

What is the Unpardonable Sin? Let

Your Light Shine

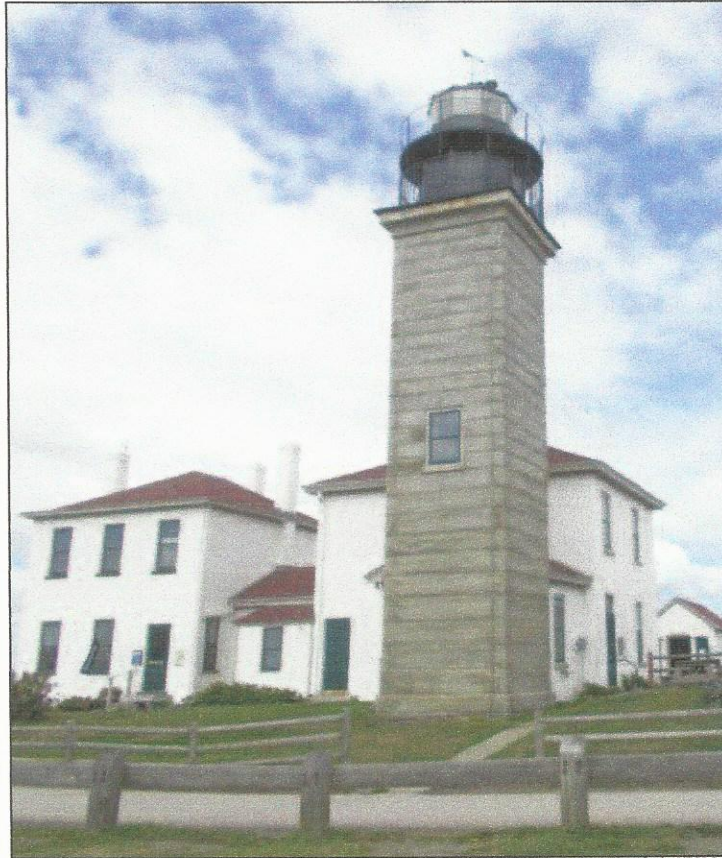
(The Definition and The Application)

By James Moriello

Matthew 12:31-32: "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

One of the foundational rules of biblical understanding is to examine the context of a particular Scripture, and this text is no exception. Prior to our examination, there must be a careful reading of Matthew 12:22-42, as well as the parallel passage which is Mark 3:21-30. References will be made to several of these surrounding verses over the course of this teaching. Without further ado, we will do three things. First, we will address the difficulty presented by our text itself. Second, we will define the unpardonable sin. Third, we will draw applications for our lives today.

First, we will examine the difficulty in the text itself. We are presented with what



Beavertail Lighthouse, Jamestown, RI. Photo Credit: NECB Staff

"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18)

seems to be a contradiction. We read that every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, and in the next phrase we read that there is one type of sin (of blasphemy) which

will not be forgiven. Another foundational rule of biblical understanding is that we should interpret the unclear passages in light of the clear ones. Now the

Bible is very clear that all of the sins of the Christian have been paid for.

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"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). This season, and all the following seasons, let us show these fruits to others, showing to all the light of Jesus. Let His light shine through by using all these actions to help others. Endeavor to use these fruits with people you work with, live with, family, friends, and also to strangers. Maybe just a smile, a friendly "hello", opening a door, or assisting an elderly person. There are so many things we can do, small or big, to make a difference in this dark world. Please consider the use of these fruits with children, pre-teens, and teenagers who have a difficult path to walk in this world of technology. Keep them in your prayers. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Throughout 2020, may the "Son" shine on you always!



Photo Credit: Christina Correia

"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you" (1 John 3:13)

The Cultural Accommodation Crowd Has a Lot to Answer For

(A Commentary on Today's Seeker Sensitive Church)

By Joe McKeever

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.... They are of the world. Therefore, they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God.... (1 John 3:13 and 4:5-6). First, they told us our language was too churchified and we would need to jettison such terms as justification, sanctification, and washed in the blood. I remember Arthur

Blessit. The hippic-looking, jive-talking, cross-carrying brother in Christ took the young churches by storm. We stayed most of the night with Arthur at the local youth hang-out witnessing for Christ, trying to look and sound cooler than the teens, picking up the drug culture's language in an attempt to bring the gospel into a foreign land. Heaven

alone knows whether we did good. Then, they came at our music. Away with organs and pianos, and in with drum sets and keyboards and guitars. Amplification on steroids and heavy metal, ear-assaulting, nerve-rattling instrumentations were not far behind.

