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Well, it's quite important for you to have the words of those hymns echoing in your mind as we come to God's word this evening, Jesus paid it all. "He paid the debt and made me free," we so gladly and joyfully sang before we began the message tonight. It's important for those things to be etched in your mind as we come near the conclusion of our series on "The Bible and Roman Catholicism." You see, as we sang, and as you know, biblical Christianity is premised on a wonderful truth, the most wonderful truth, that Jesus Christ made a full payment for sinners at the cross of Calvary. Scripture says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin in 1 John 1:7, and because of the complete and perfect and all sufficient nature of the sacrifice of Christ, that is why God's word says this about us as Christians despite our sin, Colossians 2:10 says "in Him you have been made complete." In chapter 2, verses 13 and 14 of Colossians it says, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him," listen to it, "having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Christ has made a complete and permanent and effective sacrifice for sinners that has made us complete in the books of God, in the presence of God. He no longer sees us as being stained by sin. He has thoroughly, completely forever cleansed us and made us pure and forgiven from all of our sins.

Scripture says having forgiven us all our transgressions, beloved, that means that there is no further payment to be made. You don't have to add to the works of Christ with your works, with your rituals, with your good deeds, in order to improve your standing with God or to make up for something that Christ didn't cover. Jesus paid it all and because of that, when a sinner trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, God declares him righteous, fully pardoned of all of his sins, and God counts to that sinners behalf the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. And that's why we can sing, "O sing of my Redeemer/ With his blood he purchased me." You see a Christian, for a Christian those aren't simply external words to a hymn, that's the song of his heart. It's not just the song on his lips, it's the song that echoes and reverberates from his heart because God places within our hearts a melody that assures us and conveys to us with certainty that our debt of sin has been completely paid by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has canceled the debt of sin and that is the basis of our hope, that is the liberty of our heart, that is our confidence when we contemplate the end of life. And when we realize that we are coming to the end

of our life, we realize that it's just the outer man that is decaying, our inner man is renewed day by day by the wondrous sensational news that Christ has paid all of our sins and that there is no further account that we have to give to God for the way that we have sinned against him. We have a brother in heaven who represents us. We have a Savior who has paid it all. We have a Lord who not only has reigned over our life but he has dealt with our soul with power in a way to make sure that we go straight to heaven when we die. That's reason to sing.

Those are glorious truths and because it is so great, because it is so majestic, because it is the eternal knowledge and plan and intent of God that his children would be delivered from sin forever and ever, and we rest in that and that is the greatest hope of our heart, beloved, those truths, that truth of the sufficiency of Christ on the cross is utterly nonnegotiable. There is no compromising with anything that attacks that central, basic, glorious truth so that we say that anything that contradicts the finality of the work of Jesus Christ for sinners on the cross must be resisted and refuted with all of our might, to the point that we would join with those who in the past have given their lifeblood in order to defend that truth; that we would join and we would understand and we would affirm those that gave their life rather than to let that truth be contradicted on their watch.

Now beloved, that is why over the past few weeks we have taught a series titled "The Bible and Roman Catholicism." At its root, Roman Catholicism denies everything that I just said. It denies the sufficiency of the work of Christ. To speak theologically, it denies the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We have taught two messages on the Bible and Catholic salvation, last Sunday, the prior two Sundays ago, we defined the doctrine of justification by faith alone and in subsequent messages we have seen this: we have seen how Catholic insistence on baptism and the sacrament of penance denies the glorious truth of which we sing. That was last Tuesday. There are two final matters that we need to address this evening and perhaps for some of you these terms and Catholic doctrines will be new, those of you that have grown up around the system or in the system will find some familiarity with what I'm about to say. We're going to talk about the Catholic system of indulgences and the Catholic doctrine of purgatory this evening and kind of draw this series to a close with one final climactic message this coming Sunday.

