

The Bible and Catholic Tradition

The Bible & Roman Catholicism

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Tonight, we're going to continue the series. Last time we looked at the Bible and the pope and we saw that the Bible utterly rejects any concept of the modern papacy, and tonight we're going to continue along the similar line of authority as we examine the Catholic view of biblical authority and I've titled this message "The Bible and Catholic Tradition," and tradition for them is more than simply what we might think of the traditions that we do at Thanksgiving or at Christmas, tradition is a source of authority and a source of, you could say, revelation to them in terms of they believe that it has equal authority with the 66 books of the Bible. So we're going to examine their view of biblical authority and the relationship of their tradition to it as we go through this evening.

What I'm going to try to do is answer four questions tonight about this. What I want to do here this evening is, first of all, I want to set forth what we believe about biblical authority. You can state that as a question. That's your first point for this evening: what do we believe about biblical authority? What does the Bible teach about itself, is another way that you could put it. So we're just going to establish the biblical plumb line, the biblical standard about where God has spoken before we move into what Catholics teach about it and examine that in light of Scripture.

What do we believe about biblical authority? Well, having asked the question I guess I'd better answer it. We believe in Sola Scripture, which is a Latin phrase that means "by Scripture alone." By Scripture alone. Scripture is the sole and final authority and here at Truth Community Church, we use the London Baptist Confession of 1689 and it defines biblical authority in a couple of different paragraphs in its first section. So our church teaches that the holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. I'll say that again. That's paragraph 1.1 of the 1689 Confession: the holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. Paragraph 1.6 says this: the whole, and I emphasize "whole," the whole or the entire, the complete, you might say, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the holy Scripture, to which nothing is to be added at any time either by new revelation of the Spirit or by the traditions of men. 1689, 1.1 and 1.6.

Now, I'll repeat what I said last time: I quote a lot of things in this series and it makes it a little bit harder to take notes perhaps. If you ever want my preaching notes on this, I'm more than happy to share. All you have to do is ask for them and I'll gladly share them with you and my notes contain all the citations to everything that I quote. I just think that it's very important for you to understand and to realize that everything that we are saying in this series is very carefully documented. This is not my summary or my representation of anything. We are quoting from the original sources that establish these things and just compare them with Scripture. So I want you to know that as we proceed and if you get a copy of my notes, you'll certainly see that, for sure.

Now, what do we believe about biblical authority? We believe in Sola Scriptura. In other words, nothing shares authority with the 66 books of the Bible. There is no other source of revelation from God. There are no modern day prophecies. There is no Catholic tradition. There is no book of Mormon in the sense that they are true revelations from God. Those things might exist but it's all falsehood. There is nothing from God about any of it because Scripture alone is the standard. That's what we believe about biblical authority.

Now, that leads to our second question for this evening. Having said that we believe in Sola Scriptura, we want to answer a second question which is this: why do we believe that? Why do we believe that when so many people would deny it? Why do we believe in Sola Scriptura? Well, we let Scripture speak for itself and Scripture claims for itself a perfect sufficiency to which we submit. Scripture claims a perfect sufficiency for itself which we believe and submit to. We take God at his word, in other words.

If you'll turn to Psalm 19, we're going to look at a couple of familiar passages here to stand on some familiar ground, perhaps for those of you that are new to our church. Psalm 19 beginning in verse 7 says this. I'll give you time to turn there. Psalm 19:7 says,

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

What you need to see in that passage is the statement that the law of the Lord is perfect. You could say the law of the Lord is blameless. Everything that is needed for the salvation of man and the revelation of God is perfectly contained in his word. You do not need anything else. If something was missing from the completed canon, you could not say that God's word was perfect and the Bible would be lying to us; it would be bearing false testimony to itself in claiming perfection for itself but then finding that really it wasn't perfect and there were other things that you needed. And as I like to say and I'll probably say later this evening, beloved, the truth of the implications of the doctrine of Sola Scriptura is this: you take the Bible alone or you do not take the Bible at all. If you take the Bible on its own terms, it says it is perfect and it is sufficient and if you try to add to it, you are denying it, you are testifying against what the Bible says about itself. So

these are very fundamental principles of revelation and authority that we must take into account.

