



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

TRANSCRIPT

Various

“Evangelicals and Catholics Together? A Response at the Present Time”

[Audio begins] It's time for us to begin. Let's open our meeting with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we give Thee thanks for another opportunity to study together. We thank Thee for the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the teaching of the Apostle Paul and others who emphasize so plainly and clearly that it is by grace alone, by faith alone, through Christ alone that we are saved. And we thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit who has, in a wonderful way, worked in our hearts to bring us to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal. We give Thee thanks. We pray Thy blessing upon our time together. We ask especially Thy blessing upon the evangelical church and churches of this day and pray that there may be a deepened interest in the Scriptures and the theology of the word of God, because ultimately the theology of the word of God is precisely what the Scriptures do teach. We pray that Thou wilt give us diligence in the study of the Scriptures and a deep desire to know them, because it is through them that we come to know Thee. We thank Thee for that which Thou hast done in the hearts of all of us here in this auditorium. We pray that Thou wilt continue Thy work. We know from the promises of the word of God that that which has been begun in our hearts will

be completed. We look forward to that. We give Thee especially a word of thanks for the security and the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins that we have through Jesus Christ. And we pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] Well the subject for this evening is one that is very important. It's one that's not very popular in the midst of the evangelical churches today, largely because the issue is unknown. That's unfortunate, because some very significant things are happening in our day and some things may be very helpful for the evangelical church and some things may not be so helpful. It's very important that we keep our eyes open, spiritually, and theologically, other wise we may be caught up in error.

The subject for this evening is “Evangelicals and Catholics Together.” That is in quotes because that's the title of a publication which was issued last year about in the earlier part of the year, I've forgotten the exact month, I have it in my notes, but I've forgotten it precisely. The rest of the title is, “A Response at the Present Time.” “Evangelicals and Catholics Together. A Response at the Present Time.”

The term “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” is the title of this particular document that appeared in *First Things*, a magazine edited by John Richard Neuhaus. It appeared in May of last year, May, 1994. It is the equivalent of about twenty-five, nine by eleven, or eight by eleven pages, eight and a half by eleven or whatever it is. So it's a fairly significant document. It's a very lengthy, but nevertheless important.

Martha and I, over the weekend, went out to Pasadena, California and there sat in on a debate in Pasadena in the Lake Avenue Congregational Church, a very large independent church. It's one of the significant churches of Fuller Theological Seminary faculty and students and of the universities and colleges around Pasadena. The auditorium is one that's gigantic. I don't know exactly how many it seated, but it looked like it might seat as many as three thousand people. And surprisingly, for this discussion or debate, by Catholics and Protestants, just as a pastor's guess without an attempt to

elaborate, there must have been six to seven hundred people there. And looking at the people who were there, they were, largely I think, it could be said, not entirely, but largely young people. That is, under thirty. And many of them were clearly theological students or college students and the interest in the debate between the Romanists or the Roman Catholics and the evangelicals was, I think, remarkable.

The prominence of the consultants in this consultation is very significant too, because many of you know the names of some of those who have had a part in “Evangelicals and Catholics Together.” Incidentally the rest of the title is, “The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium.” Among the participants in this consultation, and participating in the document that was issued, are Charles Colson, of the Prison Fellowship; Dr. Richard Land of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; John White, a man that I know, President of Geneva College and the National Association of Evangelicals. These are among the individuals who participated in the construction of the document and then there are a group of endorsers of the document, some of whom you in this audience will know. Perhaps most of you do not know Dr. Elizabeth Achtemeier from Union Seminary in Virginia, but most of you know Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ; Oz Guinness, those of you who went to the Ligonier Conference last year will remember Oz Guinness, who is the head of the Trinity Forum and a well known author and Christian. Richard Mouw of Fuller Theological Seminary, the president of that institution, one of our largest and most significant evangelical seminaries; Mark Noll of Wheaton College, history professor there, also extremely well known; Thomas Oden of Drew University, another man theologian, well known; Jim Packer, who has been in Believers Chapel. And Pat Robertson is the final man in this particular list that you might know about. There are others here, some Catholics and of course John Richard Neuhaus, the editor of *First Things*, a Lutheran who converted to Roman Catholicism a few years back, within the past ten years I believe, but I’ve forgotten the exact year.