But beloved, here's the thing, and one of the things that I hope that you have seen as we have gone through this series is that as the weight of Catholic error, Catholic false teaching, as the weight of that sinks down further and further as it is exposed to the light of Scripture, what I trust you found in your heart is raising up and being elevated in your mind the greatness of the doctrine and the proclamation of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, based on the Scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone, and the glory of the Gospel shines in brilliant whiteness, in glorious truth especially when it is placed against the black backdrop of Catholic doctrine.

Look, those of us that are Christians and tonight most of us are, maybe some aren't but most of us are Christians in this room gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ certainly, we glory in the fact that all of our sins are forgiven and there is no payment that we have to make for them. Nothing is left to be done to assure our full,

complete, final, immediate forgiveness before God of all of our many transgressions against him. Our sins have been removed from us. God has released us completely from the punishment that our sins deserve based on the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, those things are glorious. What you're going to see tonight as we look at this Catholic system of indulgences and their doctrine of purgatory, you're going to see how ugly it is by contrast that they deny these things with the things that they teach and the things that they require the so-called faithful to do.

So we're going to finish this series off. When I started this series, I thought it was going to be five messages. It turned out to be five messages times two. It is going to be 10 by the time we finish on this coming Sunday, but that's all right.

Let's consider, first of all, the Catholic system of indulgences, and remember, we are seeing how these things contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Here's what you need to know. Catholicism teaches that sin brings two kinds of punishment: there is the eternal punishment of hell that sin would bring, and there is also a temporal punishment, a punishment that is confined in time but that also attaches to the consequences of sin for the sinner. They say, Catholics do, that those who die in mortal sin will inevitably and certainly suffer eternal punishment, as we would say would be true of every sinner who dies without Christ. But Catholics add to that and they say this, they say that lesser sins, they make distinction between serious sin called mortal sin and less serious sin called venial sin, they say that lesser sins require temporal punishment to cleanse away sin even though even under their system you have already received forgiveness. You have been forgiven in baptism, Catholics say, of the eternal punishment of sin as long as you don't fall into mortal and, but even if you're in a state of grace, you still have to pay a temporal punishment to cleanse away your sins. Now that all sounds very perverse to us that are saturated in biblical truth, but this is what they teach. No need to let the Bible get in the way of a good gig.

Paragraph 1472 of the Catholic Catechism says this and I'm supporting the summary statement that I just made. This is their teaching of double punishment on sin. Paragraph 1472, "Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which," the deprivation of which, "is called the eternal punishment of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be," listen to this, "which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin." That's Paragraph 1472 of the officially approved Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. So there is grave sin, there is this eternal punishment, there is this temporal punishment, so that even if you're in a state of grace, you're still facing punishment for your sin. Even if you've been forgiven, you still face punishment. What kind of forgiveness is that?

Paragraph 1473 says this, "The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains." Now, as I've said throughout this series, I realize quoting these things makes it very difficult to take notes. If you contact us through the church website, we will be

happy to share the notes which document everything for you. You just ask and we're glad to share this with you. It's all meticulously documented.

For us tonight, can you imagine a system? Those of you that understand something about the nature of true forgiveness that God has given to us through faith in Christ and the wonderful joy that we have of saying, "I don't face any punishment for my sin because," as we sang, "Jesus paid it all. There is nothing left for me to do." A faithful Catholic could never sing that song from the depths of their heart. They can't say Jesus paid it all because the official teaching of their Church says that even after the forgiveness of sin, there is a temporal punishment of sin that remains. Do you want anything to do with a system like that? Do you? I don't. Does that sound anything like what Colossians said, "in Him you have been made complete"? Does that sound anything like Colossians that says, "He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross"? It doesn't sound anything like that, does it?

