – so they just got rid of those Books. As a matter of fact – Martin Luther wanted to get rid of some New Testament Books as well, including:

- **The Letter to the Hebrews**, which talks about *saints* in heaven watching us (**Heb. 12:1**)
- **The Epistle of James**, which talks about the importance of *faith and works* (**James 2:14-26**)
- **The Epistle of Jude**, which talks about *priest, clergy* and *Oral Tradition*
- **Revelation**, which pretty much describes the *Mass* going on in heaven (**Rev. 1:10, Rev. 1:12, 2:5 Rev. 1:13, 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 15:6, 19:13-14 Rev. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3; 16:11 Rev. 15:3-4 Rev. 4:4, 5:14; 11:16, 14:3, 19:4 Rev. 5:8, 6:9-11, 8:3-4 Rev. 4:8 Rev. 2:17, Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4 Rev. 6:9, Rev. 5, Rev. 8:3, 11:1, 14:18, 16:7, Rev. 14:4, Rev. 15:7, 16:1-4, 8, 10, 12, 17; 21:9, Rev. 17, Rev. 19:1, 3, 4, 6, 9, Rev. 5:14; 7:12; 19:4**)

In **2 Macc. 12:42-46**, we see that Judas Maccabeus prays for the men of his army, killed in battle. **Verse 44** says, *“... for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death.”*

2 Maccabees is one of the **seven** books removed from Protestant Bibles.

It is interesting too note that the Orthodox Jews **STILL** pray for the dead to this day, but our Protestant brothers reject this idea as **“unbiblical”**?

The false Protestant doctrine of **Sola Scriptura** simply cannot stand up to the scrutiny of the very Scripture is purports to defend as our **“SOLE Authority”**.

# Another Misconception

Another misconception is that Purgatory is a “second chance” to make it to heaven. This simply isn't true. Scripture teaches us that there are different degrees of sin - venial and mortal.

**Venial** sin, which is less-serious sin, may include cheating on a test, taking a pen from the office, telling a dirty joke, etc. These minor sins **damage** our relationship with God and they do harm to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. **ALL** sin does harm to the Body of Christ.

**Mortal** sins may include adultery, viewing pornography, murder, damaging somebody's life by major gossip, using God's name in vain, etc. Whereas Venial sin **damages** our relationship with God - Mortal sin severs it. It completely cuts us off from God's grace and we are no longer under His protection.

Three conditions must be present for sin to be Mortal:

- 1. Grave (serious) sin**
- 2. Full knowledge that it is grave sin**
- 3. Full consent to commit the sin**

When we find ourselves in mortal sin, we need to repent for it immediately and make an act of perfect contrition. The next thing we need to do is to get ourselves to confession as soon as possible because Jesus gave the Church the power to forgive sins or hold them bound **(John 20:21-23)**.

Because those who die in a state of mortal sin are cut off from God, they are not eligible for Purgatory. The Bible tells us that after death – there are **no** more chances. We have a lifetime of chances to make our decision to follow Christ or to follow the world - in other words, to follow Satan. It's **OUR** choice. **Heb. 9:27** tells us that it is appointed that **ALL** people die **ONCE** - and after this, the Judgement.

A good example of this is the Parable of ***Lazarus and the Rich Man*** **(Luke 16:19-31)**.

**Matt. 5:25-26** tells us that unless we have settled our matters, we will be “handed over to the prison guard and will not be released until we have paid the last penny.” Additionally, **Matt. 12:32** states, “whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, ***either in this age or in the age to come***”, which indicates that there IS purification after death for some. **Matt. 18:32-35** and **Luke 12:58-59** are additional verses that support this doctrine.

All of these verses point to the fact that those in Purgatory will suffer loss but will eventually be ***released*** (*purified, purged from iniquity, saved*). Purgatory is for the believer who dies in God’s favor (without the stain of **mortal** sin) but is in need of final purification before entering heaven.

In short, Purgatory is where we get stripped of our **OWN** will so that we can be **FULLY** open to and filled with **GOD's** perfect will. Like we talked about before, we **can't** be fully open to God's will because we're not perfect. We still have a sinful nature - and ***nothing*** imperfect or unclean can get into heaven (**Rev. 21:27**).