Now, from a New Testament perspective, you can turn to 2 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 15, and notice carefully the language that is used here as it speaks about the capacity of Scripture and the ability of Scripture to provide for the spiritual needs of men. Paul told Timothy in verse 14, he said,

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

For an unsaved person, seeking God, but maybe perhaps more accurately stated, in whose heart God is working, they can go to the Bible and find in the Bible alone everything that is needed to lead them to saving faith in Christ. There is nothing outside of that that is necessary. There is no hidden information. There is nothing subsequent to come that would fill in the gaps that the Bible doesn't have. That does not exist. Everything necessary for the salvation of a soul, everything needed for true saving faith in Christ is found in the Bible.

What about after you're saved? Verse 16,

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

No matter what situation you find yourself in, Scripture contains the direction and the path forward for you to discern what God would have you to do, what he would have you to believe, and what he would have you to avoid. Nothing is left out. Nothing is missing.

So we come back to what we say again and again here in our church. We realize again something of the preciousness of this book; that this book contains the key to eternal life. This book is the revelation that leads a man to Christ and to saving faith and then shows him how to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Everything needed for spiritual life is found within the pages of the 66 books of the Bible.

Now, that means there are a couple of implications about that. It means, first of all, that we do not need to look beyond the written word of God for any essential doctrine about our faith or practice. We don't need to. So if somebody comes, a couple of young guys in white shirts and black pants come to your door and want to talk to you about Joseph Smith, you can reject them out of hand. There is no new revelation from God. Anything claiming to be new revelation from God is necessarily satanic. There is no debating this. We don't need to look beyond the written word of God and you can reject, beloved, this is wonderfully freeing for your spiritually, this is wonderfully liberating for your soul, you

can reject out of hand any claim to new revelation made by anyone, knowing that the Scriptures are complete and that we hold to and Scripture teaches about itself, the principle of Scripture alone.

Now, we can go even further than what I just said. I said we don't need to look for anything else, the truth of the matter is according to God's word, we cannot look for anything else. Scripture forbids us from seeking further revelation.

Look at the book of Deuteronomy 4 and as you piece these things together in the progress of revelation, you can see the consistent standard of God's word until he closes the canon at the end of the book of Revelation, and we'll look at that in a moment. Deuteronomy 4. Scripture repeatedly, repeatedly warns men and warns the people of God against adding to his word; warns us against those that would seek to add to his word. So in Deuteronomy 4:1, it says,

1 Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

Listen to verse 2 carefully in this context.

2 You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Don't add to it. Don't take away from it. Don't take the scissors to it. Don't bring your glue gun to add something at the end. That is not the way that we respond to God's word. We revere God's word. We respect it and we understand that we let God speak on his own terms and we don't try to add something new according to human wisdom to it.

Turn over to Proverbs 30. In verse 5 we find this stated, Proverbs 30:5-6,

5 Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. 6 Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

There again is the principle: do not add to the words of God. Don't do that, Scripture teaches us.

Then if you go to almost the very final words of the Bible in Revelation 22, the final words before the closing prayer of the canon of Scripture, Revelation 22:18, keeping in mind that Revelation is a book that is given by God to describe the things of the end times and eternal life and the eternal kingdom to come. It comprehensively covers everything that comes after the point in which we stand in the present age. So in

Revelation 22:18, the Apostle John writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says this,

18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

Don't add to it. Don't take away from it. There is a sanctity, there is a sacredness to the word of God that, speaking metaphorically as I like to say, emanating from that is a warning, emanating from his word is a warning, "Don't mess with this. Do not touch this. Don't add to it. Don't take away from it. Simply read it, believe it and obey it." God's word stands alone and God's people were never to look beyond his written word.

Now, brothers and sisters in Christ, if anything additional was necessary to the Bible, Scripture would not be complete. Look, think about it this way: if God intended for men to add something to the completed canon, he sure went about teaching us in a really bad way to accomplish that goal. When he says over and over again, "Don't add to this. Don't add to this. Don't add to this," if his intention was to have us add to it, all of those warnings are really contradictory to the purpose that he had in establishing his revelation. Isn't it obvious that God meant what he said, "Don't add to this," and that that solves the dilemma for us about what we do with additional claims to revelation? We reject them.

