

A Study on the difference between what a Mediator is, and what an Intercessor is,
Prepared for the Adult Sunday School Class on October 6th, 2013,
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Mediator – The word in the Greek in the New Testament is *Μεσιτης* (*Μεσιτης*) and it means Middle Man. R.L. Dabney says in his Systematic Theology – “This word or phrase does not occur in the Old Testament except in the Septuagint translation of Job 9: 33. (English version: “Days-man”), and then with the sense of umpire, not of mediator.” “Its idea in the New Testament is evidently of one who intervenes to act between parties, who cannot, for some reason, act with each other directly.” “Thus Moses was (Galatians 3: 19) the mediator of the Theocratic covenant.” “But in this, he was no more than *internuncius*. (*Internuncius* means a person who acts as a messenger or go between two parties. This term is commonly applied to brokers and dealers who act as an agent of both parties. An *internuncius* acts as a medium of communication between two contracting parties.) “Christ’s mediation included far more, as He has become our Prophet, Priest, and King.

John Gill says – “A Mediator is of more than one, and has to do with two parties; and these at variance among themselves, between whom he stands as a middle person; his business is to bring them together, and make peace between them; and such an one is Christ: the two parties are God and His elect, who in their natural state are at a distance from God, and at enmity to him, and who have broken his law, and affronted his justice; Christ stands as a middle person, a days-man between them, and lays his hands upon them both; has to do with things pertaining to the glory of God, and makes reconciliation for the sins of the people; brings them that were afar off nigh to God, and makes peace for them by the blood of his cross, by fulfilling the law, and satisfying justice for them; in consequence of this he appears for them in the court of heaven, intercedes and pleads for them, is their advocate, and sees that all covenant blessings, of which he is the Mediator, are applied unto them, and preserves their persons, which are committed to his care and charge, safe to everlasting happiness.”

1st Timothy 2: 5 says – “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3: 19 – “What purpose then does the law serve?” “It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.” “Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.”

John Gill says again: “in the hand of a mediator; not Christ, as many interpreters, ancient and modern, have thought; for though he was present at the giving of the law, as appears from Acts 7:38 and is the Mediator between God and man, and had the law in his hand, out of which it went forth as the lawgiver; and as the surety of his people has fulfilled it, and by so doing put an end to it, and delivered them from the curse and condemnation of it; yet he is the Mediator of the new and better covenant, not the ministration of death, but of life; and so Moses and Christ, the law and Gospel, the old and the new covenant, are continually opposed to each other; besides, the mediator here seems to be represented as inferior to the angels, and as receiving the law into his hands from them, by whom it was ordained; which to conceive of Christ, is very much to the demeaning and lessening of him. Moses is the mediator here meant, who stood between God and the people of Israel; not to make peace between them, but to show the word of

God from him to them, and this at their own request; see Deuteronomy 5:5, and in his hand the tables of the law were, when he came down from the mount, and was a typical mediator of Christ. So the Jews say of him, that he was a mediator between them and God.”

Deuteronomy 5: 5 says: “I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fires, and you did not go up the mountain.”

But of Christ, it is said in **Hebrews 8: 6** – “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”

Hebrews 9: 15 – “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the New Covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

Hebrews 12: 24 – “But you have come.....To Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

Dabney’s Comments on “Mediator”: “The question, whether Christ performs the functions of Mediator in both natures is fundamental.” “Romanists limit them to the human nature, in order to make more plausible room for human mediators.” “They plead such passages as Philippians 2: 7, 8; 1 Timothy 2: 5, and the dialectical argument, that the divinity being the offended party, it is absurd to conceive of it as mediating between the offender and itself.”

Dabney comments once again: “Rome seeks to evade this and similar testimonies, by speaking of a primary and a secondary mediation, reserving the first exclusively to Christ.” “The activity of angels and dead saints as secondary mediators, Rome argues, first, from the benevolence and affection of these pure spirits.” “This kindness we daily experience at the hands of the saints while alive; and the Savior (Luke 15: 7) seems to ascribe similar feelings to the angels.” “The Church believes that the dead saints retain a local interest in the places and people which they loved while living; and she thinking that Daniel 10: 13 teaches the angels, as ministers of God’s providence, have their districts, and even their individuals, (Matthew 18: 10) whom they serve and watch.”

