

# Top Ten Catholic Verses

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| <b>1. Church Authority:</b>               | <i>Matt. 16:18-19, Isaiah. 22:22,</i> |
| <b>2. Church Authority:</b>               | <i>1 Tim. 3:15</i>                    |
| <b>3. Scripture &amp; Tradition:</b>      | <i>2 Thessalonians 2:15</i>           |
| <b>4. Baptism:</b>                        | <i>1 Peter 3:21</i>                   |
| <b>5. Confession:</b>                     | <i>John 20: 22-23</i>                 |
| <b>6. Eucharist:</b>                      | <i>John 6:53-58, 66-67,</i>           |
| <b>7. Eucharist:</b>                      | <i>1 Corinthians 11:27</i>            |
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## Verses for the Authority of the Church

Matthew 16:18-19 / Isaiah 22:22

*"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

*"And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."*

Some Christians believe that "church" refers to the mass of Christian believers throughout the world, loosely connected to each other by their faith in the Bible alone. But these verses demonstrate that the "Church" Jesus Christ founded is not an invisible body of loosely-connected believers, but a visible and hierarchical institution built upon the person of Peter, who was given supreme authority, an office for dynastic succession, and the gift of infallibility. This Church can only be the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

In these verses, we see the following. First, Jesus builds His Church ("ecclesia") upon the person of Peter (Simon). Jesus changes Simon's name to "Kepha," and says that on this "Kepha" He will build the Church. Kepha, in Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke), means a massive rock formation, and Jesus' use of Kepha to rename Peter signifies Peter's foundational leadership in the Church. (See also **Mark 3:16** and **John 1:42** where Jesus renames Simon "Cephas" which

is a transliteration of the Aramaic "Kepha."). Only the Catholic Church recognizes and proves through an unbroken lineage of successors that her foundation is Peter.

Secondly, Jesus says the powers of death will never prevail against the Church. So even though Jesus appoints sinful human beings such as Peter to lead the Church, Jesus promises that hell will not prevail against her. Because the powers of hell refer to the supernatural, this must mean that the Church, although lead by sinful people, is divinely protected. Because she is so protected, the Church cannot lead the faithful into supernatural error. That is, she is unable to teach error on matters of faith and morals. This inability to teach error on faith and morals is called "infallibility" (it has nothing to do with the sinfulness of the Church's leaders, which deals with "impeccability"). If the Church were not infallible, the powers of death would indeed prevail over her sinful members. The consistent, 2,000 years of the Church's teaching on faith and morals proves that Jesus has kept His promise.

Third, Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. While some think that the gift of the "keys" means that Jesus appointed Peter as the guardian of the gates of heaven, the "keys" actually refer to Peter's authority over the earthly Church (which Jesus often described as the "kingdom of heaven." **Matthew 13:24-52; 25:1-2; Mark 4:26-32; Luke 9:27; 13:19-20**, etc.) In the Old Davidic kingdom, the king had a prime minister on whose shoulder God placed the keys of the kingdom (**Isaiah 22:22**). Similarly, the new kingdom of Christ also has a prime minister (Peter and his successors) who is given the keys of the kingdom. The keys not only represent the authority the prime minister has to rule over God's people in the king's absence, but also the means of effecting dynastic succession to the prime minister's office (for example, in **Isaiah 22:20-22**, Eliakim replaces Shebna as prime minister in the Old Davidic kingdom). Only the Catholic Church claims and proves a succession of prime ministers (popes) all the way back to Peter, and this succession is facilitated by the passing of the keys of the kingdom.

Finally, Jesus declares to Peter that whatever he binds and looses on earth will be bound and loosed in heaven. As in the Old Davidic kingdom, whenever Peter the prime minister opens, no one shall shut, and whenever he shuts, no one shall open. Jesus, therefore, gives Peter the authority to make decisions that will be ratified in eternity. In order for sinful Peter (and his successors through the passing on of the "keys") to make such decisions, he must be divinely protected. Once again, this evidences Jesus' gift of infallibility to the Church. Only the Catholic Church claims and has proven that her 2,000 year-old teachings on faith and morals, which have never changed, are infallibly proclaimed.

