

**A SPECIAL INTERLUDE ON LUTHER AND CATHOLICISM**  
**"Examining Luther's Stand, Modern Lutheranism And Catholicism"**  
**(Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 1:8-9)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

*Tonight*, Martin Luther nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of the Wittenburg Church starting the Protestant Reformation. Now there is a thrust for Catholics and Protestants to **unite** upon an **alleged reconciliation** of differences:

Hartford Courant ran a story, "Catholics, Lutherans Celebrate New Spirit Of Reconciliation" (p. A1, A12). In it was reported a new "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification". This declaration proclaims: "Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works." In fact, the Courant's religion reporter, Gerald Renner called Luther's **original** rift with Roman Catholicism "**a tragic misunderstanding.**"

Well, if **Catholics and Lutherans NOW agree one is justified by faith "... not because of any merit on our part . . . "**, and the Courant's religion writer calls the original rift "**a tragic misunderstanding,**" should we JOIN in with its **reconciliation?**!"

The Berean Call, Sept., '77, "News Alerts," p. 5) This stand offended Catholic PK members, so John Sengenberber had some Catholic theologians submit a revision for approval to Promise Keepers. The Promise Keepers' leaders accepted their recommendation, and changed its credo to read: "Only through faith, trusting in Christ alone for salvation, which was made possible by His death and resurrection, can that alienation [between God and sinful man] be removed." (Ibid., The Berean Call)

Well, if the **Catholic Church NOW says one is saved ONLY through FAITH, trusting in CHRIST ALONE for salvation, isn't that in keeping with OUR stand at Nepaug so we should ALSO join company with those who unite with the Catholic Church?**

This **month** has invited William Bennett, the "founding director of Catholic Campaign for America" as a keynote speaker. (The Berean Call, Oct. '99)

Does Nepaug Church need to "keep up" **with the changes in Catholicism since Vatican II so that we should UNITE with it?!**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section as follows . . . )

**Need: "On this 482nd anniversary of the Luther's posting of his 'Ninety-Five Theses' and the current alleged mending of Lutheran and Roman Catholic rifts, should WE join in that union?! Why?!"**

**I. We note the Catholic Church's CURRENT OFFICIAL doctrine:**

- A. According to the Catholic Church's **sanctioned** Catholic Encyclopedia (s. v. "Justification," p. 319), Roman Catholicism's Vatican II council (1962-1965) reaffirmed its doctrine of the 16th cent. Council of Trent.
  - B. Some of that 16th century Council's decrees on justification are cited in Dave Hunt's, The Berean Call, Oct. 1999 issue (p. 1) as follows:
    1. 6th Session, Canon 4: "If anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law [canons and decrees of the Church] are not necessary for salvation but ... without them ... men obtain from God through **faith alone** the grace of justification ... let him be **anathema.**"
    2. 6th Session, Canon 9: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by **faith alone**, meaning that **nothing else** is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification ... let him be **anathema.**"
    3. 6th Session, Canon 12: "If anyone shall say that justifying **faith** is nothing else than **confidence** in the divine mercy ... or that it is this **confidence alone** that justifies us, let him be **anathema.**"
    4. 6th Session, Canon 30: "If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out ... that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world **or in purgatory** before ... heaven can be opened, let him be **anathema.**"

- C. Summary: Catholicism **now** asserts justification is by faith **plus works!**

**II. We then now examine the ALLEGED recent CHANGES in Roman Catholic doctrine regarding how one is justified (as follows):**

- A. The "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" reported in the October 17, 1999 Hartford Courant relates that the Roman Catholic Church agrees to these **alleged revised** views:
  1. Justification is "**by grace alone...**"
  2. Justification comes "**...not because of any merit on our part ...**"
- B. The Promise Keepers modified statement of faith (cited in The Berean Call, Oct. '97) to which Roman Catholics agree adds these statements:
  1. Justification is "**...only through faith...**"
  2. Justification is by "**...trusting in Christ alone...**"

