

## Reaching Catholics with the Lord's Love

By Richard Bennett

On October 14<sup>th</sup> 08 in Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland, I had the privilege of addressing many believers on the above topic that I treasure greatly. The Isle of Lewis is known for the revivals that took place there in times past. A distinct characteristic of those revivals, and of all the revivals that took place in the 300 years of strong biblical faith in Scotland, was witnessing to Catholics. To be true to the Lord in His great commission, and in our desire for revival in the apostate days in which we live, it is necessary to understand what is involved in this outreach. For the most part, like other religious people, Catholics think they want to be right with God. This is the reason they take that Church's sacraments and do good works, which are in accordance with their Catholic teaching. This is the basis on which we begin, as we reach out to them in the Lord's love. The sin of the Jews—their contempt for the Gospel of grace—was of great anguish to the Lord Jesus. Nonetheless, with weeping eyes the Lord looked on the lost souls in Jerusalem. Likewise, the Apostle Paul explained the great zeal that he had for the salvation of his fellow Jews.<sup>1</sup> His affection for his countrymen was such that he was willing to undergo the greatest hardships in order to give them the Gospel. So should be our love for the lost. If we do not have love and zeal to reach out to Catholics, all of whom labor under a false gospel, we should cry to the Lord for repentance and a love for all the lost, which has been the hallmark of true Christians throughout the centuries.

Some of the obstacles that hinder us from reaching them are the following. There is the tactical change that the Catholic Church made official at Vatican Council II. That particular council moved from a position of separation from all other religions to its new program of false ecumenism. This new approach was devised to present Roman Catholicism as Christian, and thereby to prevail on Evangelicals to become Roman Catholic. As the Church of Rome defines it, her main tactic is by means of dialogue. In her official post-Vatican II documents she states,

“...it [ecumenical dialogue] serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those communities [non-Catholic churches]. In this way, it aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible: thus, “little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered in a common celebration of the Eucharist into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose.”<sup>2</sup>

This tactic is meant to deceive Christians into believing that she has changed. This deceptive policy has been successful as there are now many ecumenical movements that accept Catholics as Christian. Such movements are “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” “Christian Churches Together,” “The Coming Home Network,” and the “Emerging Church movement,” which all deny the Gospel and draw people into an acceptance of Catholicism and her false ecumenism. To answer this obstacle to evangelizing, and its accompanying movements, it is imperative that we analyze Catholicism. First of all, the most dangerous aspect of the Church of Rome is the fact that she appears to be based on the great essential truths of God's revelation. However, when we understand what she adds to these essentials in her official teaching, we readily see that the system is not by any means Christian.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 9:1-3

<sup>2</sup> No. 42, “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, O.P., editor, 1981 edition (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), S.P.U.C., 15 August 1970, p. 541.

### Reaching out with the Lord's truth

We begin reaching out to a Catholic with a question such as, "Can you say, without a doubt, that you are right with God at this very moment?" We explain that it is not only *possible* to be right with God, but God wants us to be *secure* in that position. Then we begin the contrast between biblical teaching and the official Catholic teaching.<sup>3</sup> The Catholic Church, while purporting to be Christian, declares its own absolute teachings to be infallible."<sup>4</sup> However, all true believers trust in God and His Written Word alone, "...*the scripture cannot be broken,*"<sup>5</sup> "*Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.*"<sup>6</sup> Papal Rome professes to impart Christ by Masses, and the Holy Spirit by sacraments.<sup>7</sup> It claims to fortify the faithful with crucifixes, rosaries, statues, holy water, and saints. It alleges that they can shorten the sufferings of souls in purgatory by indulgences. It professes to mediate between God and man; to hold the keys of heaven and hell; to forbid the marriage of her priests by her rule of celibacy. Papal Rome commands abstinence from meats and has clothed its cardinals in purple and scarlet and with fine linen, gold, and precious stones. In a word, she has set up a system of unrighteousness and taken to herself the imaginary status of "our holy mother, the Church." The Papacy's presupposition is that the Lord set up a totalitarian hierarchy with the Pope at the top followed by cardinals, patriarchs, major archbishops, archbishops, metropolitans, coadjutor archbishops, diocesan bishops, coadjutor bishops and priests. The biblical organizational structure of the bride of Christ is utterly different. In the true body of Christ, those ordained as elders and deacons are still only brothers within the same body and the one Master is Christ Jesus the Lord, "*for one is your master even Christ and all ye are brethren.*"<sup>8</sup>