This debate was a debate over two doctrines. *Sola fide*, or is our salvation a salvation that is our by faith alone? Three hours on Friday night they debated the question of *sola fide*. I'm sorry *sola scriptura* was on Friday night, then Saturday morning, *sola fide*, so three hours Friday night, *sola scriptura*, by scripture alone, and then by faith alone on Saturday morning. The individuals who participated in the debate, included from the Protestant side, Robert Godfrey, the president of Westminster Seminary, a very fine evangelical man who has, incidentally, spoken in Believers Chapel. Some of you may remember him, he was ministered on Sunday morning, because he was in the city and is an outstanding church history professor and now president at Westminster Seminary. Two other men, Michael Horton who is the editor of, he's a very young man and an editor of CURE, and head of CURE and editor of the magazine that they publish, Reformation, I believe *Reformation and Review*. And then, a Lutheran, Kim Riddlebarger, was third member of the protestant side. The debate was conducted according to the rules of debate, and so there was a moderator who kept things well in hand, and we finished in three hours as we were supposed to. And the result of it was quite a bit of discussion.

I'd like to just say a few words about the developing history of this issue. And this is something of a brief step by step treatment. And I want you to understand that I'm giving it as I understand the debate that is taking place and as I evaluate some of the things that have been taking place. The document, I said, was published in *First Things* in May 1994. Actually it's about seven pages here, but as you can see this is a large page and it is the equivalent of twenty-five pages of ordinary book publication. So it's a lengthy document. I'd like to look at a few of the things that are in it because it's important for you to understand the purpose of this.

There is a movement on the part of a number of Roman Catholics, and some Protestants, to bring the two together, Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism. And so this is one of the attempts. Dr. Neuhaus is the one who has sought to bring it to pass and has

taken the lead in the document. I'm going to read a few of the things that are affirmed in the document, “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.” I want you to notice, first of all, how deceptive this could be. Later on we'll try to see whether it really is deceptive or not, but you can see “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.”

Now I'm going to say something that may upset some of you, but I have the feeling that probably eighty percent, maybe more, of you in this auditorium would think that that settles the issue that people who believe this are Christians. We believe, “We affirm that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.” Can a Roman Catholic say that? Well of course the answer is yes, he can say that. You notice the important omission is one word, alone. We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith alone because of Christ. For I might understand this we affirm that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ as a result of having righteousness infused to me through the sacrament of baptism for example. So, we affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith is not sufficient. Through faith alone, for as you know, we'll make reference to it in a moment, when a Roman Catholic is baptized the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church is that the forgiveness of sins, justification, is infused in that individual, poured in that individual, through the exercise of the sacrament, through the water that is sprinkled.

Further, “All who accept Christ as Lord and savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.” Would you not agree with that? “All who accept Christ as Lord and savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters together in Christ.” Well the facts are of course, that that's not sufficient.

Here are some of the other things that are important. These are some of the things that the Roman Catholic church has, Dr. Neuhaus has suggested are points of difference. The remembrance of Mary and the saints, or devotion to Mary and the saints,

ministry ordered in apostolic succession or the priesthood of all believers, and now this of importance, baptism as sacrament of regeneration, or testimony to regeneration. The Roman Catholic church believes that baptism is a sacrament of regeneration, it's by the sacrament of baptism that we receive the forgiveness sins. Protestants believe that it is simply a testimony to regeneration that has taken place when an individual believes in Jesus Christ.

Here are some of the other things. Of course, some of the things that the Roman Catholics and Evangelicals believe are similar, identical. In this document it is stated, “We contend for a free society, including a vibrant market economy.” That is something of course, for which both Catholics and Protestants work. Here is another point or two that might be mentioned. Evangelization is discussed. There is a necessary distinction between evangelizing and what it today commonly called proselytizing, or sheep stealing, “We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement.” And then also below, “We as Evangelicals and Catholics affirm that opportunity and means for growth in Christian discipleship are available in our several communities.” In other words, an acknowledgment that a man can grow in a Christian, in the Christian life whether he's in the Roman Catholic church or in a Protestant church.