## | Timothy 3:15

*"If I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth."*

Some Christians believe the Bible is the pillar and foundation of truth and no knowledge outside the Bible is necessary for salvation. But then why does Paul write that the Church, and not the Bible, is the pillar and foundation of truth? This powerful text refutes the more recent theory of sola Scriptura (Scripture alone) which erroneously holds that the Bible is the sole source of

Christian truth (a theory not found anywhere in Scripture). Instead, Paul says the *Church* is the pillar and bulwark of truth.

This means that all the truth Jesus left us concerning faith, morality and our salvation flows from a living Church which, as we have learned, is built by Christ upon the rock of Peter and his successors. As the Catholic Church teaches, God has given us His truth in the form of the living word (written Scriptures and oral tradition) and the living teaching authority of the Church, endowed with the gift of binding and loosing. In fact, it is because the Church is the foundation of truth that we believe in the Bible. *This is because the Catholic Church put the Bible together by determining which books were inspired and which books were not. The Church completed its selection of the "canon of Scripture" at the end of the fourth century.* If the Catholic Church were not the pinnacle and bulwark of the truth, our belief in the Bible would be without foundation.

The Church's compilation of the Bible illuminates the error of sola Scriptura. As alluded to above, other Christians generally believe that God has revealed everything that is necessary for our salvation through the Bible alone. Consequently, they also believe that no knowledge found outside of the Bible regarding the Christian faith is necessary for our salvation. However, the knowledge of which Scriptures belong in the Bible and which Scriptures do not is necessary for our salvation because if we didn't know this we could be led into error. Further, this knowledge could only come from God because human beings cannot necessarily discern divine inspiration.

The problem, therefore, with sola Scriptura, is that the knowledge of which Scriptures are inspired and which ones are not is not contained in the Bible. The Bible does not have an "inspired table of contents." Instead, this knowledge of the canon of Scripture *is a revelation from God that is necessary for our salvation, and yet came to us from outside the Bible.* This revelation was given to the Holy Catholic Church, and this historical and theological fact destroys the doctrine of sola Scriptura (interestingly, while other Christians reject the authority of the Catholic Church on most matters, they accept her authority in determining the New Testament canon of Scripture; we pejoratively call such picking and choosing which doctrines to believe and which doctrines to reject "Cafeteria Catholicism").

If I was trying to prove sola Scriptura, and there was a verse that said "the Bible is the pillar and bulwark of the truth," I would be proclaiming that verse from the roof tops. At the same time, if I were not Catholic, I would have to ignore **1 Timothy 3:15**.

## Basis for the Authority of Oral Tradition

### 2 Thessalonians 2:15

*"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter."*

As we have discussed, some Christians believe they are to follow the Scriptures alone as their sole source of Christian truth (*sola Scriptura*). But then why does Saint Paul tell us to follow both the Scriptures and the oral word? Isn't Paul adding something else to follow in addition to the Bible? Yes he is, because the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is an erroneous doctrine.

Saint Paul is saying that obeying the written tradition (the Scriptures) is not enough. We must also obey the oral tradition. This is the body of teaching that Christ gave the apostles that was not written down (if it were, Saint John says that "*even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*" **John 21:25**). In other words, it's everything else the Church teaches on faith and morals. We can be thankful for the oral apostolic traditions which have definitively taught us about the Blessed Trinity, the two natures of Christ (human and divine), the union of those natures (hypostatic union), the "Filioque" (the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son), and the canon of Scripture (what books belong in the Bible and what books do not). All of these teachings, and many, many more, are not explicitly taught in the Bible, yet are generally believed by all Christians. To learn more about the oral apostolic tradition, buy a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Because **2 Thessalonians 2:15** is so troubling to the *sola Scriptura* position, Other Christians often argue that the oral tradition Paul is referring to had to come from the mouths of the apostles. Their argument further goes that, since all the apostles are deceased, we no longer have to follow oral tradition. This argument, however, cannot be proven from Scripture (which should be possible if *sola Scriptura* were true) and, in fact, is contrary to Scripture. See for example, **2 Timothy 2:2** where Paul (1st generation) instructs Timothy (2nd generation) to teach others the faith (3rd generation) who will be able to teach others also (4th generation). Such an argument is also inconsistent with the very meaning of tradition (in Greek, "paradosis") which means "to hand on" from one generation to the next.