Well, the nature of the Catholic system is that they have a system of indulgences, what they call indulgences, that can help you get out from under this temporal aspect of the punishment for your sins. Here's what they say an indulgence is at Paragraph 1471 of the Catholic Catechism. And I'm so glad I'm not Catholic and I'm so glad, even more, that I don't teach Catholic doctrine. I would be embarrassed, I would be ashamed, I would be so distraught to teach as truth these things that I describe to you only long enough to refute them. Here's what Catholics say an indulgence is in Paragraph 1471. I have never been more glad to be a Christian. I have never felt more privileged to be a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ than I have at the end of this series on Roman Catholicism because the distinction is so clear and it is so sharp, and to be able to promise sinners full and free immediate forgiveness if they will come to Christ is glorious. Catholics can't do what I do. Catholics have all kinds of conditions attached to everything that they say about any promise that they would ever make about forgiveness. Here's what they say about indulgences and I quote, "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church. The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead." That's Paragraph 1471 of the Catholic Catechism.

So here's what they're saying. They say you have this temporal punishment that you're still facing even though you're forgiven. This is just insanity. You've been forgiven but you're going to be punished but we have a way for you to get out from under that punishment if you would like to avoid it. We, as the church, the Catholic Church says, we prescribe the conditions upon which you can receive that forgiveness and once we give it to you, you can either apply it to your own account or if you want, you could apply it to a dead loved one and help them. This is just insanity. So the idea of an indulgence is this, to make it simple: an indulgence is like a credit that you can use to pay down the temporal punishment of your sins. You have to suffer, you have to pay for, an indulgence will reduce the debt. It's like somebody coming along and making a payment on your credit card so that you can reduce the debt that you owe on your credit card. Something like that.

A Protestant writer named Ron Rhodes who, in what I'm about to quote, is apparently referring to an older practice of the Catholic Church, I don't think this is their current status but it helps just by way of illustration, here's what he says about this. He says, "What kinds of things must a person do for an indulgence? One of the most common is merely doing the sign of the cross which grants an indulgence of three years less time in purgatory. Reciting the rosary in a family group can grant a partial indulgence of 10 years. Visiting a Catholic shrine can also grant an indulgence." I'm going to pick up on it in a little bit. When you hear if you read about Catholics going to these Catholic shrines where visions of Mary have been seen and all of this, it's not just a tourist attraction for them, this is a way of remitting some of the temporal punishment of sin for them. They travel to these places so that they can reduce the punishment that still remains for them to suffer for their sins. Returning to the quote, "When a person performs the specific requirements for an indulgence, the Roman Catholic Church then has the power to grant that indulgence based on the merits of Christ and the earned merits of Mary and Catholic saints." This is insanity. I'll explain more about the merit system in a moment.

Now, there is a more recent Catholic source that I believe indicates that the time credits that Rhodes refers to are now outdated and I want to quote from this. Cathy Caridi, a name that I'm sure you don't know. I would be shocked if you did, but Cathy Caridi holds a law degree in Catholic Canon Law and she wrote in an article in 2014, "What are the Church's current rules on indulgences?" She says this and you'll see how these things and the time frames all kind of fit together. Ms. Caridi says this and I quote, "Older Catholics are usually quite familiar with prayers to which the Church had in previous years attached an indulgence described in terms of time: 100 days, 300 days, 7 years, etc." She goes on to say, "The lengths pertain to the number of days of penance which Christians used to be required to perform." Remember, this is a Catholic writer. "Thus, for example, Pope Pius IX decreed in 1854 that whenever a Catholic devoutly said, 'Jesus, my God, I love thee above all things,' he gained an indulgence of 50 days." So this was the Pope, the infallible Pope saying that if you say this prayer, we'll give you 50 days less punishment than what you previously were facing.

Ms. Caridi goes on to say, "But today Catholics won't see the apostolic penitentiary," that's not a joke, that's one of their tribunals, "Catholics won't see the apostolic penitentiary granting indulgences for set time periods like the above example of 50 days. That's because the Church's system of granting indulgences was revised in 1967 by Pope Paul VI. He greatly simplified the system and among other things did away with the previous time measurements for partial indulgences. The Pope indicated that it is preferable to concentrate on the spiritual significance of the indulgenced work itself rather than focusing on numerical calculations." Let me put this in English for you. Catholics would tell you, "You are forgiven but you are still facing punishment." You say in response, "I'd like to get out from some punishment." Catholics say, "Here you go. You do these things and we'll grant you an indulgence." Now, we're kind of used, speaking us here in this room, we're kind of used to thinking of an indulgence as a permission to do something in the future. You know, I am going to indulge in my love for chocolate cake or something like that. But that's not the right way to think about it. The