So we say without fear of biblical contradiction: you take the Bible alone or you do not take it at all. If you add to the Bible, you deny the Bible. This is foundational. This is about where God has spoken, where God's authority is found, where God's revelation is made known and it is a cosmic crime to falsely claim in the name of God that you have new revelation from him. That is a crime of incalculable proportions. It is a sin against the word of God to claim that you have something new. And in time, I hope to down the road maybe in January, to deal in a message about this modern fascination and love that people within the so-called evangelical church have about claiming that God spoke to them in their hearts. We'll deal with that down the road. That's for another time but everything we're saying here applies to that as well.

You see, the Bible is complete. It is sufficient and it is final and when God has said this so plainly, beloved, it is our responsibility to believe that and to honor what he has said. It is not for men to try to add to the Bible because God has said, "That prerogative is mine alone and it is over. It is final. Don't do that." I think we've made that point as clearly as we can here this evening. That's why we believe in Sola Scriptura. The Bible claims a perfection for it, positively it claims perfection for itself, then in a negative way, it says repeatedly, "Don't add to God's word." So if you believe the Bible is God's word, then that issue is already settled for you by what it says about itself.

Scripture is sufficient. Sola Scriptura, by Scripture alone. That leads us to our third point tonight as we get into our topic, "The Bible and Catholic Tradition." I'll frame the

question this way: how do Catholics deny the sufficiency of Scripture? Stated differently: how do Catholics violate Sola Scriptura? Well, they don't even try to hide it. They specifically state in their Catechism what it is that they believe and teach and we're going to look at, I believe, three different aspects of it, two different aspects of it, I guess. First of all, they deny the sufficiency of Scripture with their tradition. Catholics deny the sufficiency of Scripture with their tradition. That's the first subpoint: they deny sufficiency with their tradition.

Now I'm going to quote a little bit from the Catholic Catechism to prove that point. I feel like I'm speaking to a jury trying to persuade you of my case. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says at paragraph 82, and I quote, "The Church," meaning the Catholic Church, "the Church does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."

You know, I'm glad I'm quoting this to refute it because if I was quoting that to assert it, I would fear lightning striking me. They state plainly. Did you hear it? They state plainly that you must accept Catholic tradition on the same level as Scripture, with equal devotion and equal reverence. This is their own teaching. I'm not making this up. I would never falsely attribute something so blasphemous to somebody if they hadn't said it.

At paragraph 95 of their Catechism they say this, and we'll explain some of these terms in just a bit. Paragraphs 95 says and I quote, "It is clear that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."

That is an absolute denial of 2 Timothy 3:15 which I just read to you that says, and let me repeat it here because I don't want to quote it from memory and get it wrong. Paul says that the sacred writings which Timothy had known from childhood "are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Catholic Church says that's not true. Scripture is not sufficient, they say, to lead to the salvation of souls, it needs the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, it needs Catholic tradition in order to be able to do that. If you are a Christian and you love the Bible, you should have some kind of sense of righteous indignation in your heart against such blasphemous claims.

This is not a matter of debate and this is why, can you see, my friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, can you see why I said at the beginning that when you put these things side-by-side you are faced with a choice that you have to make? You cannot have it both ways? Scripture says the Bible alone. The Catholic Church says the Bible and tradition and our Magisterium. Those two things are mutually exclusive. Those are competing truth claims. They cannot be reconciled with one another.

Now, just so it doesn't get lost in my rhetorical flourishes, did you hear what they said? They said that sacred tradition and the Magisterium of the Church contribute effectively

to the salvation of souls. What does their tradition teach? What is contained in their tradition that is not contained in Scripture? Well, there are just multiplied heresies like salvation by baptism; seven sacraments; transubstantiation in communion, the idea that the elements change to the literal body and the literal blood of Christ; confession of sins to a priest; the Catholic Mass, a repeated offering of Christ for the forgiveness of sins; purgatory; the authority of pope; an unbiblical view of Mary. And that's just for starters. That's what their tradition would cram down your throat if you would submit to their authority. That's the 10 ton weight of unbiblical baggage that they would place on your shoulders and say, "You must follow this or you will die in your sins."