So, what we have seen affirmed by this document is the fact that it is possible for an individual to say, “I believe in justification by grace through faith,” and still not be an Evangelical. An Evangelical will say “justification by grace through faith alone,” not through the sacraments.

Now, this document caused a great deal of discussion, because what it says is that evangelicals and Roman Catholics really are brothers in Christ. That is, those who believe as that statement, justification by grace through faith, are brothers with Christians. The issue of the sacraments may be hidden and the fact that a Roman Catholic says that we, “I

believe in justification by grace, I believe in justification by faith” is he to be received as a believing brother? That’s the point. The document says that he is a believing brother.

Now as a result of this, evangelicals who have an understanding of some of these things have become very disturbed over it. Some of the subsequent stirrings of the flock include these, from Orlando, and R. C. Sproul. He immediately, because he is a knowledgeable man, noticed the omission of justification by grace through faith alone. And the affirmation that a person who simply affirms justification by grace or justification by faith without alone, and at the same time believes that he receives the forgiveness of sins through the seven sacraments, that individual is not an Evangelical, because obviously, if he has to undergo, so Dr. Sproul has said, as other Evangelicals do, if he must undergo the sacraments in order to be saved he has now mingled works with his grace and faith that he has proclaimed. It’s not faith alone. It’s faith and the observation of the sacraments. So, he was very much upset over this. The reason for this of course, other than R. C. Sproul’s interest in biblical doctrine, is that Jim Packer, and Charles Colson, and Oz Guinness, speak in his conferences. And speaking in his conferences, where by grace through faith alone is proclaimed as the truth, we have a contradiction. So he was very upset about it. Also upset about it for the same reason was John Gerstner, who has appeared more than once in Believers Chapel in a series of meetings, John MacArthur Junior, John Armstrong, and a number of individuals who have written articles in the book *Roman Catholicism*. I happened to have been one who wrote one of the chapters. Those authors also were very upset as well.

Sunday, Martha and I were in John MacArthur’s church near Van Nuys, and it was really a thrill to hear John MacArthur expound the Scriptures, because the kind of message that he gave was simply to open up the Scriptures, he was preaching from 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 15, 16, 17, and expound the Scriptures just, not only verse by verse, but word by word where necessary, and this is most significant, affirm five point Calvinism. It was very interesting. He has come to that view relatively recently and has

been affirming it. And when I saw one of the seminary professors of the Master's Seminary afterwards and said I was so glad to hear that, he said, “You should have been here last week.” [Laughter] Well I would liked to have been there the week before, because it's really a thrill. I knew that over a period of several years or more he's been thinking about these issues and it was good to see that he came. And it was nice to hear him take a phrase from Charles Hodge. He didn't say it was Charles Hodge, but I knew it was from Charles Hodge because I've used it too. It's 2 Corinthians chapter 5, where Charles Hodge said, “Jesus Christ died for those who died when Jesus Christ died.” And he went on to emphasize that with the large congregation that he has in that particular church. He himself has been very much disturbed by this.

Well after this document came out and after there were the stirrings of the flock of those who believe in by grace and faith alone, Jim Packer and Alister McGrath wrote something that could be called a response. These two men are British men, Alister McGrath a professor at Oxford, incidentally, the professor of Frank James who grew up in this church, at least for a while, while he was partially going through seminary here, and married one of our church secretaries, Carolyn Custis, and now is on the faculty of Reformed Seminary in Orlando. But, Jim Packer and Alister McGrath have written a kind of response. What Alister McGrath did was simply to write, “Do We Still Need a Reformation?” And it was a review of the new Catholic catechism in the light of this particular discussion. And what Jim Packer wrote was his response to the objections that people had made that he signed that document. And so his title is, “Why I Signed It.” “The recent statement ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together’ recognizes an important truth. Those who love the Lord must stand together.”