As Catholics live their lives under the Church's jurisdiction, they have a long journey through the Sacrifice of the Mass, sacraments, good works, merit, veneration of Mary and the Saints. Each one is required to partake of the sacraments in order to be good enough to die in the state of "sanctifying grace" and then to be saved or at least, it is hoped, to land for a time in purgatory. Even on a natural level one wonders how a Catholic can have any hope. The sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments are such that the most they can promise is a pseudo-hell called purgatory. It is truly time for those who really love the Lord to reach out in that same love to Catholics.

### The Necessity of Giving the True Gospel to Catholics

The Apostle John wrote, as did Peter and Paul, in order that we would know how we as convicted sinners can have the peace and security which comes from being in right standing with God the All Holy One. His holiness is the distinguishing factor of His essential character. This is the reason why we need to be in right standing before the All Holy God on the terms He prescribes. By His grace alone the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin is turned by the conviction of the Holy Spirit from his sin to Him in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives. This salvation is based only on Christ's perfect life and death, for by it He has paid the full price for the sins of His people. God alone by His grace opens the ear of the sinner so that he can by faith alone believe on Christ alone, "*for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*"<sup>9</sup> The Apostle Paul also gives the exact meaning of right standing be-

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<sup>3</sup> This is clearly outlined in our tract called "Are You Right with God?" It is available from 'Literature Ministries International' Toll free in the USA: 877-454-8646 or email Doug Salser [doug@litmin.org](mailto:doug@litmin.org) (25 tracts/packets) See on line at: <http://www.litmin.org/store/products.php?prodid=1013&do=list>

<sup>4</sup> Catechism Pars 891 "...the Supreme Pontiff...enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when...he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals....This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself."

<sup>5</sup> John 10:35

<sup>6</sup> John. 17:17

<sup>7</sup> "The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), Para. 1129.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 23:8

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9

fore God, “*for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*”<sup>10</sup> Christ Jesus was not “*made sin*” by the infusion of vice or sin into Him, nor is the believer “*made righteous*” by an infusion of holiness. The Lord is personally All Holy; yet, as the substitute for the believer, who is dead in trespasses and sins, He rendered Himself legally responsible to take upon Himself alone the full payment for the believer’s sin—the just wrath of God. The consequence of Christ’s faithfulness in all that He did, including His death on the cross, is that His righteousness is credited to the believer. It was God who legally constituted Christ to be “*sin for us.*” He was “*made sin*” because the sins of all of His people were transferred to Him, and in like manner, the believer is made “*the righteousness of God in Him*” by God’s reckoning to the believer Christ’s faithfulness to the precepts of the law. Quite clearly this is the Gospel, of which even the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “*But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*”<sup>11</sup>

### **How Not to Evangelize**

The greatest obstacle to the Gospel is silence. By remaining silent and hoping that our Christian life will testify for itself we fail to keep the Lord’s commandment. The commandment, “*go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,*” means to go give the Gospel to all, including the Catholic! The majority of nuns, priests, and former Catholic laypeople that I know who have been saved out of Catholicism testify to the fact that no Bible believer ever approached them about their salvation. Christ’s commandment to give the Good News is not a request! It is a commandment. In evangelizing a Catholic, one must be extremely careful not to give any “*process message.*” A process message means telling the hearer “*what he must do.*” The Catholic has been continually told how to do things to be pleasing to God. When we approach a Catholic we speak of what Christ has done, and the necessity of believing on Him. Using expressions such as “*Accept Jesus into your heart*” and “*Give your life to Christ*” are quite similar to what the Roman Catholics hear inside Catholicism, sometimes the exact words. These messages must be completely left aside if one is to truly evangelize. It is necessary, therefore, that we discuss some of the wrong ways of evangelizing that are absolutely detrimental to the true Gospel.

