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C0544 – 11/16/2005 – The Terms of Salvation
Roman Catholicism-Part 2

I. HEARING THE WORD OF GOD ESSENTIAL

I really want you to understand the essential nature of “hearing the word of God”. A person must hear the word of God to have faith in the word of God (Rom 10:17). This means that people cannot be saved if they do not hear the gospel. It is not speculative in the least to say that while every person ever born into the world has known God clearly through creation and conscience (Rom 1:18-20; 2:14-15) yet billions of people have never even heard the gospel and therefore did not believe the gospel and therefore will not go to heaven.

II. THE MAJORITY OF MEN WILL GO TO HELL

We often blind ourselves to this fact and prefer to think that our friends are saved. They are good people; they’ve talked about God or Jesus in conversation. As a pastor I am realizing more and more the difficulty for humans to accept the fact that many people, even our close friends will go to hell for all eternity. Normally, it is not too difficult for Christians to accept that people they don’t know are going to hell, but it is almost impossible that people we do know personally could be going to hell. I think we are very naïve and worldly to think this way. I remember a theological discussion several years ago where the discussion came to the population before the Flood (~1656 *anno homini*). It surprised us to find that a conservative estimation of world population before the Flood was over 1 billion. This is due in large part to the longevity of human life before the flood. Even assuming a slow population growth rate Henry Morris stated, “If, at this time, only one previous generation was still living, the total population of the earth would have been over 1,030 million! And we believe that anyone would agree that these calculations are extremely conservative, assuming only that the Biblical statements are true.”¹ If anyone of you doubts this consider the longevity of human life before the flood and the declaration of Gen 6:11

and 13 that claim “*the earth was filled with violence*”. Further, consider, “why would God flood the whole world if mankind did not cover the whole world?” World population reached 1 billion around 1850 and certainly man filled the whole earth at that time. In just 150 years world population has risen to 6.5 billion. Practically speaking, consider that the present population growth rate of 2% is higher than the rate used in these calculations (1.5%)! And here’s the point I want you to ponder: “Out of this extremely conservative number of 1 billion souls how many were genuine believers at the time of the Flood?” Eight (1 Peter 3:20). This is devastating. I can imagine how you are feeling now because I too feel the same way and have for years. If that model fit our modern population of 6.5 billion only 52 people on planet earth would be genuine believers. I cannot help but think that is incorrect but I nevertheless think we far overestimate the number of genuine believers in the world today and it would do us all some good to ponder the pre-Flood world. Peter said “the last days” would be similar to the days before the Flood (2 Peter 3:1-7). Are your friends really believers? Or are they likely people who think they are going to heaven but haven’t a genuine clue about Christ’s salvation in the gospel? People must hear the gospel in order to be saved and I think we have to re-align our presuppositions about human salvation to accord with the Biblical revelation bearing on the issue. The gospel is extremely important and easily distorted. When this happens people can’t get saved. It can’t be believing in Jesus + any human works. It must be believing in Christ alone as the substitutionary payment for sin that when appropriated by faith results in the once for all declaration that a man is righteous. If we add anything to Jesus Christ as the content of our faith then we are not placing confidence in His work on the cross. As a result, we are saying that Christ alone was not a full payment for our sin and that Christ did not fully satisfy God the Father; something else is required. This is damning.

III. THE INEPTNESS OF MUCH MISSIONARY WORK

Last week we discussed the ineptness of much missionary work. For some they overstress the doctrine of election, expecting God to just zap the elect with salvation. For others, they are overanxious about getting to the gospel and do not spend the time to lay a proper foundation for understanding the gospel. Both approaches are lazy and ineffective.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING OTHER RELIGIOUS VIEW POINTS

The proper approach is demonstrated by Jesus and Paul. Both were well studied in the religious viewpoints of their world and were able to use that knowledge to effectively break through the barriers of men’s hearts and stimulate a repentant faith. By doing things this way the gospel was demonstrated to be the power of God unto salvation. The reason Jesus

and Paul took the time to become well acquainted with the religious and philosophical viewpoints of their day was because they loved men. They quite frankly had a compassion for men that few of us can even imagine. They realized the heart-wrenching fact that most men will go to hell and the only way to combat that is to do all that we can to help men hear the gospel clearly.

Therefore, we are studying Roman Catholicism in the context of our Terms of Salvation class in order to get a handle and pave the way for God to open doors for you, opportunities, to ask your Roman Catholic friends questions, to learn their worldview, and challenge them with the gospel in such a way that it pierces through all the baggage and hits their heart. One-sixth of the world's population is claimed to be Roman Catholic. I want to repeat the goal of this study:

1. to inform you of what this religion teaches;
2. to build compassion in your heart for them/
3. to help you sanctify Christ in your heart; and
4. so you will be ready to give a defense for truth when anyone asks you, yet in a gentle and reverent manner (1 Pt 3:15).