*Moreover, this argument is also refuted by the way in which the Church selected the Bible canon. While the last apostle John died around 100 A.D., the Bible was not finally compiled until 397 A.D. The Church was thus required to rely upon the oral apostolic tradition during this 300 year period in order to determine which letters were inspired and which letters were not. The tradition they depended on, of course, did not come from the mouths of the apostles (they were deceased), but from their successors. (There is also no reason to conclude that the Church should listen to the fourth, fifth or sixth generation of apostolic successors, but not to later successors such as those of our day).*

We should also note that the apostolic traditions Paul is commanding us to follow in **2 Thessalonians 2:15** are not the same as the Pharisaical traditions that Jesus condemned in **Matthew 15:3** and **Mark 7:9**. The traditions Jesus condemned dealt with the Old Testament ceremonial rituals and other acts that contravened the New Testament Gospel. So there are certain human traditions that, if contrary to the Gospel, we must reject, and oral apostolic tradition, as Paul commands, which we must accept.

The only other argument others can make is that, once the Bible was compiled, all oral apostolic tradition was committed to the Scriptures. As a result, the requirement to follow oral tradition ceased. But this they cannot prove from the Bible. There is nothing in the Scriptures that commands us to follow oral tradition until the Bible is compiled, and then to follow the

Bible alone (the word "Bible" is not even in the Bible). In fact, Jesus never even commanded any of His apostles to write anything down. They were only charged to "preach the Gospel to all creation." **Matthew 28:19**. Because the Scriptures are the living word of God which is the same yesterday, today and forever (cf. **Hebrews 13:10**), and there is no verse in Scripture that repudiates Paul's instruction in **2 Thessalonians 2:15**, we must also obey the oral tradition of the Church as Paul commanded, or we are not being faithful to the Scriptures.

## Scriptural basis for Baptism

### 1 Peter 3:21

*"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"*

Some churches teach that baptism is just symbolic and does not actually save us. Why, then, does Peter say that baptism does indeed save us? Because baptism, contrary to that symbolic interpretation, is salvific (effecting salvation). Through the merits of Christ's resurrection, baptism, the sacrament of Christian initiation instituted by Christ, washes us clean of original sin, makes us adopted sons and daughters of God, and brings us to salvation.

Baptism is not just a symbolic act of pouring, sprinkling or immersing one in water (otherwise Peter would not have said that it saves us). It is not just an appeal to God through a symbolic gesture. This is why Peter says it is "not as a removal of dirt from the body." Most scholars say that Peter was referring to circumcision (the ritual of initiation in the Old Covenant) when he writes about the "removal of dirt from the body." Circumcision was a symbolic gesture before God that could never save us. But, at a minimum, Peter is teaching that baptism does not deal with the exterior, but the interior life of the person.

Thus, Peter teaches that baptism saves us "*for a clear conscience.*" This deals with the interior life. Similarly, the author of **Heb. 10:22**, in regard to being washed with the pure water (of baptism), says we are sprinkled "clean from an evil conscience." Baptism removes original sin which darkens our consciences. It purifies the interior life of the person. Baptism is not just an external, symbolic, ceremonial gesture (otherwise, the sacred writers would not write about the purification of the conscience, where sin is born).