“*Accept Jesus into your heart (i.e., to be saved),*” is one of the most used sentences in modern Evangelical circles. This humanistic concept is unbiblical. It puts man in control of his salvation; nevertheless, from start to finish, salvation is entirely the work of God. Salvation is not a decision originating in man; it is the loving choice of the Father before the foundation of the world.<sup>12</sup> The biblical concept of salvation is that by grace alone the believer is accepted in Christ. The whole theme of the first two chapters of Ephesians is summarized by the Apostle’s words, “*to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.*”<sup>13</sup> The terminology, “*accept Jesus into your heart*” is backwards and deceptive. The spiritually dead and ungodly person can be made acceptable to God only as he is “*in Christ,*” as all the teachings of the Apostles Paul, John, and Peter testify. Revelation 3:20 is often wrongly used to evangelize, “*behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*” These words were spoken to Laodicean Christians, not to unbelievers.<sup>14</sup> The misuse of this sanctification verse to teach the Gospel is inexcusable. Sanctification differs from justification. Sanctification is grad-

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<sup>10</sup> II Corinthians 5:21

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 53:5-6

<sup>12</sup> “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*” Ephesians 1:4

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 1:6

<sup>14</sup> Hence Revelation 3:14, “*and unto the angel [pastor] of the church of the Laodiceans write...*”

ual and mutable whereas justification is instantaneous and immutable. The abuse of this verse is most serious because Catholics in particular are so susceptible to being deceived upon this vital matter.<sup>15</sup> They still remain in the Roman Catholic Church believing themselves now to have done the “Evangelical thing” to add to their many rituals in Catholicism. Likewise vast numbers of church-going Evangelicals are still unsaved having gone through this same Evangelical “easy-believism” plan of salvation. It is unspeakably serious to give a deceiving salvation message.

There are other similar manmade messages that are used in Evangelical churches. For example, to be saved people are told to “give Jesus control of your life”, or “give your life to Jesus.” In fact there is nothing any person can do in exchange for his salvation. In the words of the Apostle, “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...*”<sup>16</sup> Christ Jesus was the only sacrifice for sin acceptable to Holy God, and that sin offering was accomplished completely at the cross. The sacrifice for sin is finished. A person is made right with God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone, not by commitment or controlled behavior. In fact, the exact opposite of that is true.<sup>17</sup> These are some of the humanistic ways in which modern Evangelicals give a so-called evangelistic gospel. The examples given here are to illustrate the departure from the true Gospel, which is taking place in the modern world, and to alert the Lord’s people to give the true message.

### **The Bible Way of Presenting the Gospel**

First, all men are commanded to “*believe on the Lord Jesus.*” The Lord put the command to believe in a nutshell when He said, “*This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the Apostle Paul and Silas declared, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*”<sup>19</sup> The central importance of faith was given by the Lord in the words, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*”<sup>20</sup> In a word, the Lord summarized the situation, “*he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*”<sup>21</sup> The Lord Christ Jesus states clearly the reason for this, “*He that believeth on Him [Christ] is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*”<sup>22</sup>

Having heard the command to believe, we must realize that without God’s unmerited favor or grace, no person can believe. The highest expression of the loving kindness of God is grace. Loving kindness and mercy denote the very nature of the graciousness of God. Therefore, the Scriptures insist, “*That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*”<sup>23</sup> Salvation does not proceed from anything within the person to whom we witness, but rather it issues forth from the immense kindness and mercy of God. The biblical tension between these two points—that every person is commanded to believe, but without God’s grace, a person cannot believe—must be clearly evident in our witnessing

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<sup>15</sup> For example Catholics sincerely believing that they have received Jesus into their hearts by taking the Eucharist, which they have been taught to believe is the “body and blood of the Lord Jesus”.