Well this was issued on December 12, 1994. There was no apology for signing it. Jim Packer didn't make any apology at all. And of course Alister McGrath had not signed it so he didn't have to apologize to it. McGrath's article “Do We Still Need a Reformation?” is an excellent article. He reviews the new Catholic catechism with

suggestions for collaboration with the Catholics, generally, very illuminating and very wise. At the end of it he says, “I’m somewhat uneasy about this emerging consensus which seems to be predominately pragmatic and plays down some big theological dilemmas. It also raises the question of how much younger evangelicals really know and care about the importance of reformation theology. But I concede that it may hold the key to some very needed reconciliation and cooperation in the body of Christ.” Now that’s interesting that he would put in “in the body of Christ” for making that statement he is putting them both in the body of Christ. I have little note in my edition, “Better, reconciliation and cooperation in the professing body of Christ” would be much better. But at any rate, it’s an excellent article and he tries to respond to the question and outlines precisely what justification by grace through faith is, and doesn’t hesitate to state that as his own view. He reviews the new Catholic catechism with suggestions for collaboration with the Catholics, and as I say it’s generally illuminating. But, he does make some needed points that should be made.

In July/August of 1994 something was published which most people would not see because it’s published in a magazine called *Modern Reformation*, edited by Michael Horton, and it does not have a wide readership yet. It’s one that I would recommend that all of you subscribe to because it deals with some of these specific issues over and over again. It’s *Modern Reformation*, published I think six times a year. And this is the July/August issue and Jim Packer in his reply, in which he makes no apology for saying what he said, he said, after he had written, after he had signed the document, he said that he and Michael Horton had issued some resolutions for the dialogue, and here are some of them. He recommended that we read this, and perhaps it would help to understand why he signed the document. Well some of the things that were stated in it are, and this is Horton and Packer, “We deny that the defined doctrines of the church’s infallibility, Papal primacy, justification according to Trent,” that’s the Council of Trent in which justification is by faith but not by faith alone, “transubstantiation and Eucharistic sacrifice,

and the immaculate conception and assumption of Mary, can be proved from Scripture, and we cannot accept any form of joint action that appears to imply agreement with them.” That’s strange for Packer to say that after doing what he did to take part in the other document, but he’s now covering his tracks a bit.

And he also, they issue this, “We affirm that individual Roman Catholics who for whatever reason do not self-consciously assent to the precise definitions of the Roman Catholic Magisterium regarding justification, the sole mediation of Christ, the relation between faith and the sacraments, the divine monergism of the new birth,” that is that the new birth is a work of God alone, monergism, one person working, not two together, “and similar matters of evangelical conviction, but who think and speak evangelically about these things, are indeed our brothers and sisters in Christ.” In other words, if there is a Roman Catholic in the Roman Catholic communion who believes in justification by grace through faith alone he is a member of the same body that we are a member of. “We perceive that the Roman Catholic Church contains many such believers. We deny, however, that in its present confession it is an acceptable Christian communion.” And so, Jim has now said what he apparently, he has now denied what he apparently said in the first document.

Bill Bright also has issued, “Why I Decided to Become a Signatory on the Document Evangelicals and Catholics Together, The Christian Mission in The Third Millennium.” Well no one expected a real theological statement from Bill Bright, and this is not a real theological statement, and obviously some man on his staff has done it and it’s not done real well either. [Laughter] But at least he tries to explain why he signed the document. I think he really signed the document because he didn’t realize it might cause him some trouble and he was hoping perhaps to have an opening to some Roman Catholics.

Well, after this has taken place, and after the articles of McGrath and Packer in the December issue of *Christianity Today*, relatively recently there has been an Orlando

Summit. Now the Orlando Summit occurred on January the nineteenth, the twentieth in Orlando, Florida and included these individuals; Bill Bright, Chuck Colson, or Charles Colson, Michael Horton, D. James Kennedy, pastor of the presbyterian church nearby, John Ankerberg, an apologist who appears on T. V., many of you probably have seen his program, R. C. Sproul, John Woodbridge of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and John MacArthur. There were some excerpts of what they did. It's largely, they have not published anything specifically in great detail that I have been able to get my hands on, but at least they came to some kind of agreement and the essence of it was that they were taking back some of the things, or clarifying some of the things that those who signed that first document should have paid attention to before they signed it, probably.