Now, why are we making such a point of this? Why are we having this series, "The Bible and Roman Catholicism"? Look, beloved, if Scripture is true, and it is, and if in Scripture alone is revealed the path of salvation from sin and judgment, and only in Scripture can you find true salvation, then we have a responsibility to confront and to refute those who would contradict that. As we said last time, there are 1.27 billion living souls on the earth today according to the Catholic Church's own census, 1.27 billion souls that are baptized Catholics in one manner or another believing this tripe, and they are in danger of judgment. They are in danger of eternal condemnation because Paul said there is an anathema on anyone who preaches a Gospel contrary to the one that he taught.

Well, that's what Catholics do and so we have an obligation of love to make the truth known as broadly as we can, as effectively as we can. It is not because we have hostility toward Catholics that we say these things and that we have these series, it is because we love them. It is because we want the well-being of their soul. We would have them join us in the true church of Christ. We would have them join us in true salvation. We would have them join us around the throne of God in eternity singing the praises of the Lamb who alone is our salvation. That's why we do it. We can't be silent in light of the things that we know, in light of what God's word says. Their tradition denies the Bible.

Now, carrying this forward a little bit. Scripture condemns the whole idea of the traditions of men. It utterly condemns it. The Bible makes it clear that it will not share its throne of authority with the commandments of men.

Look at the Gospel of Mark 7 in verse 6. This idea of unbiblical or extrabiblical tradition has always been a problem. It was a problem in the days of Christ, it's a problem in our day as well. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees who had asked him in verse 5, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" And in verse 6,

6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' 8 Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

Drop down to verse 13,

13 thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.

Now, I can perhaps grant to some Catholics that they have a zeal for their traditions and that their zeal is sincere but, beloved, don't you see, don't you understand that their sincerity does not make it true? That their sincerity does not make it right? Does not make it a revelation from God? Paul said of the Jews, "They have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge."

Look over at Romans, I believe it's Romans 10. I always confuse Romans 10 and 9 when I'm just quoting it quickly off the top of my head. But in Romans 10, you see a passage from Paul speaking about the Jews that gives us a perspective on this and echoes what we said earlier about our desire for the salvation of Catholics anywhere in the world. Paul speaking about his kinsmen according to the flesh said in chapter 10, verse 1,

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God is found in Christ and in the Gospel. You cannot set up your own standard of righteousness no matter how zealous you are for it. You can't set up your own standard of righteousness and follow it and think that you're pleasing God. It does not work that way. God has spoken, God has given us one name by which we must be saved, one book with 66 sub-books, you might say, in which he has revealed his truth and there are no others. So the fact that they might be zealous and really sincerely believe it just doesn't matter. If you believe a lie, it's still a lie no matter how sincerely you take it to your heart. No matter how many times you kiss the feet of a statue to Mary, it doesn't make any difference. It's still a lie. It's still leading you astray.

Over in Colossians 2, you don't need to turn there, I'll just read it. Colossians 2:8 says this and adds to the warning about the traditions of men and Paul commands the church, commanded the church at Colossae and by extension to all true believers in Christ, he said,

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

There is no excuse for the person who has read the Bible to give any quarter in their heart to an idea of a tradition having equal authority with Scripture. There is no excuse for that. There is no justification for it. Scripture has spoken far too many times, far too clearly, to think this is even a possibility.

We can go a step further, even. These are the kinds of points that I like to make. Tradition was unreliable even in the time of the apostles. Even while the apostles were still living and Christ had not yet ascended into heaven, tradition was unreliable.

Look at the Gospel of John 21, things that were being spread by word of mouth. John 21. You remember that the Lord had restored Peter. "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, I love you." "Feed my sheep," and so on. Jesus told Peter how he was going to die in verses 18 and 19 and in verse 20,

20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved [which is John's self-reference in this Gospel] following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die

Christians were saying, "John's not going to die. Did you hear what Jesus said to Peter?"

yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

So they were repeating these things, they were repeating their mistaken understandings in the time of the apostles but it wasn't true, it wasn't right, it wasn't accurate. That was not what Jesus had said. Well, beloved, if that is true, if tradition was unreliable, if oral reports were unreliable while the apostles were living, how much more unreliable and untrustworthy is Catholic tradition today 2,000 years after the time of Christ, especially when it contradicts Scripture?