These are all biblical objectives; sanctification in short.

V. BEGINNINGS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church (which is a contradiction of terms) began in 324AD when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Western Roman Empire. With church membership, which came through baptism, came many privileges. Thus, pagans by the thousands rushed into the church. There were far too many to instruct and the simple form of biblical worship was unappealing to those cultivated in heathen worship. Thus, over time the heathen traditions came into the church and resulted in an elaborate ritual worship with a sacrificial system, elaborately appareled priesthood, elaborate rituals, images, holy water, incense, monks and nuns, the doctrine of purgatory, and in general a belief that salvation was achieved by works rather than by grace. Then I showed you the evolution of Catholic dogma over the centuries. Dick re-visited several of these in Sunday school last week. It is essential to see how the Roman Catholic Church strayed farther and farther away from Scriptural truth. It wasn't until the Reformation that some Roman Catholics called the Church to reform and protested against the dogmas pronounced at the Diet of Spire. With initial success Protestantism was born only to slumber back toward Roman Catholicism denomination by denomination.

VI. SIX BASIC KINDS OF CATHOLICS

I also thought it helpful to point out that there are six basic kinds of Catholics.

1. Converts – see an opportunity for influence
2. Spiritual Suicides – can gain a ticket to heaven through money and formulas
3. Genuinely Naïve – trapped by Rome’s eye-filling spectacles
4. Practical – uses Church to advance career through church connections
5. Nominal – born into Church...not overly committed
6. Liberals – eventually leave because conscience unable to reconcile with church teachings
7. Good People – good neighbors, honest, not very in tune with Catholic teachings. Would leave if they knew more about the Church.

As I said last week, what you need to do is challenge your Roman Catholic friends to read the NT for themselves. If you can get them to do this it will go a long way. You want to challenge them to show you the Roman Church’s teaching in God’s word.

VII. ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHINGS AND THE BIBLE’S TEACHING

A. Priesthood

1. Roman Catholic Claims

The Roman Catholic Church has an elaborately appareled and ordained priesthood that offers a sacrifice during mass that takes away sin. At ordination the proclamation from Ps 110:4 is applied to the human priest

Psalm 110:4 "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

and “Receive thou the power to offer sacrifices to God, and to celebrate masses, both for the living and for the dead, In the name of the Lord. Amen.”

What you must realize is that the mass that is officiated by the priest is not just a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ but is a sacrifice that *takes away sin*. For one schooled in the NT this is a blasphemous declaration for Christ’s sacrifice alone takes away sin. The Council of Trent said,

The priest is the man of God, the minister of God...He that despiseth the priest despiseth God; he that hears him hears God The priest remits sin as God, and that

which he calls his body at the altar is adored as God by himself and by the congregation...It is clear that their function is such that none greater can be conceived. Wherefore they are justly called not only angels, but also God, holding as they do among us the power and authority of the immortal God.

Archbishop of Ottawa, Canada, says,

Without the priest the death and passion of our Lord would be of no avail to us. See the power of the priest! By one word from his lips, he changes a piece of bread into a God! A greater fact than the creation of a world.

Support for the priesthood and power is said to be in Matt 16:18-19.

Matthew 16:18-19 “And I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Confraternity Version)

Basing its interpretation on a poor translation Rome identifies Peter as the rock upon which Christ would build His church and asserts that Peter had the power to forgive sins or not because he had the keys to the treasure chest of merit in heaven. We will entertain these verses more fully under our discussion of Peter as the first pope. Suffice it to say now that Rome’s identification of Peter as the rock is the least plausible interpretation of the passage and indeed misses Jesus’ point. When rightly understood there is absolutely no biblical support for Rome’s priestly system. The NT terms “elder” (*presbuteros*) and “bishop” (*episcopos*) are not the same as priest (*hierus*) and cannot be used as support for such a powerful office. The obvious error to those who have read the NT is that it mirrors the OT priestly system but the NT declares this system has been done away in Christ who once for all entered into the holy place through his own blood and offered a once for all sacrifice for sins forever. There is no longer any need for sacrifice for sins. For those who have believed in Christ they now have direct access to God without any earthly human mediators. The Bible declares,

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

2. Protestant Doctrine

The biblical doctrine of priesthood is that Jesus Christ is the high priest

Hebrews 4:14-15 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.

Hebrews 5:10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:26-27 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Hebrews 8:1-2 Now the main point in what has been said *is this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

There is no need to offer up sacrifices for sin as the Roman priest does at every mass.

Hebrews 9:11-12 But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; ¹² and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 10:10-12 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

Jesus Christ offered “one” sacrifice “once for all”. There is no need for priestly sacrifice today. Those who trust in Christ alone have completed satisfied God because they are seen in Christ! Believers have become a universal priesthood.