When it was over John MacArthur said, “It still doesn't go as far as I would've hoped.” And then he added, and I think I must thank him for saying this, he said, “Roman Catholicism is another religion.” What he meant by that, it's another religion, is that when you come right down to it and one system of truth has as the means by which we enter in to the forgiveness of sins, the observance of the sacraments of the church, and the other posits the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone, you have an entirely different doctrine. One doctrine is essentially a doctrine of salvation by works. The other doctrine is the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. To put it in its full expression, justification is by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone. All of those points are necessary for us in order to truly be harmonious with the teaching of the word of God.

Now what I would like to do is, we have a few moments left. I'd like to read two or three passages of Scripture and then say a few words by way of reflection, biblically, on what is transpiring. It would be nice to talk about other things here. There is an article Charles Colson wrote, “Why Catholics Are Our Allies” and he makes a valid point. In many of the things that both churches are interested in, they think alike. For example, the Roman Catholics thing, as Evangelicals do, about abortion. They think with one

another similarly in cases of say family values, things like this. Many of them of course think alike politically and economically. But nevertheless, those differences are not important spiritual differences; those are things that have to do with the culture.

Now the passages that I'd like to read are passages that have to do with doctrine, the doctrine of justification by grace. And so I ask, if you have your Bibles to turn with me first to Acts chapter 15 and I want to read verse 1 through verse 11. Acts 15, verse 1 through verse 11, and I want you to notice that the issue is whether a person should be circumcised in order to be saved, a believing person, whether he should be circumcised in order to be saved. Listen to what Luke describes, giving the history of this conference of men,

“And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that had been done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It's necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.” (now notice that these Pharisees were believing individuals, but they believed that also one must be circumcised in addition in order to be saved) Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as

He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. (notice, by faith alone, nothing added) Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? (what he means by that is that if you put yourself under the legal system you're responsible to obey all of the Mosaic Law, you're responsible for the system of righteousness found in the law for your salvation. Now that's very difficult, a very difficult system under which define salvation. In fact, as we know, only one human could ever have found it and that would be our Lord himself. But he says, verse 11) But we believe that through the grace (now, it's obvious that if we have circumcision as a necessity for salvation then we don't have grace. He says) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

That is we, the same as those Gentiles who have come to be saved. In other words, Peter seems to be questioning the salvation of those who want to require the Gentiles to be circumcised. They don't understand grace very well. So he puts it in reverse order. You might not expect it that way. You might expect that he would say, “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus they shall be saved in the same manner as we. That is, we Jews, we important Jews. But no, it's almost as if he were saying, “The very fact that you are concerned about this shows you don't understand grace very well.” And so, we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved. You who have doubts about our salvation and suggest that you ought to circumcise a person also, we shall be saved just as they. I always liked that. I think that there's no indication Peter did that on purpose, but as far as I can see, it was a marvelous way to put it.

Now Galatians 1, verse 1 through verse 10. Listen again, Dan Duncan has just finished expounding Galatians not long ago, and here are some of the texts that you remember so well,

“Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

I like that expression, because Jim Packer in one of his writings some time back mentioned the gospel of the five “onlies”. And what he was referring to was *sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone, *sola gratia*, by grace alone, *sola fide*, by faith alone, *solo Christo*, by Christ alone, and then *soli deo gloria*, to God alone be the glory; the five “onlies.” The gospel of the five “onlies” that is, great stress on the fact that salvation is a gracious salvation that comes through faith because of Christ only, and not by the sacraments or any other humanly devised system of salvation. Verse 6,

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

What is Paul talking about specifically? Well, he lets us know over in chapter 5 and verse 2 through verse 4, so if you’ll turn over there we’ll read these verses, and then I want to say a few words about this. Paul now says in verse 2 of chapter 5,

“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. (these are two different types of salvation, one is a salvation by works, the other is a salvation by grace through faith alone) I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace.”

Now when he says fallen from grace he doesn't mean fallen from salvation. He means fallen from the grace principle of salvation. As a matter of fact, if you turn back to chapter 1 you'll see that he means the principle, because he says in verse 6 of chapter 1, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel.” Grace is the principle by which we are saved. There are some other uses of it, but this is the sense in these passages. It's the principle by which we are saved, in other words, no works.