Thus, through the resurrection of Christ, baptism now actually saves our spiritual lives, just as Noah's ark (which Peter says baptism "corresponds to") saved his family's natural lives. In baptism, we are washed clean of original sin and become adopted sons and daughters of the Father. This is why Paul writes to Titus, in reference to baptism, that "*He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs of eternal life.*" **Titus 3:5-7**. Paul echoes Peter's teaching that baptism saves us by regenerating our interior lives, namely, our souls,

which are now endowed with God's divine and sanctifying grace. We thus become children of God and heirs of the kingdom.

Only the Catholic Church teaches that baptism, by virtue of the merits of Christ and their application to us, is salvific. The Protestant churches, contrary to **1 Peter 3:21 (and Titus 3:5-7; John 3:5; and Heb. 10:22)** teach that baptism is only symbolic. For more on the striking parallels of these Scripture verses, please visit my link on Baptism.

## Scriptural basis for Confession

### John 20:22-23

*"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'"*

Some other Christians believe they should confess their sins privately to God, and not to a priest. Why, then, does Jesus give the apostles the authority to forgive and retain sins? Because, unlike the Protestant belief, Jesus believed that Christians could best grow in holiness by confessing their sins to His priests and receiving absolution in the sacrament of confession. Confession is thus the normative way in which God forgives us our sins.

This passage is very powerful. First, we see that Jesus breathes on His apostles in the upper room. The only other time God breathed on man was when He created him and breathed life into his body. **Genesis 2:7**. When God breathes on man, a transformation takes place. Here, the apostles were transformed into "other Christs," filled with the Holy Spirit and endowed with Jesus' divine authority to forgive sins. Thus, Matthew writes that God gave the authority to forgive sins "to men." Matt. 9:8. We also note that Jesus makes no distinction between very serious sin (called "mortal sin") and lesser sins (called "venial sin"). See **1 John 5:16-17**. By virtue of God's mercy, the apostles are able to forgive all sins.

We also note that the apostles were not only given the authority to forgive sin, but to retain sin as well. What does this mean? This means that the apostles were given the gift of rendering judgment on the sincerity of the penitent, and binding the penitent to works of penance in order for him to be forgiven of his sin. If, in the apostles' judgment, the penitent was not sincere, or should be required to perform acts of penance in reparation for his sins, the apostles could retain the sin (withhold forgiveness) until their conditions were satisfied. While such authority is reserved to God alone, Christ shared this authority with the apostles.

The power to retain sin is extremely important because it gives priests the authority, not only to forgive sin, but to remove the temporal punishments due to sin (the Church calls the removal of temporal punishments due to sin already forgiven an "indulgence"). Certainly, if a

priest can forgive a mortal sin (which, if unforgiven, would have sent the person to hell), the priest can certainly remove the temporal punishments due to venial sin. This is part of the priests' binding authority (retaining sin and imposing penance) and loosing authority (forgiving sin and removing punishment due to sin).

Of course, Jesus' gift of authority described in **John 20:22-23** only makes sense if the penitent orally confesses the sins to the apostles. The apostles were not given the gift of mind reading, and, even if they were, forgiveness of sin would still depend on the sinner's desire to be forgiven (the sinner would express that desire by confessing his sins to the priest). If oral confession were not required, the way that Jesus granted the gift to the apostles would not make any sense.

Finally, for the small group of other Christians who do acknowledge that the apostles had the authority to forgive and retain sins, they can only disregard **John 20:22-23** by arguing that this authority terminated at their death. The problem with their argument is that it cannot be proven from Scripture (there is no place in Scripture that teaches the apostles' binding and loosing authority terminated at death). Neither can the argument be proven from any historical record (the Church has had the sacrament of confession for many centuries).