Now, our Catholic friends, if we can call them that, our Catholic friends like to point to a particular passage to support their position and they point to 2 Thessalonians 2:15. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Catholics try to bootstrap everything to the extent they even try to make a biblical argument about it, they'll point to this passage and say,

15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

What are we to say about that? Does that just undermine everything that I just said? No, it doesn't. You see, the letters to the Thessalonians were most likely the first letters that Paul wrote of the 13 letters that made their way into the canon. You see, when Paul said this, the New Testament was still being written and so what you have in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 is simply a transitional statement. Paul had taught them, Paul had directly given them apostolic teaching. He's telling them, "Hold to that," but it wasn't meant to bootstrap all kinds of unbiblical traditions added after the apostolic era ended. No, it's simply referring to what the Thessalonians had heard directly from the apostles. That has nothing to do with subsequent Catholic tradition. As they love to do, they take one verse out of

context, impose their interpretation on it and say, "See? This is what the Bible means." But when you examine it in context, when you know something about the background, you have a sense of the fullness of biblical revelation, you realize that couldn't possibly be true. It would contradict everything else that we have said.

So Catholics deny the sufficiency of Scripture with their tradition. Now secondly, this would be point B, subpoint B if you're taking notes: they deny the sufficiency of Scripture with their Magisterium. Their Magisterium and we won't spend much time here and I'll define this for you because I realize for many of you that's probably an unfamiliar word.

What is their Magisterium? Well, according to their own Catechism, the teaching authority of Catholicism resides in their bishops and with the pope and that is what they call their Magisterium. It's from a Latin word which means "master." And here's what they say about their Magisterium, the college of bishops in communion with the pope. They say this and I quote, "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God whether in its written form or in the form of tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone." When they say "Church," they mean the Roman Catholic Church, they're not talking about us. We're on the outside looking in. We've got our noses pressed against the window and they won't let us in, according to their teaching. So they say and I'm quoting from paragraph 85 of the Catechism, "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God whether in its written form or in the form of tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome."

In paragraph 100, they say and I quote, "The task of interpreting the word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the pope and to the bishops in communion with him." Sometimes you feel like you're on information overload and that you're about to blow the switch, blow the fuse with some of these things as you hear them for the first time.

But here's what they're saying: they are saying that only this small group of Catholic bishops and the pope, that only Catholic leadership determines what's true. They claim exclusive authority and they even preclude questions. Paragraph 119 of the Catechism says this, "Interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the church." Paragraph 2,039 says, "Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church." You should not use your mind to evaluate their truth claims, they say. What we say goes and it doesn't matter if you understand it or if you object and you don't have the authority to search Scripture for yourself to see.

It is a breathtaking arrogance. It is a breathtaking hubris that says, "We alone determine what is true." It is a shocking arrogation of power to themselves that you would find nothing of the sort laid forth for you in Scripture. Think about it this way: if you were saved with no knowledge of the Catholic Church and you had time to read through the

Bible and acquaint yourself with it and become thoroughly acquainted with it before you were exposed to the Catholic Church and you had an understanding of Scripture, and then you stepped into their realm of thought, you would not recognize anything about what you were seeing because it would be so distinct and different from what you found in Scripture. Their arrogant boast, which is nothing more than a cheap, thuggish intimidation tactic by spiritual mafia, is utterly contradicted by Scripture. The fact that they would preclude people from searching the Scripture is utterly contradicted by Scripture itself.

You remember what Acts 17:11 says, that the Bereans were more noble minded than those who were in Thessalonica. They heard the teaching of the Apostle Paul, they heard the real thing, and yet what did they do? They examined the Scriptures daily to see whether what he said was so. The Catholic Church says, "Don't do that." The Bible says, "Do that." Choose whom you're going to serve. You can't have it both ways. These things are mutually exclusive.

As we've said multiple times in past weeks so that I won't go there again, you'll recall that Paul corrected Peter, the supposed first pope, supposed being the operative word there. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul rebuked Peter. How can it be? This is just such a disconnect. These things are unrelated to one another.

Not only that, from a more positive perspective, you might say, look at the simplicity of Scripture, talking about the salvation of souls in John 20:30-31. John states the purpose of his Gospel and he says, after having recounted the miraculous deeds of Christ, his teaching, his death, his resurrection, in verse 30 he says,

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

My dear Christian friends, those two verses should be immensely sweet and precious to you because it tells you that you can read the Gospel of John for yourself and that John wrote it with a purpose of leading someone to saving faith in Christ. He claims a sufficiency for his own Gospel in order to lead someone to faith in Christ.

