



**WIN Program: Witnessing in Neighborhoods
Advanced Class on Catholicism**

Week Ten

The Gospel for Roman Catholics

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The Gospel for Roman Catholics

[By Matt Slick](#)

This paper is written in two parts. The first explains and documents the Roman Catholic Church's position on justification. The second part presents the true gospel in contrast to the Catholic Church's position. If you want to go straight to the gospel presentation for Catholics, simply scroll down the page.

Because of the great emphasis on Sacred Tradition within the Catholic Church and because so many Roman Catholics appeal to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, the Word of God is often placed after the Catholic Church itself in relation to authority. Because of this, many Catholics appeal to their works--in combination with the sacrifice of Christ as a means of being justified before God. The Council of Trent expresses this plainly:

"If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema." (Canon 14).

Justification is the legal declaration by God upon the sinner where God declares the sinner righteous in His sight. This justification is based completely and solely on the work of Christ on the cross. We cannot earn justification or merit justification in any way. If we could, then Christ died needlessly. "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." ([Gal. 2:21](#)). Because righteousness cannot come through the Law (through our efforts of merit), the Bible declares that we are justified before God by faith:

- "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." ([Rom. 3:28](#)).
- "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." ([Rom. 4:3](#)).
- "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness," ([Rom. 4:5](#)).
- "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God;" ([Eph. 2:8](#)).

However, in Roman Catholicism, justification by faith is denied.

"If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified . . . let him be accursed," (Canon 12, Council of Trent).

Which are we to believe? The Roman Catholic Church or God's word? Furthermore, the RCC states that justification is received not by faith--but by baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic

Church says in paragraph, 1992, that ". . . justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith." This means that faith is not the instrument of obtaining justification; instead, it is an ordinance performed by a priest in the Roman Catholic Church.

Furthermore, baptism is only the initial grace along the road of justification. The Roman Catholic is to then maintain his position before God by his efforts.

"No one can MERIT the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can MERIT for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods," (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), par. 2027).

The problem here is that the RCC is teaching us to "merit for ourselves and for others all the graces need to attain eternal life." You cannot merit grace. Grace is unmerited favor. Merit is, according to the CCC, par. 2006, ". . . the recompense owed by a community or a society for the action of one of its members, experienced either as beneficial or harmful, deserving reward or punishment . . ." CCC 2006. This means that merit is something owed. By contrast, grace is something not owed. Therefore, the RCC is teaching contrary to God's word regarding grace and justification.

The sad result is that in Roman Catholicism, justification before God is a process that is maintained by the effort and works of the Roman Catholic. This is a very unfortunate teaching since it puts the unbearable burden of works' righteousness upon the shoulders of the sinner. By contrast, the Bible teaches that justification/salvation is by faith.

- "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness," ([Rom. 4:5](#)).
- "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," ([Rom. 5:1](#)).
- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God;" ([Eph. 2:8](#)).

The Gospel for Roman Catholics

The Gospel for Roman Catholics is the same as for anyone else, and it is obtained by grace through faith in believing and trusting in Jesus alone, who is God in flesh, for the forgiveness of sins. Salvation is not found in a true church. Salvation is not found in being good. Salvation is not found in good works. Salvation is not found in a sincere heart. Salvation is not found in making up for past sins by efforts of restoration or penance or indulgences. You can never do enough to please God.

Because God is so infinitely holy and righteous and because we are sinners, we are incapable of pleasing God by anything that we do. In fact, our righteous deeds are considered filthy rags before God ([Isa. 64:6](#)). You can do nothing to earn forgiveness or keep forgiveness. Salvation before God is not administered to us through an earthly priest in the Catholic church by the sprinkling of water or giving of penance or recitation of formula prayers. Salvation for the

Christian is not kept through the effort of the person who hopes and tries and worries about being good enough to stay saved.

Such error can only lead to despair and hopelessness and a desperate and unwarranted dependence on the Roman Catholic Church as the only means by which salvation can be distributed and maintained. In this error, people far too often seek to work their way to heaven by being good, by doing what the Catholic church teaches them to do, by prayers to Mary, by indulgences, by the Rosary, and by a host of other man-made works. Remember, in the RCC, salvation is through the Church and its sacraments and not through Jesus alone--by faith alone. This is exactly how the cults of Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses work who both teach that true salvation is found only in their church membership and in following the revelation and authority of their church teachers and traditions.

Are you tired of the works' requirement?

In great contrast to the position of the Roman Catholic Church, if you want to be forgiven of your sins, once and for all, then you need to come to Christ ([Matt. 11:28](#)). You need to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior ([John 1:12](#); [Rom. 10:13](#)). You need to ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins ([John 14:14](#)) and trust in Him alone and in nothing that you can do. Remember, your good deeds have no merit before God ([Isa. 64:6](#)). Furthermore, if you have faith, it is because that faith is the work of God ([John 6:28-29](#)). If you believe, it is because God has granted that you believe ([Phil. 1:29](#)). It is not because you were baptized or have been good or have been sincere. It is all of God. The Lord must receive all the glory for salvation because it completely and totally rests in Him. Salvation rests in Christ alone, and it is received by faith apart from works.

Please read the following scriptures carefully.

1. "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ([Rom. 3:23](#)).
2. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord," ([Rom. 6:23](#)).
3. "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." ([1 Pet. 2:24](#)).
4. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)).
5. "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." ([John 14:14](#)).
6. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
²⁹"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls." ([Matt. 11:28-29](#)).
7. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name," ([John 1:12](#)).
8. "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." ([Gal. 2:21](#)).
9. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," ([Rom. 3:28](#)).

10. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." ([Rom. 4:3](#)).
11. "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness," ([Rom. 4:5](#)).
12. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." ([1 John 5:13](#)).

A suggested prayer

This suggested prayer is not a formula but a representation of biblical principles by which you might better understand the true gospel and receive Christ as your Lord and Savior. It is not a formula derived from Sacred Tradition or Stamped with the seal of the Roman Catholic Church's approval. Its principles are derived from scripture: we are sinners; God is Holy; we cannot earn salvation; salvation is a free gift; prayer to Christ; Jesus is the only way; receiving Christ; faith; etc.

"Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner, and that I have offended you by breaking your Holy Law. I confess my sins to you, Lord, and ask forgiveness from you and do not ask anyone else to be forgiven of my sins against you. I acknowledge who you are, God in flesh, creator, humble Lord, who bore my sins in Your body on the cross; and I come to you alone and trust you alone, by faith, that you will forgive me completely of my sins; so that I will have eternal life. I ask you, Lord, to come into my heart to be my Lord, to forgive me of my sins. Lord, I trust in you alone, in the work of the cross alone and not in any church, not in any saint, not in Mary, not in any priest but in you alone. Lord, Jesus, I receive you and come to you and ask you to forgive me and justify me by faith as I trust in you alone. Thank you.

If you are a Roman Catholic and have trusted in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins, then welcome to the body of Christ. Welcome to salvation and the free gift of forgiveness in Jesus.

Next, I strongly recommend that you read the Bible regularly, talk to Jesus daily in prayer, and seek to find a church that teaches and focuses on Jesus as Lord, Jesus as Savior, and sticks to the Bible alone.