Moreover, these other Christians fail to provide an adequate explanation of why Jesus would grant such an incredible gift to the apostolic age, and then remove the gift from future generations. The answer, of course, is that He didn't remove it. The gift was preserved through priestly succession by the sacrament of ordination as Christ intended, which the Scriptures often refer to as "the laying on of hands." **Acts 1:20; 6:6; 13:3; 8:18; 9:17; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6.**

## Scriptural basis for the Eucharist

### John 6:53-58, 66-67

*"So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.' After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, 'Will you also go away?'"*

Some other Christians believe that the bread and wine offered by the Catholic priest in the Holy Mass are only symbols of Christ's body and blood. They do not believe that Christians have to actually eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ to have eternal life. They do not

believe that Christ's flesh is actual food, and His blood actual drink. Why, then, does Jesus repeatedly say in these verses that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood or we have no life in us? Why does Christ say that His flesh is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed, if His flesh and blood really aren't food and drink indeed? This teaching of Jesus on the Eucharist is the most profound in all of Scripture, and these verses are very problematic to some of these other Christian's contention that the bread and wine of the Mass are just symbols.

When John 6 is prayerfully read, we see how Jesus gradually teaches the faithful about the life-giving bread from heaven that He will give to the world (through the multiplication of the loaves, the reference to the raining manna given to the Israelites, and finally to the bread that Jesus will give which is His flesh). When the Jews question Jesus about how he could possibly give them His flesh to eat, Jesus becomes more literal in His explanation. As we learned in the link on The Eucharist, Jesus says several times that we must eat (in Greek, "phago") His flesh to gain eternal life (which literally means "to chew").

When the Jews further question the strangeness of His teaching, Jesus uses an even more literal verb (in Greek, "trogo") to describe how we must eat His flesh to have eternal life (which literally means "to gnaw or crunch"). The word "trogo" is only used two other times in the New Testament (**Matt. 24:38; John 13:18**) and it is always used literally (physically eating). Other Christians are unable to provide a single example of where "trogo" is ever used in a symbolic sense. To drive His point home, Jesus says that His flesh is real food indeed, and His blood is real drink indeed (Jesus says nothing about the bread being a symbol of His body and blood).

What is perhaps most compelling about the foregoing passages is what happens at the end of Jesus' discourse. We know that the Jews understood Jesus as speaking literally. This is demonstrated by their question, "*How can this man give us His flesh to eat?*" They could not conceive of why consuming Jesus' flesh was life-giving and how they could possibly do such a thing. We also know that Jesus responds to their question by being even more literal about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. But we learn at the end of Jesus' discourse that many of His followers, because of the difficulty of His teaching, decided to no longer follow Him - and Jesus let them go. Then He turned to His apostles and asked them, "Will you also go away?"

Would Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God who became man to save humanity, allow his followers to leave Him if they misunderstood His teaching? Of course not, especially when the teaching regarded how they were to obtain eternal life which was at the heart of Jesus' mission. Jesus always explained the meaning of His teachings to His disciples. Mark 4:34. Jesus did not say, "Hey, guys, come back here, you got it all wrong." He didn't do this because they did not have it all wrong. They understood correctly - we must eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood, or we have no life within us. The Protestant who contends that the Catholic offering of bread and wine in the Mass is just a symbol (and does not miraculously become the body and blood of Christ through the actions of the priest acting "in persona Christi") must address **John 6:53-58, 66-67** - why Jesus used the words He did, and why Jesus allowed His followers to leave Him if they understood Him correctly (which is the only time in Scripture where Christ allows His disciples to leave Him based upon a doctrinal teaching).

When we meditate upon this mystery with an open mind and heart, we come to believe and know that the Eucharist is the way the Father gives us His Son in the eternal covenant of love by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation. If we can believe in the Incarnation (that God become a little baby), than believing that God makes Himself substantially present under the appearance of bread and wine is easy. The Church has thus taught for 2,000 years that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian faith - the consummation of the sacrificed Paschal lamb, by which we are restored to God and share in His divine life. Thus, Saint Paul says, "*our Paschal lamb has been sacrificed; therefore, let us celebrate the feast.*" **1 Corinthians 5:7-8.**

## 1 Corinthians 11:27

*"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord."*

Although some churches teach that the Eucharist is just a symbol of Christ's body and blood, Paul in this verse sets forth the Catholic teaching that Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the Eucharist. Paul confirms what Jesus taught in John's Gospel, chapter 6. If we partake of the Eucharist unworthily, we are guilty of the unthinkable crime of profaning Christ's body and blood (literally, murdering Christ). This very solemn and powerful teaching drives home the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist and leaves little, if any, room for doubt about the Real Presence.