## What Purgatory IS:

It is a state of final purification before entering heaven for those who dies in a state of grace **WITHOUT** the stain of Mortal Sin.

Scriptural support for Purgatory includes:

- Praying for the dead - **2 Macc. 42-46, 2 Timothy 1:18**
- Suffering and being released - **Matt. 5:25-26, Matt. 18:32-35, Luke 12:58-59, 1 Cor. 3:12-15**
- God as the Refiner – **Mal. 3:3, Jer. 6:27-30, Ezek. 22:18, Psalm 119:119, Psalm 37:20, Zech. 13:9, Isa. 48:10**
- There is remission of venial sin after death for those in Purgatory - **Matt. 12:32**
- Nothing unclean can enter heaven so purification is necessary – **Rev. 21:27**
- Purgatory defined in the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** - **Paragraphs 1030, 1031, 1032**

## What Purgatory is NOT:

1. A “**Second Chance**” to correct our mistakes.

In our lifetime, we have many chances to obey God. After we die, our chances will end as we are judged by God (**Heb. 9:27**).

Just like the **Rich Man** in the **Parable of Lazarus** the beggar, we *don't* get another chance after death to make things right (**Luke 16:19-31**).

2. A “**Waiting Room**” where we find out whether we go to Heaven or Hell. **EVERYBODY** in Purgatory goes to heaven after their own will is “burned away” by God’s perfect will in His “Refiner’s Fire”. Nobody in Purgatory goes to hell.

To fully understand the doctrine of Purgatory – we must also address the Protestant objections to it.

**1. “Purgatory makes Christ’s sacrifice insufficient.”**

Not only does it **NOT** make His sacrifice insufficient – it is only **BECAUSE** of His sacrifice that a final purification is even possible. If it were **NOT** possible, most of us wouldn’t get to Heaven.

**2. “The word ‘Purgatory’ does not appear in the Bible.”**

Neither do the words “Trinity, “Incarnation” – or even “Bible”. This is a silly argument

**3. “Purgatory negates the fact that Christ paid the complete sin debt “**

**Then why does** Jesus say in the Lord’s Prayer to “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12-15)? “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. **But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.**”

**WHY** would we need to ask the Father to forgive our debts if Jesus already paid them? There is **NO** Scripture passage that states or even implies imply that Christ paid the entire sin debt of man. He **REDEEMED** man by saving him from absolute death. Our cooperation is necessary for that sin to be *forgiven*.

# The Early Church Fathers on Purgatory

The belief in **Final Purification** or *Purgation* goes all the way back to the earliest of times in the Church. Abandonment of this teaching is only as old as Protestantism.

## Acts of Paul and Thecla

And after the exhibition, Tryphaena again receives her. For her daughter Falconilla had died, and said to her in a dream: "Mother, thou shalt have this stranger Thecla in my place, ***in order that she may pray concerning me, and that I may be transferred to the place of the just***" (A.D. 180).

## Clement of Alexandria

The believer through discipline divests himself of his passions and passes to the mansion which is better than the former one, **passes to the greatest torment, taking with him the characteristic of repentance for the faults he may have committed after baptism. He is tortured then still more, not yet attaining what he sees others have acquired. The greatest torments are assigned to the believer, for God's righteousness is good, and His goodness righteous, and though these punishments cease in the course of the expiation and purification of each one, "yet" etc.** (*Stromata* 6:14 [A.D. 202]).

## Origen

If a man departs this life with lighter faults, **he is condemned to fire which burns away the lighter materials, and prepares the soul for the kingdom of God, where nothing defiled may enter.** For if on the foundation of Christ you have built not only gold and silver and precious stones (I Cor., 3); but also wood and hay and stubble, what do you expect when the soul shall be separated from the body? Would you enter into heaven with your wood and hay and stubble and thus defile the kingdom of God; or on account of these hindrances would you remain without and receive no reward for your gold and silver and precious stones? Neither is this just. **It remains then that you be committed to the fire which will burn the light materials; for our God to those who can comprehend heavenly things is called a cleansing fire.** But this fire consumes not the creature, but what the creature has himself built, wood, and hay and stubble. It is manifest that the fire destroys the wood of our transgressions and then returns to us the reward of our great works. (*Homilies on Jeremias* 13: 445, 448 [A.D. 244]).