Revelation 1:6 He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father-

As priests under our High Priest Jesus Christ, we have direct access to the Father.

Ephesians 3:11-12 *his was* in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

With this access we can pray with confidence and expect Him to answer.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Christian sacrifice comes in the form of praise...not mass

Hebrews 13:15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

doing good and sharing with one another...not mass

Hebrews 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

and presenting our bodies to spiritual service for Him which is the beginning of discipleship (cf Rom 6:13)...not mass

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

The Roman Catholic priest, far from being legitimately called “God”, has no NT basis at all. It is solely founded on the traditions of men.

B. Was Peter the First pope?

The Roman Catholic Church claims that Peter was the first pope and that his power and authority were transferred to his successor. The main passage used to support this is...

Matthew 16:18-19 “And I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Confraternity Version)

To this passage the Confraternity Version adds this commentary:

“The rock was Peter....*The gates of hell*: hostile, evil powers. Their aggressive force will struggle in vain against the Church. She shall never be overcome; she is indefectible. And since she has the office of teacher (cf. 28, 16-20), and since she would be overcome if error prevailed, she is infallible.

“*Keys*: a symbol of authority. Peter has the power to admit into the Church and to exclude therefrom. Nor is he merely the porter; he has complete power within the Church. “To bind and to loose” seems to have been used by the Jews in the sense of to forbid or to permit; but the present context requires a more comprehensive meaning. In heaven God ratifies the decisions which Peter makes on earth, in the name of Christ” (pp. 36-37).

The late Cardinal Gibbons, former archbishop of Baltimore and representative of American Roman Catholicism says,

“The Catholic Church teaches that our Lord conferred upon St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the popes, or bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently, to be true followers of Christ all Christians, both among the clergy and laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome where Peter rules in the person of his successor” (*Faith of our Fathers*, p. 95)

This is all built on the assumption that Jesus made Peter the first pope. Topple this interpretation and the whole Papacy falls as well as the system of the priesthood. I will attempt to show three things.

1. Matt 16:18-19 does not teach that Christ appointed Peter as pope
2. Peter’s own writings never made such a claim of authority over others
3. Paul did not think Peter was an infallible pope

First, “the rock” in Matt 16:18-19 has four interpretations: 1) Peter is the rock, 2) Peter’s confession is the rock, 3) Peter’s faith is the rock, and 4) Jesus is the rock. Admittedly a debated passage I have spent several hours on these verses and considered the various interpretations. *First*, the most popular Protestant view is that the rock is Peter’s confession of Jesus’ deity. However, this is unlikely because it doesn’t take into account the OT study of the “rock” which prepares the way for understanding the passage. In the OT it was well known that YHWH was the rock of Israel (39 times). It is hardly tenable to now transfer the rock from *YHWH* to Peter’s *confession* of Jesus’ deity or Peter’s faith. *Second*, those who argue that Peter is the rock often refer to the Aramaic problem. They suggest that Jesus was speaking in Aramaic (and in Aramaic there is no such distinction of the words for “rock”). Thus, Jesus meant Peter was the rock. This is ill-founded because the original manuscripts inspired by the Holy Spirit are in Greek not Aramaic. It is simply impossible to base one’s interpretation of the Greek text on a hunch that Jesus was speaking Aramaic. The inspired evidence says otherwise. *Third*, and most importantly, the word “Peter” is *petros* and refers to a small pebble or stone while the word “rock” *petra* refers to a “bedrock or massive rock formation” out of which a tomb would be hewn or upon which a home would be built (cf BAGD). Jesus is saying “you are a little stone, and upon this bedrock of massive rock formations I will build My church”. The Greek makes a clear distinction between Peter and the rock. No one in their right mind would build a home on a small pebble. *Fourth*, S. Lewis Johnson suggested that when Jesus said, “this rock” He was pointing His finger at His own chest. Matthew did not have a video camera to record this gesture. He was limited to the Greek language and here he takes full advantage of its genius. The word “this” is a demonstrative pronoun which has an attributive force signaling that He is pointing to something. Finally, the definite article “the” stands before rock in the Greek. The definite article with a noun usually designates persons and not abstractions, such as Peter’s confession. “The sequence of ideas is consistent since Peter had just affirmed the Lord Jesus as deity. Therefore, the divine Messiah alone is qualified to be the foundation of the church.”ⁱⁱ Rightly understood, Christ alone is *petra*. We could paraphrase the verse as follows:

“You, Simon, are a stone; but upon this very bedrock [pointing to Himself] I will build my church.”

Identification of the rock with Christ is confirmed by other NT passages.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:4 for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

But what about the rest of the verse?