An illustration of the application of this verse may be helpful. Some time ago, I was debating a gentleman at work about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I explained to him that in all three synoptic Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, as well as in Saint Paul's teaching which he received directly from Christ, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and said, "*This is my body.*" *In the same manner, he took wine, gave thanks, and said, "This is my blood."* **Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20;** and 1 Corinthians 11:21-25. I emphasized that Jesus did not say "This represents my body and blood," or "This is a symbol of my body and blood" (even though there were many verbs in Aramaic for "represent"). I further explained to him that God does not, and cannot, declare something to be without making it so, and challenged him to find a Scripture verse to prove me wrong. He could not.

Instead, the man took down a picture of his wife which he had pinned up in his cubicle, gave me the picture, and said, "This is my wife." Then he asked me, "But it is not really her, is it?" He thought he had me cold.

I first congratulated him on having such a beautiful spouse. I then pretended to rip up the picture and, after it fell to the ground, pretended to stomp all over it. I made a bit of a scene. He looked at me with an expression of surprise and confusion. I then asked him, "Am I now guilty of profaning your wife's body and blood?"

After quite a pause, he responded, "No." I asked him, "Why not?" His mind was obviously reeling, but I don't think he knew where I was going. I jumped in to help him by saying, "I'll tell you why, and it's the point you just made. Because the picture of your wife is just a symbol of her, and not actually her." At this point, he agreed, but was still confused. I then added, "Being guilty of profaning your wife's body and blood by ripping up a picture of her would be an absolute outrage, because you can't profane a symbol, right?" He agreed.

I then drove my point home by leaning in close to him and slowly asking, "Then why does Saint Paul in **I Corinthians 11:27** declare us to be guilty of profaning Christ's body and blood if we receive the Eucharist unworthily? That would be an absolutely unjust penalty if the Eucharist were just a symbol, wouldn't it?" After another long pause it was obvious that my Protestant brother was at a loss for words. All he could do was ask me to give back to him his wife's picture and promised me he would read the verse in its proper context and get back to me. He never did.

## Scriptural basis for the Anointing of the Sick

### James 5:14-15

*"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."*

While some other Christians usually have some type of rebuttal for most Scriptures that support Catholic teaching (which can always be disproved), they generally have little to say about **James 5:14-15**. Some Christians tuck this verse away, never to deal with it again. This is because there is no place to put it in their theology. It doesn't fit anywhere.

The passage sets forth the Catholic sacrament of the anointing of the sick (which used to be called "Extreme Unction.") This sacrament, which is one of seven sacraments Jesus instituted for His Church, is given to people who are in danger of death, suffering with grave illness, or facing serious medical procedures.

The verse demonstrates several things the Church has taught for 2,000 years. First, in order to confect the sacrament, one must call for the elders or priests of the Church. This requires men specially ordained to do the job, and gets into what we mean by Church (don't forget about Peter, the keys, dynastic succession, priestly ordination, the power to bind and loose, and the pinnacle and bulwark of the truth). Secondly, James says the priests' prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up. This demonstrates that the Church's priests act in the person of Christ ("in persona Christi") in furthering Christ's work of salvation. Yes, Jesus is our only Savior, but He desires us to participate in His eternal priesthood, and He calls certain men to participate in a very intimate way by effecting salvation (through the ministerial priesthood

described here). So the priests, through the power of Christ, save the sick man's soul.

Finally, by virtue of the actions and prayers of the priests, the sick man's sins are forgiven (this is what actually saves the man's soul). Other Christians have great difficulty with this verse particularly because it demonstrates that priests have the power and authority to forgive sins (which was given to men by Christ; see also **Matthew 9:8**). Unlike what the Bible provides, no where in theology or practice do other understandings of the faith provide for priestly forgiveness of sins or the sacrament of the sick.