Look at it again there in verse 31, "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Watch this: read, believe, have eternal life. That is the simplicity of Scripture. That is the clarity of the Gospel. That is the sufficiency of Scripture. Read, believe, have eternal life. Beloved, mark it, the Catholic Church is not inserted anywhere in between any of those three steps.

Lorraine Boettner says this and I quote, "Our Lord and the New Testament writers referred to Scripture as authoritative and final. Never once did they say or imply that extra-scriptural tradition was needed to supplement Scripture or that any man or group of

men was authorized to give authoritative interpretations of Scripture." He's exactly right. There is nothing about adding to the Bible with subsequent tradition made up by men. There is nothing about a small college of men that alone have the ability to know what Scripture says and to interpret it.

This is all a fabrication. It's made up. You could say it this way, I reach for different words to make the same point over and over again. Do you know what all of this stuff from Catholicism is on tradition and their assertions about their Magisterium and their bishops and the pope, do you know what it all is? It's just one big bluff. It's just one big bluff and sadly as we see the power of Satan and his demonic horde, remembering that we wrestle not with flesh and blood but with principalities, we find that 1.27 billion people have not called the bluff. They submit to it. They think it's true when it is not.

Now, briefly in the final few minutes that we have here this evening, a question that often comes up when you talk to Catholics is this: what about the apocrypha? What about the apocrypha? That's our fourth point for tonight, our fourth question. The first question was: what do we believe about biblical authority? Why do we believe that? How do Catholics deny the sufficiency of Scripture? And now our fourth question is this: what about the apocrypha? Well, we don't have too much time to deal with this and so I'm going to run through it, reminding you again of my invitation to contact me if you want copies of my notes. It's all documented and footnoted carefully here in my notes.

The Catholic Bible, for those of you that have never opened a Catholic Bible, has seven books in the Old Testament and long sections in the book of Esther and Daniel that are not in your real Bible. By the way, a point of fact here, just something to point out: very very often as you sit and listen to me teach, you will hear me use the phrase "the 66 books of the Bible." This is why I quantify them, it is to distinguish the true Bible from the Catholic Bible and my hope is, is that somebody that is enmeshed in Catholicism when they hear the claim to 66 would understand, "But that's different," and that it would spark a sense of investigation to them. And when we say "66 books of the Bible," we are setting the four corners of where God's revelation is contained and by implication denying the authority of the apocrypha. That's why we do that. But these seven books in the Old Testament which are listed in the Catechism in paragraph 120. Paragraph 120 of the Catechism sets forth their view of the biblical canon and they claim 46 books in the Old Testament, seven more than the real 39. Those seven books are called the apocrypha which means "hidden things," and these seven books were written between 400 BC and the time of the coming of Christ.

Now, even a short discussion of the apocrypha is beyond our scope tonight but I want to just give you some bullet points about why we reject the apocrypha so that you would know that we were aware of this issue; you can have some sense of discussion when you talk with Catholics in the future. Why do we reject the apocrypha, those seven books and the additions to Daniel and Esther? I'm going to give you seven real quick reasons here.

1. The apocrypha does not claim inspiration for itself. The apocrypha does not claim inspiration for itself.

Secondly, the Jews who lived in Palestine never accepted the apocrypha as revealed Scripture. The Jews in Palestine never accepted the apocrypha as revealed Scripture.

3. Jesus Christ and the New Testament writers do not quote the apocrypha like they do the rest of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ and the New Testament writers do not quote the apocrypha like they do the rest of the Old Testament. That's very significant.

4. The early church as a whole rejected the apocrypha. The early church as a whole rejected the apocrypha.

5. And this one is very compelling: even the Roman Catholic Church did not declare the apocrypha inspired until 1546 at the Council of Trent. That's 2,000 years after the completion of the Old Testament. If those books were inspired and we've taught on the canon here in months gone by, if those books were truly inspired, the early church would have recognized them as so. That fact that it took 1,500 years for the Catholic Church to make that claim ought to set off in your mind, "Wait a second. This isn't square. This isn't right. You're up to something here."