indulgence is reducing the debt of punishment that you owe. So the Catholic Church says, "We'll make a deal with you. You do what we tell you, and we'll drop the debt of punishment for you." Back in the 19th century and up until 1967, they would assign specific chronological periods of reduction if you just did it. We saw it by a quote from a Catholic author themselves: 50 days, 7 years, whatever it might be. You do this and we'll reduce the sentence for you. But 1967, the then Pope said, "This is too complicated. Let's do away with the math on it and we're not going to tell you how long it is, we'll just tell you it's partial and you can do the thing and we'll just tell you that you've got a partial reduction in payment that's required." Then I'm not even getting into the fact that there are other things that you can do that you get a full indulgence.

Let's step way back and say this. With all due respect to Ms. Caridi, Pope Pius IX and Pope Paul VI, with all due respect to them and others like them, this would be funny like a bunch of clowns trying to pile into a Volkswagen, this would be funny to think that anybody thinks this reflects anything of truth; that this has anything to do with the Bible or anything to do with Jesus Christ; that little external prayers, that there is actually a system by which you could reduce it by a fixed numerical calculation and this is by decree of the Pope, but then a later Pope comes along and says, "No, that's too complicated. Let's simplify it." This would be a riot except that we are talking about an invented religion that keeps the souls of men in darkness and contradicts and robs the glory of the cross in exchange for this petty system of "do this and we'll give you that." It's despicable.

Now I've got a little bit more to say to you about this before we come to grips with it. On what basis, you might ask, on what basis would the Church say that they can reduce the punishment? On what basis do you do that? Well, they have what they call the treasury of the Church. The treasury of the Church. Now, that is not a financial treasury like the U.S. Treasury. Catholics believe that the Church oversees a spiritual treasury that supposedly holds the merit of Jesus Christ, the merit of Mary, and the merit of saints who were more righteous than they needed to be in order to enter into the presence of God. They were so good that they built up a surplus and you as a meager sinful person and you're not righteous enough, we as the Catholic Church will draw upon this treasury that has been given to us and we'll share a little bit of it with you if you do what we tell you to do. How does that help the sinner and how does it relate to indulgences? I hope you understand now why I quote directly from their Catechism. If I just told you that this is what they believed, you would rightly wonder if I had gone bonkers and you would question whether I was telling you the truth and whether I was being fair in my summary of it. You would say, "This is so ridiculous, I'm not sure you're telling me the truth." You would question me before you would question what they actually teach so that's why we quote from Paragraph 1478 of the Catholic Catechism, "The Church...intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins." We open up the treasury, we take out a couple of gold bars from Mary, and we apply those gold bars to your account and it goes down. Of course, the catch is that when you sin tomorrow, you know, you are building it back up.

They go on in Paragraph 1479 and say, "Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints," in other words the dead Catholics that are in purgatory, "Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted." So you've got a loved one, you're pretty sure he's in purgatory because the guy was a jerk, but you've still got a sense of compassion for him, well, you go and get an indulgence for him and you can shorten the punishment that he's facing in purgatory, which we will face in a moment, or which we will describe here tonight in a moment. So what the Catholic Church does is they make a withdrawal from this treasury of merit and they give it to the one seeking the indulgence to reduce the punishment for their sins.

Now, you can see the utter falsehood of this and you can see a biblical perspective on it with one simple statement here. Beloved, the only reason you would need anything like this crazy insane system of indulgences is if the work of Jesus Christ on the cross was incomplete to pay the debt of sin. If Christ, as the Bible teaches, made a full and complete satisfaction for sin, you don't need any system to remit any further punishment because as we sang, Jesus paid it all, and so that means there is nothing left to pay. It's not that complicated, is it? Do you see the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel compared to this complex changing system that Catholics are in bondage to? No. No, there is no truth in it at all. No truth in it at all.