He further says: “Were the design of papists merely to seek a communion in the prayers of the dead saints and angels, it would only be superstitious and idolatrous.” “But this does not at all satisfy them.” “The essential peculiarity of their doctrine is, that the mediatory access of these holy creatures is founded on their merits with God.” “This their divines expressly teach.” “But it is expressly injurious to Christ, utterly false, and indeed impious.” “No one who comprehended the rudiments of either the Covenant of Works, or of that of Grace, would ever dream of making the supererogatory merit of an unfallen creature, much less of a fallen creature, a basis for an imputed righteousness.” In that sense the creature cannot merit.” “Take the case of Abraham in Genesis 20, verse 7.” “The Romish argument is ruined by the fact that Abraham was himself ‘justified by faith’.” “If he was himself a sinner, accepted in the righteousness of another, how could he have supererogatory merit to spare for a fellow-sinner?” “Job is mentioned in Chapter 42, verse 8 of Job as sacrificing for his erring friend; because he was righteous.” “But see the 6th verse where Job avows his utter sinfulness.” “Surely, then he was not righteous in such a sense as to be a meritorious mediator.” “Job was directed to sacrifice for his friends.” “What?” “Himself?” “No; but bullocks and rams, typical of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of

the world.” “This tells the whole story: that his intervention was ministerial, and not mediatorial.”

Lorrain Boettner on mediators like Mary – “Thus Christ, because He is both God and man, is the only Savior, the only Mediator, the only way to God.” “Not one word is said about Mary, or a pope, or the priests, or the saints, as mediators.” “Yet Romanism teaches that there are many mediators, and the great majority of Roman Catholics, if asked, would say that our primary approach to God is through the Virgin Mary, and that only as she begs for us can we enter the presence of God.” “The priests detract from the glory of Christ when they teach that Mary is a mediator.” “Humanly speaking, that must grieve her who would want all honor to go to Christ.” “The priests have no right to place her in such an unscriptural position.” “Mary is presented in Scripture as a handmaiden of the Lord who fulfilled her office in the church according to promise, just as did John the Baptist and others, but whose work has long since ceased.” “The great antithesis is not between Eve and Mary, as Rome sets it forth, but between Adam and Christ.” (Romans 5: 12-21; 1st Corinthians 15: 21, 22, 45-47) Roman tradition has so altered the picture of Mary that the Mary found in the New Testament and the Mary found in the Roman Catholic Church are two different and conflicting persons.” “Any fair-minded Roman Catholic knows that his church gives first place to Mary and that Christ is kept in the background.” “The reason that Mary, the saints or angels cannot act as our priest or mediator is because they have no sacrifice, nothing to offer in behalf of our sins.” “Only a priest with a true sacrifice can serve as mediator between God and men.” “Christ alone has a true sacrifice, and He alone can act as our priest.” “In this connection Calvin says: ‘I deem it indisputable that the papal priesthood is spurious; for it has been formed in the workshop men.’ “God nowhere commands a sacrifice to be offered now to Him for the expiation of sins; nowhere does He command that priests be appointed for such a purpose.” “While then the pope ordains his priests for the purpose of sacrificing, the Apostle Paul denies that they are to be accounted lawful priests.” (End of quote)

So, in conclusion, there is only one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. Moses did mediate the Old Covenant to the people on God’s behalf, but he was only acting as one who announced the will of God. He did not offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. Although Aaron and the Old Covenant priesthood did offer sacrifices, they could not reconcile the people to God with the sacrifices of bulls and goats, and rams and lambs. These sacrifices only typified what Christ would do by His great Mediatorial, sacrificial work.

Hebrews 10: 1–3 - “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year make those approach perfect.” “For then would they not have ceased to be offered?” “For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.” “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.”