Now, inevitably, inevitably sincere well-intentioned Catholics will ask someone like us, "Why do you leave out the apocrypha?" The answer to that question is a different question. The real question is, "Why did the Roman Catholic Church add it?" That's the question. You can't evaluate it as we look at it here in 2017, we have to look at the historical process, the undeniable historical facts of it and say, "Why did they do that?" 1546, do some math. Remember that we're doing all of this in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation which began on October 31, 1517. Do the math. Luther nails the 95 Theses in 1517 and the world is turned upside down. The Catholic Church tries to get things back under control in 1546. What's going on here? The Catholic Church needed outside books to try to argue against the Reformers. They could not refute the Reformers on Scripture alone so they changed the rules, they added the books and then started to appeal to things that they had never claimed were inspired beforehand.

6. The apocrypha contain numerous errors which are inconsistent with being the inerrant word of God. They contain numerous errors which are inconsistent with being the inerrant word of God.

And finally, Jewish scholars in the first century affirmed a book as canonical only if it was available in Hebrew. The apocryphal books are found only in Greek.

That's seven reasons for why we do not accept the apocrypha and gives an explanation briefly though it may be, as to why the Catholic Church found it necessary to add them historically.

Can I add one final thing? We're almost done here. I know this is like sitting in a college lecture in some ways and it's very taxing, perhaps, especially late in the evening. But beloved, even the apocrypha recognizes its own inferiority. You can find this in the New

American Bible, a version approved by the Roman Catholic Church, in 2 Maccabees 15:37-38. Listen to this, listen to what the writer of 2 Maccabees said, "I will bring my own story to an end. If it is well written and to the point, that is what I wanted. If it is poorly done and mediocre, that is the best that I could do." Beloved, does that sound like the authoritative revealed word of God to you? Does that sound like the prophets who said, "Thus saith the Lord"? Does that sound like the word of Jesus saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you"? You put it side-by-side and you say there is no comparison here. On its own merits, it disclaims its own authority.

Well, let's summarize it and say this, just to summarize as we close. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:6, "Do not exceed what is written. Don't go beyond the written word of God." Catholics, sadly, do just that. They add oral tradition. They claim authority for a small group of men to restrict interpretation of the Bible. They add books to the Bible. This is just a multiplied travesty and an undisguised assault against the authority of Scripture. So we ask the question again: why are we, Protestants, why do we protest against the Catholic Church? Why do we reject the claims of Rome without any fear of bringing condemnation on our souls from the true and living God? We are Protestants because our authority is the Bible. We believe Sola Scriptura. We are Protestants because we have rejected Catholic tradition, their Magisterium and the apocrypha, because they violate Sola Scriptura. Scripture alone, that is why we are Protestants. Scripture alone, that is why we reject Roman Catholicism and its truth claims.

Is that where your heart's at? Do you believe the Bible and the Bible alone? Are you trusting in Scripture and Scripture alone to know what God has truly said about the salvation of your souls?

Let's pray together.

Father, we commit these things to you. We pray for our family, our neighbors, people dispersed throughout the world, especially in Latin America and in Italy, Father, where they just put statues of Mary on almost every street corner. O God, we pray for their salvation as Paul prayed for the Jews. It grieves us, in one sense, to have to say these things, Father, because we realize the consequences are that there are 1.27 billion people in darkness and there is a small group of men above them that are perpetrating an eternal crime against their souls. Father, we pray that you would take the power of your word today not only from this pulpit but in other places where these things are being taught, and that you would renew the power of the Reformation from 500 years ago where Luther and others assaulted the Catholic Church simply by teaching the word of God. We ask that you would renew the spirit of that through your word and through those who teach it here again in our age.

And Father, along with that, we pray that you would tenderly, carefully care for the souls of each one that are here. For those that are in Christ, Father, may they rest afresh knowing that their faith in Jesus is well placed. And for the dear ones that are with us that, Father, are still resisting Christ, we pray that your Spirit would soften their hearts to the truth of the Gospel, that Christ died for sins, that he was buried, he was raised on

the third day and now ascended to heaven having made a complete atonement for the sins of anyone who would believe in him. May those who do not know him here this evening, Father, be awakened and run to Christ for salvation, fleeing their sin, fleeing the world behind and receiving Christ by faith alone to the eternal bliss and well-being of their souls.

So Lord, with those things we conclude our time together tonight. We thank you for each one here and pray your blessing on us as we go. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

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