Matthew 16:18-19 “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

I will build My church. Christ is both the bedrock of the ***church*** and the builder of the ***church***. Only the God-man could even qualify for either function. This is the first usage of the word ***church*** in the NT though it was already known by the apostles because it was the Greek word used of the congregation of Israel in the OT LXX (Acts 7:38). No doubt they probably did not recognize the total import of Jesus’ usage here, but nevertheless, Jesus could not have said of Israel, ***My church***. Notice Christ says ***I will*** which is a future tense showing that the church was not yet in existence. Thus, again it could not refer to Israel which had long been in existence. Further, it could not have begun yet because Christ first had to die and be resurrected in order to serve as the bedrock upon which He would build. Christ began constructing His church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2; cf 1:5; 11:15-17; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:21-23).

the gates of Hades will not overpower it. To the Jews the ***gates of Hades*** signified “death”. Thus, the meaning is that death ***will not overpower*** Christ’s church. The resurrection of the bedrock of the church, Christ guarantees the resurrection of each living stone in Christ’s church.

Verse 19 ***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*** Clearly Jesus is talking about a future event when He will give Peter ***the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*** ***keys*** refer to “authority”. Thus, Peter will be given authority in the kingdom of heaven. What is the kingdom of heaven? Every reference in Matthew is to the literal, earthly millennial kingdom. It is eisegesis to equate the kingdom of heaven with the church here. Jesus is promising Peter a position of great authority in the millennial kingdom. In Matt 19:28 Jesus promises each of His disciples that they will reign on 12 thrones and judge the 12 tribes of Israel. Peter will be given the power to bind and to loose. To bind and loose do not refer to the ability or right to forgive sin. It is well known that “to bind means to forbid and to loose

means to permit.” Thus, Peter will be given the power to execute his judicial authority over Israel in the millennium.

...and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. The Roman Catholic Church bases its whole priesthood on these phrases. But it rests on a faulty translation of the Confraternity Version (which is really a translation of a translation; i.e., from Latin Vulgate)

and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Confraternity Version)

The commentary says, “In heaven God ratifies the decisions which Peter makes on earth, in the name of Christ” (pp. 36-37). This is the opposite of the intended meaning of the perfect periphrastics of verse 19. Every Greek scholar knows that the perfect tense means past completed action that has ongoing results up to the present. Thus, it should be translated as the NASB:

...and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

God will ratify the decisions that Peter makes on earth but that Peter’s judgments in the future kingdom will have already been decided in heaven.

Further, Peter never claimed in either of his two epistles that he was the pope or that he had authority over the other apostles or that later popes would be his successors. In fact, the word “pope” is never used anywhere in the Bible. Peter called himself a “fellow-elder” (*presbuteros*) and warned against lording over the flock.

1 Peter 5:1-3 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Nor did Peter accept homage from men. Cornelius, the Roman centurion bowed to worship Peter in Acts 10 but Peter said,

Acts 10:26 "Stand up; I too am *just* a man."

Yet the popes not only accept but demand such homage. In fact, the highest cardinals must prostrate themselves on the floor before a newly elected pope and kiss his foot. The pope gladly receives the title Pontifex Maximus, first given to the emperor's following Julius Caesar as well as the title "Holy Father" and "Vicar of Christ". Such titles are blasphemous. There is only one "Holy Father" and He sits on His throne in heaven. There is only one "Vicar of Christ" and that is the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). Further, there is no scriptural support for apostolic succession or papal succession or even how such powers could be transferred from one person to another. What is more than clear is that Peter was not the first pope and even if that be granted, which would do great violence to the text, there is no passage which speaks of him passing his powers to a successor.

Finally, Paul directly confronted Peter in Galatia charging him with error.

Galatians 2:11-14 But when Cephasⁱⁱⁱ came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³ The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

If the pope is infallible then who was Paul to publicly rebuke and humiliate him? If Peter was the pope then it was Paul's duty to recognize his authority and to teach only what Peter approved. Obviously, Paul did not consider Peter to be an infallible Pope.

In all this I want you to remember several things. First of all, this is not a diatribe against Catholicism but a careful comparison of Rome's teachings with Scripture. Second, to inform you of what this religion teaches. Third, to build compassion in your heart for the lost. Fourth, to help you sanctify Christ in your heart. You have to set apart Christ as number one and nothing that is contrary to Christ can be tolerated. Fifth, so you will be ready to give a defense for truth when anyone asks you yet in a gentle and reverent manner (1 Pt 3:15).

ⁱ Morris and Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood*, 25-27.

ⁱⁱ C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, 353.

ⁱⁱⁱ The name given to Peter here *Kephas* is of Aramaic origin and originated from Jesus' calling Simon *Petros* in Matt 16:18. *Kephas* too then must mean no more than the original intention of Jesus, a "small stone" or "pebble".

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