## Scriptural basis for the place of Suffering

### Colossians 1:24

*"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh and I complete what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body, that is, the church"*

Some other Christians believe that Jesus' suffering and death were entirely sufficient to forgive all the sins of the world. Why, then, does Paul say that Christ's afflictions are lacking something? How can this possibly be? The question can only be answered by the 2,000 year-old Catholic understanding of how we as Christians participate in Christ's work of redemption and salvation.

Some churches leave you pretty unfulfilled when they teach about suffering. Because in their teaching, all you generally need to do is accept Jesus as personal Lord and Savior to be saved and nothing more, suffering is simply viewed as something we must endure as part of the human condition, without any value or merit for ourselves or others. Because the Catholic Church believes that each of us, by virtue of our baptism, participates in Christ's eternal priesthood, she instead teaches that our prayers, works, and even suffering further Christ's work of redemption. This is the necessary effect of belonging to the communion of saints. This is also what Saint Paul is writing about in **Colossians 1:24**.

In the verse, Paul says he rejoices in his suffering for the sake of others. Knowing what we know about Paul, we can safely conclude that he would not rejoice in anything, much less write about it in a theological epistle, unless it brought about Christ's work of redemption. We also see that Paul's rejoicing is not for himself, but for the other members of the Church. So Paul's rejoicing about the value of his suffering in the work of redemption is based on his understanding that his suffering is helping others (it is not because he enjoys the pain of suffering). This becomes clearer as Paul explains his teaching in the context of the Mystical Body of Christ, for, only in this context can Paul's teaching make sense.

Paul explains that he completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. But Paul does not do this for the sake of Christ Himself, because Christ's afflictions were sufficient and perfectly efficacious for our redemption. Paul could add nothing to the power of Christ's sufferings.

Instead, Paul explains that he does this for the sake of the Church (the Mystical Body) of which Christ is the head. Why? Because God wills us to participate in Christ's sufferings in order to further the work of His redemption. Thus, in the Church and for her benefit, Jesus Christ, in a very mysterious way, leaves room to allow our suffering to be united to His, to accomplish the will of the Father. It is by virtue of our baptism, in which we become sons in the Son and share in His priesthood, that our suffering can further Christ's redemptive work. This is lofty stuff, but it is as true as God's love for us, and it is precisely because of God's love for us.

How do we, like Saint Paul, complete what is lacking in Christ's sufferings for the sake of the Church? We offer up our suffering as a sacrifice of praise to God. Instead of just enduring the suffering, we literally will the suffering through prayer to bring about Christ's work of redemption. This is what the Church calls "redemptive suffering." This type of suffering is what Paul is rejoicing about, and this is why the way we handle suffering is so important. Such suffering can benefit not only those who suffer, but all the members of the body. The worst kind of suffering is wasted suffering. Only the Catholic Church, for 2,000 years, has both taught and lived Saint Paul's teachings on suffering.

## Scriptural basis for the place of works in salvation

### James 2:24

*"You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."*

In addition to their belief in the Bible alone ("sola Scriptura"), some other Christians believe that all one has to do is accept Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior in order to be justified by God (justification is the process by which man, moved by grace, turns toward God and away from sin, and accepts God's forgiveness and righteousness). Thus, most Other Christians believe that one is justified and saved by His faith in Christ alone (called "sola Fide" or Faith alone). But if this is true, then why does James say that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone?

James says this because we are justified, and ultimately saved, through both our faith and works, and not just faith alone. In fact, the only place in the Bible where the phrase "faith alone" appears is in **James 2:24** where it says we are justified by works and NOT by faith alone. So the Bible never teaches anywhere that we are justified, saved, or anything else, by faith alone. While on its face the Catholic position seems obvious, the theology of faith and works in the matter of salvation is actually quite complicated, and has been one of the main sources of division between Catholicism and Protestantism. Hence, a couple of points should be made to address the controversy and clarify Catholic teaching.