R. C. Sproul says this. For those of you not familiar with his name, R. C. Sproul is one of the good guys so you know how to receive the quote I'm about to give you. He says, "I believe that there is no concept within the Roman Catholic Church that is more basically repugnant to Protestants than the concept of the treasury of merit. A person who believes in justification by faith alone weeps at this notion. The issue in the indulgences controversy is the sufficiency of Christ alone to redeem a person. According to Protestantism, justification happens on the basis of Christ's merit credited to his people. For Rome, we are never finally saved until we have sufficient merit of our own."

Now, think with me a little further. Even within their own system, the Church asserts the fact that it has jurisdiction over an infinite treasury of merit that can reduce the punishment that the faithful experience for their sins. That's what they say. They say there is this treasury, which there is no such thing, the only merit is the merit of Christ, but let's assume what they say for the sake of argument. We have this treasury and we as the church have the authority over that treasury. That's our account. It belongs to us and we have the authority to reduce the punishment that the faithful face for their sins. But do you know what? They won't just give it to you, you have to work for it. You have to come, sometimes literally crawling on your knees saying, "Please, help me! Please, give me something that would reduce the punishment that still remains for my sin because, you know, Jesus didn't pay it all!" And you come crawling to the Catholic Church asking them to please give you something that could reduce your debt and they say, "Go and do this and we'll give you an indulgence." Why? Why if Jesus Christ could leave the glories of heaven and gladly freely give up his life on the cross and shed his blood as a gracious act of mercy for sinners of his own initiative, why, why won't the Catholic Church who is

supposedly his representative on earth, why won't the Pope just freely do that for everyone that attains to and looks to the Catholic Church for salvation? Why wouldn't you just do it freely like Christ did? Christ said, "Freely you have received, freely give." The Church says, "Ain't gonna do it that way. We've got it all but you've got to crawl first." I detest that. The treasury of merit is completely unbiblical. The idea that some saints had more merit than they needed and can share it with others is bizarre and it is untrue. There is nothing biblical about it.

That would be bad enough but do you know what really steams my broccoli on this? Do you know what really invokes what I trust is completely righteous anger on this? This utterly distorts the character of our gracious God. This whole system pictures God as someone who has to be poked and prodded to meagerly give out in little itty-bitty increments forgiveness and release from the punishment of our sins. "Yeah, Christ did it but do you know what? I'm going to require several pounds of flesh from you in addition to that." That is such a slander against the true God of the Bible.

Look at Ephesians 2. Set the Catholic system of indulgences over against the truth of what God did for you in your salvation. You've got God as a miser and the Catholic Church as a miser over their treasury of merit and they just dole it out in bits and pieces. What's the truth? That's what we all want to know. What is God really like? Ephesians 2:4, when you were dead in your trespasses and sins, what did the real God, the true God, the God of the Bible, when he saved you, what was it like and what did it display and reveal about his character? Chapter 2, verse 4,

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

What is God really like? He's a God of boundless grace. Rich in mercy. Full of love and kindness toward unworthy sinners like you and me. That's what he's really like. That's why at other times when we realize our guilt and we realize the freeness of salvation, we realize the fact that God has given us a gift that we never could have deserved at the price of the blood of his own Son. That's why we sing, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." We get so familiar with the hymns that we forget the magnitude of what they're saying. This is grace, abounding, undeserved favor, so complete, so rich, so magnificent that the tongue just runs out of words to describe it but we can say, "Oh, it's amazing! That grace that forgave me is amazing!"

That's who God really is and this system of indulgences takes this infinitely wonderful portrait of God and throws black paint all over it and smears it and disfigures it until he's lost in the process. That is the ultimate crime of Roman Catholicism. That is the ultimate crime, the treason of cosmic proportions is that it makes God out to be someone other than who he is. And the accountability of the Cardinals, of the Popes throughout the ages that

have promulgated this, is of infinite fearsome proportions, that they have misrepresented who God really is and they have led sinners blindly following their teaching. The blind have led the blind and they both and up in the pit, but the teachers, the promulgators of this demonic doctrine are going to face a stricter judgment as a result. Ultimately this whole system of indulgences denies the finished work of Christ.