- C. We review each of these phrases in order in light of the **Catholic Church's endorsed** The Catholic Encyclopedia (Broderick, ed., '87):
1. On Catholicism's consent to justification "by grace alone," "grace" in **Catholicism** has "also the idea of 'merit'" so one can **gain** grace or loose it by **good or bad works respectively**, Ibid., p. 246!
  2. On Catholicism's consent to justification "not because of any **merit** on **our** part", the Catholic Encyclopedia notes (Ibid., s. v. "Merit," p. 384) "...we can do nothing to give profit to God..." **while also** claiming "...we share, through the **Church and sacraments**, in the **merits of Christ...**": for **Catholicism** to deny **man's merit** does **not** mean it denies justification by **works**, for **Catholicism** teaches that we gain **Christ's** merit by faith **plus OUR OWN WORKS!**
  3. On Catholicism's consent to justification "...only through faith...", any Protestant **or** Catholic would always agree that apart from faith in Christ there is no salvation! Their difference of opinion arises over whether anything is to be **added to** faith for **justification!**
  4. On Catholicism's consent to justification by "... trusting in Christ alone ... ", a Protestant **or** Catholic can agree one believes in Christ and no one else to be justified. They **differ** over whether simple faith in Christ **or** if faith in Him **plus works** produces **justification!**
  5. Summary: The Catholic Church can agree to the Lutheran-Catholic declaration and the Promise Keeper's credo and **still contend** that justification is by faith **plus works** as stated in its Council of Trent!

**III. We then review Martin Luther's stand to see if there was a possible "tragic misunderstanding" between him and the Catholic Church:**

- A. Martin Luther wrote: "... the righteousness of God is revealed **only** in the **gospel** ... This comes by faith **ALONE** ... " (Atkinson, Advance of Christianity: Volume 4: The Great Light, p. 30-31).
- B. The Catholic Encyclopedia (Ibid.) **itself** says of "Lutheranism," (p. 361-362): "... it finds its **center** in a justification by faith **alone**, based on Luther's translation of Romans 3:28 ... Thus, Luther **did away** with the **sacraments** ... Luther also **denied purgatory** ... "
- C. Summary: There was **NO** "tragic misunderstanding": Luther opposed justification by faith **plus works**, so the pope excommunicated him!

**Lesson Application:** (1) *To gain eternal life, we must trust ALONE in Christ ALONE apart from any merit OR WORK on our own, Eph. 2:8-9.* (2) *Then, we must hold to this Gospel and not come under GOD'S "anathema" for adopting any OTHER one, Gal. 1: 8-9.* (3) *We must disciple others to the TRUE Gospel for their salvation and (4) be on our guard against DECEPTION to the contrary as Paul warned us would come in 2 Timothy 3:13, 14-17!*

**Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )**

The Catholic Encyclopedia states that Luther drew his belief in justification by faith **alone** from Romans 3:28 (Ibid., p. 361), we now quote that verse to ascertain its instruction. It states simply: "**Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**"

Knew **well** what he was **NOT** saying just like he **knew** what he **was** saying: he believed a man was justified by **faith ALONE apart FROM** any **Church sacraments** or **works**. **THAT** stand has **ALWAYS** been **opposed** by the **Catholic Church**, and that is why the Papal Bull excommunicated Luther on July 17, 1520!

**The wall between LUTHER HIMSELF and the Roman Catholic Church has NOT been dismantled! Until the Roman Catholic Church REFUSES to require SACRAMENTS or ANY OTHER such WORK or CONDITION besides SIMPLE faith ALONE in Christ ALONE for salvation can there be ANY BASIS of any GODLY union to BEGIN between those who stand with Martin Luther's original stand and that of the Catholic Church.**

Scripture says: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: NOT of WORKS, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Scripture also states: "**But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be anathema.**" (Galatians 1:8)

Accordingly, WE stand WITH LUTHER HIMSELF in upholding justification by faith **without** human merit OR MAN'S WORKS of ANY kind! Luther's stand of 482 years ago was NOT a "tragic misunderstanding" as some now teach, but an accurate, wonderful clarification of the FACTS of the BIBLE!