First, Catholics ultimately believe that we are saved, not by faith or works, but by Jesus Christ and Him alone. Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection is the sole source of our justification

(being in a right relationship with God) and salvation (sharing in God's divine life). But as a result of Christ's death and resurrection, we are now able to receive God's grace. Grace is God's own divine life which He infuses into our souls. It is what Adam initially lost for us, and Christ won back for us. This grace initially causes us to seek God and to believe in Him (the "faith" part). Non-Catholics generally stop here.

But God desires us to respond to His grace by putting our faith into action (the "works" part). This is why Jesus always taught about our salvation in the context of what we actually did during our earthly lives, and not how much faith we had ("*whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did to Me.*" **Matthew 25:40,45**). When Jesus teaches about His second coming where He will separate the sheep from the goats, He bases salvation and damnation upon what we actually did ("works"), whether righteous or evil. **Matthew 25:31-46**. In **James 2:14-26**, James is similarly instructing us to put our faith into action by performing good works, and not just giving an intellectual assent of faith. James says such "faith apart from works is dead." **James 2:17,26**.

In answer to a direct question from a rich young man about how to be saved, Jesus responds in **Mark 10:17** and **Matthew 19** by telling him to "keep the commandments;" verses first found in the Old Testament. We cannot keep the commandments instantly, in the manner of a promise to do so. The commandments refer to behaviors that we live over time.

So we must do more than accept Jesus as personal Lord and Savior. Even the demons believe Jesus is Savior, and yet "*they tremble.*" **James 2:19**. We must also do good works. Faith is the beginning of a process that leads us toward justification, but faith alone never obtains the grace of justification. Faith and works acting together achieve our justification. Saint Paul says it best when he writes that we need "*faith working in love.*" **Galatians 5:6**. We are not justified and saved by faith alone.

Secondly, it is important to distinguish between the "works" James taught about in **James 2:24** and the "*works of the law*" Saint Paul taught about in **Rom. 3:20,28; Gal. 2:16,21; 3:2,5,10; and Eph. 2:8-9**. Some other Christians generally confuse James' "good works" from Paul's "works of the law" when they attempt to prove that "works" are irrelevant to justification and salvation. The "*works of the law*" Paul taught about in **Ephesians 2:8-9** and elsewhere referred to the Mosaic law and their legal system that made God obligated to reward them for their works. They would thus "*boast*" about their works by attributing their works to themselves. Cf. **Rom. 4:2; Eph. 2:9**. Saint Paul taught that, with the coming of Christ, the Mosaic (moral, legal, and ceremonial) law which made God a debtor to us no longer justified a person. Instead, Paul taught that we are now justified and saved by grace (not legal obligation) through faith (not works of law). **Eph. 2:5,8**. Hence, we no longer "*boast*" by attributing our works to ourselves. We attribute them to God who gives everything to us freely by His grace.

Therefore, we are no longer required to fulfill the "*works of law,*" but to fulfill the "*law of Christ*" **Gal. 6:2**. This is why Paul writes that the "*doers of the law (of Christ)*" will be justified. **Rom. 2:13**. Of course, the "*works of the law*" Paul wrote about in **Rom. 3:20,28; Gal. 2:16,21; 3:2,5,10 and Eph. 2:8-9** have nothing to do with the "good works" James is teaching in **James 2:24** or the "*law*" Paul is teaching about in **Rom. 2:13** (because they are part of the

same Word of God which can never contradict itself).

In summary, based on the Scriptures, the Church has taught for 2,000 years that we are justified and saved by the grace and mercy of Christ through both faith and works, and not faith alone. We are no longer in a legal system of debt where God owes us (creditor/debtor). We are now in a system of grace where God rewards our works when done with faith in Christ (Father/child). This also means that we must continue to exercise our faith and works to the end of our lives in order to be saved. This is why Jesus told us to "endure to the end" to be saved. **Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13**. This is also why Saint Paul warned us that we could even lose our salvation if we did not persevere. cf. **Romans 11:20-23; I Corinthians 9:27**. This Catholic belief contradicts the novel notion of "once saved, always saved."

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