For one more passage to kind of cleanse our palate, to remind us of what the truth is, turn to Hebrews 10, beginning in verse 14. Hebrews 10:14, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ it says,

14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

One offering, all time. There is no punishment left to pay.

15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them," He then says, [watch it] 17 And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 18 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

The Bible says when God forgives you in Christ, the forgiveness is complete and there is no punishment left to pay. God does not remember your sins by which it means that he no longer will hold them against you. There is no more punishment to pay. And because that's true, there is nothing left to do to try to remit any kind of payment for your sins, to make any kind of payment for it. If you have been forgiven, there is no longer any offering for sin. It's done. It's over. It's paid because Jesus paid it all. The Catholic system of indulgences gets out the broadest Sharpie marker it can find and makes a big X over that passage of Scripture, "Not in our system, it doesn't."

Let's consider a second point just briefly: the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Beloved, there is a sense in which if you have a little sense of feeling as we've gone through this over the past few weeks as we have gone through it here tonight and looked deep into a demonic pit, if there is a sense of weariness and fatigue that you feel on this, I sympathize. I feel that way too, in some sense, in part I feel that way. But let's step back and just put everything in perspective here, what the Catholics have said as we have reviewed it over these past several weeks. You would think that a religious system that required baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and seven sacraments for the forgiveness of sins, and a system of Mass, bowing down before a wafer as if it was the living God, and prayers to Mary, and indulgences, you would think that at some point they would say, "Okay, that's enough." You'd think that they'd say, "Do you know what? We've just piled brick upon brick upon brick, pallet upon pallet of bricks upon the souls of these people, why don't we just back off and let that be enough? If they do that much, surely we can let them into heaven when they die." No. No, they're not done. They're not done cracking the whip on their slaves. They're not done inflicting punishment even then. Even faithful

Catholics have another stage to face after they have been trying to pull that sled of multiple pallets of bricks behind them on dry ground and having it wrapped around her neck and just trying to strain to get that thing to move a couple of inches toward righteousness and they fall over from exhaustion and they die. What does a Catholic have to face then? Purgatory. What is purgatory? It's a place after death. It's a further dungeon of punishment for them. This is incredibly sad. Think about the 1.27 billion people that this is what they think is truth.

Here's what the Catholic Church says about purgatory at Paragraph 1030 in their Catechism, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation." You see, that sounds great, doesn't it? "Oh, thank goodness I'm assured of eternal salvation," and they held it out with one hand and said, "You are assured of your eternal salvation," but do you know what they immediately do? They don't even finish the sentence before their other hand comes and takes it away. After the semicolon they say, "but." Let me repeat it, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation," semicolon, "but." What do you mean "but"? "But after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."

Paragraph 1031, "The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect... The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire." That's their Gospel. We are going to give you a weight of works that you can never satisfy. You will still feel guilt. You will never know if you are fully forgiven or not. And when you die, what we tell you is that purgatory is on the other side. It just makes me weep. If my eyes were expressing what's in my heart, a river of tears would be coming down right now.

James McCarthy, a Protestant writer, one of the good guys, says this and I quote, "Roman Catholic theologians are not in agreement as to the nature of suffering in purgatory. Some teach that the pain of purgatory is chiefly a sense of loss in being separated from God. Others teach that souls in purgatory suffer intense and excruciating pain from fire." McCarthy goes on to say, "How long a person must suffer in purgatory is not clear, for not only must the Catholic pay for his sins but his soul must be cleansed after death by cleansing pains. The amount of time required to perform this soul scrubbing varies from one person to the next." To which we say, to which the Bible says: no, absolutely not.