## **Abercius**

The citizen of a prominent city, I erected this while I lived, that I might have a resting place for my body. Abercius is my name, a disciple of the chaste shepherd who feeds his sheep on the mountains and in the fields, who has great eyes surveying everywhere, who taught me the faithful writings of life. Standing by, I, Abercius, ordered this to be inscribed; truly I was in my seventy-second year. **May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius** (*Epitaph of Abercius* [A.D. 190]).

## **Tertullian**

**The faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband, and begs for him in the interim repose,** and participation in the first resurrection, and offers prayers on the anniversary of his death (*Monogamy* 10 [A.D. 213]).

## **Cyprian of Carthage**

It is one thing to stand for pardon, another thing to attain to glory; it is one thing, **when cast into prison, not to go out thence until one has paid the uttermost farthing;** another thing at once to receive the wages of faith and courage. It is one thing, tortured by long suffering for sins, **to be cleansed and long purged by fire; another to have purged all sins by suffering.** It is one thing, in fine, to be in suspense till the sentence of God at the Day of Judgment; another to be at once crowned by the Lord (*Letters* 51[55]:20 [A.D. 253]).

## **Cyril of Jerusalem**

Then we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition, next, we make mention also of the holy fathers and bishops who have already fallen asleep, and, to put it simply, of all among us who have already fallen asleep. For we believe that it will be of very great benefit to the souls of those for whom the petition is carried up, while this holy and most solemn sacrifice is laid out (*Catechetical Lectures* 23:5:9 [A.D. 350]).

## **Serapion**

We beseech you also on behalf of all the departed, of whom also this is the commemoration (*after mentioning the names*) Sanctify these souls, for You know them all; sanctify all who have fallen asleep in the Lord and count them all among the ranks of your saints and give them a place and abode in your kingdom (*Anaphora* 13:5 [A.D. 350]).

## **Basil the Great**

I think that the noble athletes of God, who have wrestled all their lives with the invisible enemies, after they have escaped all of their persecutions and have come to the end of life, are examined by the prince of this world; **and if they are found to have any wounds from their wrestling, any stains or effects of sin they are detained** (*Homilies on the Psalms* 7:2 [ante A.D. 370]).

### **Epiphanius of Salamis**

Furthermore, as to mentioning the names of the dead, how is there anything very useful in that? What is more timely or more excellent than that those who are still here should believe that the departed do live, and that they have not retreated into nothingness, but that they exist and are alive with the Master. And so that this most august proclamation might be told in full, how do they hope, who are praying for the brethren as if they were but sojourning in a foreign land? Useful too is the prayer fashioned on their behalf (*Against all Heresies* 75:8 [A.D. 374-377]).

### **Gregory of Nyssa**

If a man ... after his departure out of the body, gains knowledge of the difference between virtue and vice, **and finds that he is not able to partake of divinity until he has been purged of the filthy contagion in his soul by the purifying fire** (*Sermon on the Dead* [A.D. 383]).

### **John Chrysostom**

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice [Job 1:5), **why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them** (*Homilies on First Corinthians* 41:5 [A.D. 392]).

### **Ambrose of Milan**

Give perfect rest to thy servant Theodosius, that rest which thou hast prepared for thy saints... I have loved him, and therefore will I follow him into the land of the living; nor will I leave him until by tears and prayers I shall lead him wither his merits summon him, unto the holy mountain of the Lord (*Funeral Sermon of Theodosius* 36-37 [A.D. 395]).

### **Augustine**

Temporal punishments are suffered by some in this life only, **by some after death, by some both here and hereafter**, but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. **But not all who suffer temporal punishments after death will come to eternal punishments**, which are to follow after that judgment (*The City of God* 21:13 [A.D. 419]).