Now, what I want to say is this, about this in Galatians, because it's the heart of the whole issue that is appearing in all of these publications. The publication by John Richard Neuhaus, the response of Jim Packer, and the response of Alister McGrath, and then the response of Michael Horton and Jim Packer together, and the concern felt in Orlando by Gerstner and Sproul and others in that meeting. It all boils down to this question of is our salvation truly a salvation by grace or have we a mixture of grace and works?

Karl Barth is reported to have said that there is one little word that keeps Protestants and Roman Catholics apart. Now you might say he would've said the little word “only.” No he didn't. He said the little word, “and” because Romanists believe in salvation by faith and works, or by grace and works, or the Christian truth is the truth that is found in Scripture and church tradition, and so on. In other words, the addition of the one little word makes all the difference in the world. If we say by faith and works, or we

say by grace and works, we’re saying something entirely different. He was very right. He may have been wrong in many other things, and he was, he was right in some other things as well, but in this he’s absolutely right. Reunion is impossible as long as Rome continues to insist that it must be the Bible and tradition, must be faith and works, it must be Christ and the Pope, or Christ and prayer to God and the saints, and so on. All of the things that are bound up in that little “and” make the difference in the two religions. MacArthur’s right, Romanism as it is presently constituted from the Council of Trent in the 16th Century that’s still their doctrine. They have not denied one iota of that lengthy Council of Trent document, still affirm it, and still affirm incidentally, all of the councilia decisions made by the popes down through the years, not a single one have they ever turned away from, because if they ever turned away from one then they would be acknowledging that the Pope was not infallible and all of the other things that they affirm would come crashing to the ground.

That salvation was to be found in Jesus Christ was a proposition to which Paul and his Judaizing opponents would equally have subscribed. That’s the most interesting thing about Galatians. You read through the Epistle to the Galatians and Paul is very concerned. It’s the epistle that he’s so concerned about that at the end he doesn’t even, at the end he doesn’t bother to use an amanuenses to start with, but he takes his pen in his hand and he writes with these large letters, evidently out of his own concern, possibly because of his eye trouble we don’t know about that, but he was very concerned, wrote that epistle, spoke about the fact that a person who really believed that an individual who believed in Christ should add something to that, that individual was preaching a different gospel. The term he uses, different, is the term from which we get the English word heterodox. It’s not another of the same kind, but it’s a different gospel. In other words, you can have Jesus Christ as the Son of God, you can have the cross at Calvary, you can have the Holy Spirit, you can have the trinity, you can have all of the other great doctrines

that are found in the word of God, but if you affirm that it is necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved, then you have preached another gospel.

Well Paul is so concerned about it, he says more than that. He says more than the fact that you're preaching a different gospel, as you well know, he says, that such an individual is a person who should be accursed. This is the term incidentally that the Romanists use throughout the documents of the Council of Trent to refer to the Protestants. If a person believes that you're saved by faith alone let him be accursed, and so forth, all of those things over and over again.

So, what I want you to notice is this. We don't know of any other thing that the Judaizers disagreed with Paul about. So far as we know, they believed in the deity of Christ. They believed in a blood atonement. They believed in the trinity. They believed in the Holy Spirit. They believed in Christian doctrine, so far as we know. The only other thing that there's some suggestion that they and some others might have believed had to do with the recognition of certain days. But that doesn't come up in the book very much, and so most feel that that's not really of significance, that they really believed everything that Paul believed, but you need to get circumcised in order to be saved.