<sup>16</sup> Titus 3:5

<sup>17</sup> For example, Galatians 1:4

<sup>18</sup> John 6:29

<sup>19</sup> Acts 16:31

<sup>20</sup> John 6:47

<sup>21</sup> John 3:36

<sup>22</sup> John 3:18-19

<sup>23</sup> Ephesians 2:7

to Catholics. This tension is expressed in some Scripture texts, for example, “*But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of [the will of] God.*”<sup>24</sup> The design of the Lord in these and other verses is to show that a person must “believe on Christ Jesus” for salvation; yet, to do so, he needs God’s undeserved grace. In witnessing, we should show a person that to believe he must look to the Lord for His grace. All those that come to rest in faith on Christ Jesus are not only convinced of the evil of sin in their own lives, but also of the fact that the very power to believe on Christ is His gift to the believer. The graciousness of the gift is highlighted by the Apostle Paul, “*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”<sup>25</sup> Grace is a free, undeserved gift. A gift is always free, or else it is a wage received for some work performed in the interest and gain of the giver. Grace is totally unmerited and stands opposed to what is obtained by one’s own efforts or as a matter of claim.

### Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, evangelizing the lost, especially Catholics, ought to be a top priority in our lives. We have to concede, however, that the majority of believers are not much concerned with evangelizing Catholics. We need the freshness and zeal of authentic believers throughout the course of Christian history. There is no question that God seeks our repentance so He can restore us to spiritual health and instill a love for the lost. His promise is, “*if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*”<sup>26</sup> In this context, are we willing to stir ourselves to take hold of God’s promise to work among us? In the past, even in days of utter decline, the Holy Spirit’s work of salvation was always by means of the Gospel of grace. This will always be the Holy Spirit’s means until the Lord of glory returns. This has been the teaching and practice of those used of the Lord in revivals throughout church history. Therefore, we pray as did men and women in previous days of spiritual decline, “*awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.*”<sup>27</sup> The Lord God needs not to be reminded by us, but He gives us leave, thus, to be humbly earnest with Him for such appearances of His power as will be for His own praise. We are confident of sending forth of His power as we remember that in Christ Jesus are promised riches of grace. His Word speaks of the “*riches of his grace*” and of the “*exceeding riches of His grace,*” but also it is proclaimed His grace has “*abounded unto many,*” and that we receive “*abundance of grace.*”<sup>28</sup> Yes, God’s grace in the Gospel of Christ Jesus is superabundant. Should we not expect to be touched by it in true revival in our day even with the situation of the churches as we have outlined? This is so because the Lord Jesus remains as the “Christ,” i.e., the Anointed One. His purpose continues. As on the day of Pentecost, He is still to be the exalted One for the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit continues to be not for Himself, but for us His people.<sup>29</sup> The gift was in the power of the Father that Christ Jesus had promised.<sup>30</sup> This promise was then fulfilled and is still valid for us, “*for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*”<sup>31</sup> Thus what was seen and heard is an earnest of the same outpouring for us. Thus we can be confidently assured that we will be answered as the Lord Himself assured us, “*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father*

<sup>24</sup> John 1:12-13, Likewise, in II Peter the Apostle teaches that true saving faith, by which we believe, is acquired through God.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 3:24

<sup>26</sup> II Chronicles 7:14

<sup>27</sup> Isaiah 51:9

<sup>28</sup> See Romans 5:15,17

<sup>29</sup> Acts 2:33

<sup>30</sup> John 14:26; 15:2

<sup>31</sup> II Corinthians 1:20

*give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*<sup>32</sup> Then, as the Father answers with that personal revival in our own hearts, we will with obedience and love reach out to those still lost in darkness, without the Shepherd and the light of the Gospel. ♦

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<sup>32</sup> Luke 11:11, 13