Hebrews 10: 11-14 – “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

This Mediator, Jesus Christ, makes intercession for us, the saints. We, the saints, are not mediators, but we can be intercessors.

The word – Intercessions from 1st Timothy 2: 1 – The word in the Greek is ἐντεύξειο (enteuxeis) which means prayers on behalf of others.

Intercessions (ἐντεύξεις)

Vincent’s Word Studies on 1 Timothy 2: 1 - Only here and 1 Timothy 4:5. The verb ἐντυγχάνειν, commonly rendered to make intercession, Romans 8:27, Romans 8:34; Romans 11:2; and ὑπερεντυγχάνειν (Uperentugchanein) to intercede in behalf of, Romans 8:26. The verb signifies to fall in with a person; to draw near so as to converse familiarly. Hence, ἐντεύξεις is not properly intercession in the accepted sense of that term, but rather approach to God in free and familiar prayer. Ἐντυγχάνειν in the passages cited is not to make intercession, but to intervene, interfere. Thus in Romans 8:26, it is not that the Spirit pleads in our behalf, but that he throws himself into our case; takes part in it. So Hebrews 7:25 : not that Jesus is ever interceding for us, but that he is eternally meeting us at every point, and intervening in all our affairs for our benefit. In ἐντεύξεις here the idea of interposition is prominent: making prayers a factor in relations with secular rulers.

A Biblical Example of Interceding in Prayer – Romans 11: 2 – “God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.” “Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ‘Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?’”

John Calvin on the word “Intercessions” – I exhort therefore. These exercises of godliness maintain and even strengthen us in the sincere worship and fear of God, and cherish the good conscience of which he had spoken. Not inappropriately does he make use of the word therefore, to denote an inference; for those exhortations depend on the preceding commandment.

That, above all, prayers be made. First, he speaks of public prayers, which he enjoins to be offered, not only for believers, but for all mankind. Some might reason thus with themselves: “Why should we be anxious about the salvation of unbelievers, with whom we have no connection? Is it not enough, if we, who are brethren, pray mutually for our brethren, and recommend to God the whole of his Church? for we have nothing to do with strangers.” This perverse view Paul meets, and enjoins the Ephesians to include in their prayers all men, and not to limit them to the body of the Church.

What is the difference between three out of the four kinds of prayer which Paul enumerates, I own that I do not thoroughly understand. The view given by Augustine, who twists Paul’s words so as to denote ceremonial observances customary at that time, is quite childish. A simpler exposition is given by those who think that “requests” are when we ask to be delivered from what is evil; “prayers,” when we desire to obtain something profitable; and “supplications,” when we deplore before God injuries which we have endured. Yet for my own part, I do not draw the difference so ingeniously; or, at least, I prefer another way of distinguishing them.

Ἐντεύξεις is the word commonly used by Paul to signify those prayers which we offer for one another. The word used for it in the Latin Translation is “intercessiones,” intercessions. Yet Plato, in his second dialogue, styled Alcibiades, uses it in a different sense, to moan a definite petition offered by a person for himself; and in the very inscription of the book, and in many passages, he shows plainly, as I have said, that προσευχή is a general term. (31)

But not to dwell longer than is proper on a matter that is not essential, Paul, in my own opinion, simply enjoins that, whenever public prayers are offered, petitions and supplications should be made for all men, even for those who at present are not at all related to us. And yet this heaping up of words is not superfluous; but Paul appears to me purposely to join together three terms for the same purpose, in order to recommend more warmly, and urge more strongly, earnest and constant prayer. We know now sluggish we are in this religious duty; and therefore we need not wonder if, for the purpose of arousing us to it, the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Paul, employs various excitements.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown - intercessions — properly the coming near to God with childlike confidence, generally in behalf of another. The accumulation of terms implies prayer in its every form and aspect, according to all the relations implied in it.

John Gill – Intercessions – “And the next word, "intercessions", intends either complaints exhibited in prayer against others that have done injuries; or prayers put up for others, either for the averting of evil from them, or for the bestowing some good thing on them.”