Now, is circumcision a sacrament? Well, I think circumcision is a sacrament. It is something that a person underwent in order to become a member of the covenantal community. The infant, the male infant who was circumcised by that rite became an inheritor of the Abrahamic promises, or in the family of the Abrahamic promises. It was a valid sacrament, prescribed by God to Abraham in Genesis chapter 17, affirmed down through the years, practiced by the parents of our Lord as well, as you know. That is a sacrament. Baptism is a sacrament. As a matter of fact, the Roman Catholic church has seven sacraments. We have two, usually in Protestantism. We have baptism and the Lord's Supper. What is significant is that in the Council of Trent, and in the documents related to it, it is stated specifically that every one of the seven sacraments is a means of the forgiveness of sins. Let me say that again. Through the sacraments we receive the

forgiveness of sins. Now they must be exercised by an authoritative, a recognized, authoritatively recognized person, the priest of course, but it is by baptism, for example, that the forgiveness of sins takes place. It is by the Lord's Supper that the forgiveness takes place. It is by purgatory, well I won't get off into that, that's not on the point, but there are other, all of the sacraments, it's specifically stated with each one of the seven that the forgiveness of sins takes place when the sacrament is recognized and acted upon.

Now, what is it that distinguishes circumcision from the sacraments? So far as I can tell there isn't anything that really distinguishes. Circumcision was set out by God. What kind of act is it? Well it's performed by a man physically isn't it? Baptism is performed physically isn't it? You see Dan Duncan, he gets in the baptistery and he takes someone and puts them under the water, brings them up out of the water. So it's performed visibly. It's performed by an agent. Person does not circumcise himself, the infant doesn't circumcise himself. It's the priest or the official who does that. It is performed with material elements, with a knife, for example.

So, a sacrament, or let's say circumcision is performed by a man physically, it's performed visibly, it's performed by an agent, it's performed with material elements. Baptism parallels all of these things. Now Paul says that if you add circumcision to faith in Christ you have therefore introduced a totally different salvation system. You have introduced a salvation system by works, of works. Now if that is true of the sacraments, why is it not true of Rome and the seven sacraments, since every one of them is a sacrament designed to be the means of the forgiveness of sins. I made a mistake. I did not bring what I should have brought to you, the Catholic catechism and also another document I'd intended to bring so that I would just read it out for you. But trust me, one time at least. It is found there. If you read the article that I wrote, I wrote every one of them, citing specifically from Roman Catholic theologians who were citing the Council of Trent, and occasionally cited Trent as well. But it is true; the seven sacraments are a means of forgiveness.

Now if that's true Rome's system of the forgiveness of sins is a system of salvation by works, according to Paul. So a Roman Catholic cannot honestly say, if he believes Trent, if he believes their official documents, of course if he wants to say, "Well I don't believe those official documents" well, it may be he's really one of us. He needs to leave that communion and come into a communion where he finds himself in harmony. But if he really believes Trent he cannot say, "I believe in salvation by grace, through faith, by Christ alone" for he believes in works. He believes salvation is through blood, through water, through fire, and other means as well. So, it is not true when a person affirms, "I am a Roman Catholic. I believe the Council of Trent, and at the same time I believe in salvation by grace. I believe in salvation by faith, justification by faith, and therefore, we Evangelicals and Catholics ought to be together."

You see, it's really possible for a person to believe very similarly with another person. It's possible for a person to believe in the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the blood atonement on Calvary's cross, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the ascension to heaven, the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, I guess it would be possible, I don't know of any such, to believe in pre millennialism, and at the same time be lost if he believes that it is necessary to observe the sacraments in order to be saved. Why is that so? Because he does not understand yet the doctrine of the grace of God, that we are saved by grace, that there is absolutely nothing in us that makes God our debtor, that we are totally in debt to him. That's the point of this whole issue. And that's why a number of Christian men, such as R. C. Sproul, and John MacArthur, and various others, have become very much concerned about this, because they perceive that this might be a significant move of the Evangelical church away from that which has made the church an Evangelical church; its belief in the salvation through Jesus Christ alone, by received by grace alone, not by the sacraments, through the exercise of faith alone. May the Lord deliver us from error on this point, because this would be a fatal error. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the ministry of the Apostle Paul and for the faithfulness of this man who wrote the letters that have clarified our understanding of the grace of God. We thank Thee for our savior who also proclaimed, in the purest way of all, that salvation is through him alone, “I am the way the truth and the life, no one cometh unto the Father but through me.” May that Lord, that marvelous truth, be always confessed by us. And Lord, we pray that Thou wilt give...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]