For the believer, Jesus Christ made a perfect sacrifice. His blood, Scripture says, cleanses us from all sin. When you put your faith in Christ, there was a perfect cleansing that took place on your account before God that cleansed all of your sin and removed all of the guilt and satisfied all of the punishment that God would ever require. That is why Christ suffered on the cross, was that as the God-man he was able to absorb an infinite amount of punishment for everyone who would ever believe in him. That's why he suffered. That's why he groaned on the tree. He did it for you. He did it out of grace. He did it so there would be nothing left to pay. And Scripture says, 1 John 1:7, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Do you know what that means? There is no purification

left to be done. Oh, we are being sanctified in this life but that has nothing to do with the paying of punishment for our sin.

Listen, and again coming back to what we said about the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that God counts to us, reckons to our account, credits to us the perfect righteousness of Christ, pardons all of our sins, beloved, let me ask you a question: if that's true, and it is, how could we ever say that a true believer had only been imperfectly purified as the Catholic say? The very language they use denies the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross because they tell you there is still a lot of work to do and you'd better get to it, and even when you've done it all, there is more to pay when you're done, there is more to pay when you die. Purgatory is not in the Bible. There is no need for it in Christian salvation.

So baptism, seven sacraments, Mass, Mary, indulgences, purgatory. They may frame their system at times as an expression of God's grace but, beloved, listen to what they say, and in the end it is obvious: there is a lot for a man to do to be saved in the Catholic system, and even then there is no assurance that it will ultimately end up in heaven in the end. Friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, that is not biblical salvation. That is a man-made invention that has no power to save anyone from their sins.

What does Scripture say? Listen as I read a few verses as we start to wind this down.
Acts 16:31,

31 ... Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,

Romans 11:6,

6 ... if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Galatians 2:16,

16 ... by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Hebrews 1:3,

3 ... When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Revelation 1:5,

5 ... To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood

If you trust Christ alone for salvation, my friends, he releases you forever from any punishment for sin and let me tell you, he's glad to do it. He doesn't do it begrudgingly. Scripture says that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than 99

righteous men who need no repentance. Heaven rejoices in the forgiveness of sin. God does it gladly, abundantly, freely as an act of grace, and that's why we say it's to God alone be the glory. That's why Scripture says therefore no man can boast. The entire Catholic system denies all of that. These two things are mutually exclusive. Beloved, mark it clearly in your mind so that you never forget and that you never go back and you have a clear sense of discernment anytime anyone says anything different than this: Roman Catholicism is not Christian. They teach a different Gospel that is under the curse of God.

So recognizing that we have a final postscript message coming on Sunday from James 2, what have we done in this series entitled "The Bible and Roman Catholicism"? From Scripture, by the grace of God, we have shown the utter impossibility of Catholic assertions about the Pope, Catholic tradition, Mass, Mary, Catholic salvation, indulgences and purgatory. Beloved, I'll be honest with you, we've not at all said all that we could have said in this series. Truth be told, we have not said all that we probably should say in this series. But beloved, we've said more than enough to support these conclusions that I'm about to make. Ian Murray writes, "Instead of upholding the New Testament Gospel, the Roman system is calculated to lead away from faith in Christ to faith in Church and faith in the priest." Loraine Boettner concluded his classic work with this final paragraph. On page 460 he says this and I quote, "The admonition of Scripture is, 'by their fruits you shall know them.' Surely the fruits of Romanism as they have been manifested throughout history and in various parts of the world, are sufficient to disprove its arrogant claim that it is the only true Church. Its interpretation of the Scriptures is so erroneous and its practices so persistently unchristian, that over the long period of time its influence for good is outweighed by its influence for evil." Then Boettner concludes with these words, "It must, therefore, as a system be judged to be a false church." The pulpit of Truth Community Church, Truth Community Church itself, is in full and unqualified agreement with those assessments from Ian Murray and Loraine Boettner.

We close with our prayer that God would open eyes so that many would turn from Catholicism and find true salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, based on the Scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone.

Father, may it thus be. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

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