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Carried by Four

(Excerpted from the sermon delivered on March 19, 1871)

By C.H. Spurgeon

"And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:1-5).

I. THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORK-



Photo Credit: Tanya Hay

"Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp" (Psalm 149:3)

ERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED. This man must needs to be borne by four, so the evangelist, Mark, tells us. There must be a bearer at each corner of the couch whereon he lay. The great mass of persons who are brought into the kingdom of Christ are converted through the general prayers of the church by the

means of her ministry. Probably three out of four of the members of any church will owe their conversion to the church's regular teaching in some form or other. Her school, her pulpit, her press have been the nets in which they were taken. Private personal prayer has, of course, in many instances been mingled with all

this, but still most of the cases could not be so distinctly traced out as to be attributable mainly to individual prayers or exertions. This is the rule, I think, that the Lord will have the many brought to Him by the sounding of the great trumpet of jubilee in the dispensation of the Gospel by His ministers. There are some, again, who are

led to Jesus by the individual efforts of one person, just as Andrew found his own brother Simon, so one believer by his private communication of the truth to another person becomes instrumental, by the power of God's Spirit, in his conversion.

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Should You Avoid Certain Customs? (The Danger of Dabbling in the Occult)

By Tanya Hay

A recent sermon addressed what the Bible says about witchcraft and mediums. The devil is hard at work convincing people to accept things that are wrong and to avoid and shun things that are good. Let's read what Deuteronomy 18:9-14 says: "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or *one* who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or

a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you." Furthermore, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every

good work."

Decide for yourself, after reading what the Bible tells us, should you avoid these customs? Is the devil leading you to believe that these practices are good? Just because something is widely accepted by society doesn't mean that it is right or a decision that is a representation of what God would want us to do. After reading these things, I pray that in all circumstances you seek guidance from His Word. I pray that you turn to the truth provided to you in The Holy Bible rather than following things that will lead you down the path of deception. Amen.

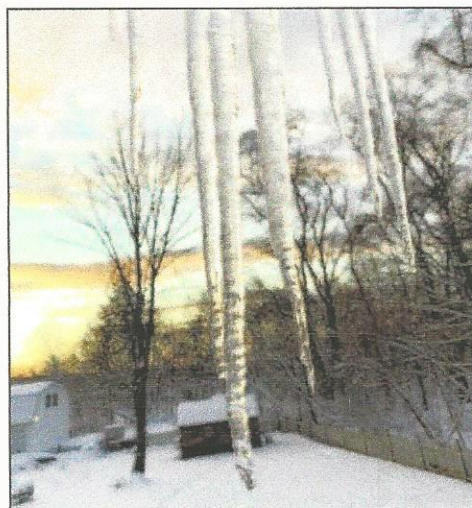


Photo Credit: Christina Correia

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13)

How We Got the Papacy

By Judy Aurelio

According to Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan, 1927,1965), the papacy was a gradual development. And when reading about this, it can be better understood. Originally, at the close of the Apostolic age, churches were independent. They

were led by a board of pastors, and over time, the main leader came to be called "Bishop." Later, the jurisdiction of the Bishop also included neighboring towns. Also, taking note here, the church's original mission was to bear witness to Christ, to hold Him before the people. Christ Himself is the Head of the church and the Transforming Power in

human life. The church in the Roman Empire "gradually developed a form of government like the political world in which it existed, becoming a vast autocratic organization, ruled from the top."

The Roman Catholic tradition states and believes that Peter was the first "Pope." This is an absolute impossibility.

Acts 15:6-7 states, "Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "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." This was in Acts Chapter 15, the

Jerusalem Council. So, Peter did preside over the Jerusalem church, not the Roman church, at this time in history (about 50 AD, twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

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“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:3-7).



What is the Difference Between Christianity and All Other Religions?

By Cheryl Correia

Christianity is different from all other religions, because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to its theology. Historically, the resurrection can be proven. Conclusive evidence is contained in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. There were even eyewitnesses. This is what makes the resurrection of Christ significant. Saint Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian people around 25 years after the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul had been a Pharisee, knowledgeable in the Old Testament, and had become a missionary, preaching that Jesus is the Christ. Having stayed in Corinth for about 18 months, Paul was very dedicated to both the people and the spreading of the gospel. This gospel, or good news, encompasses the life of Christ threefold. Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead. “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the pres-

ent, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:3-7). Faith in Jesus Christ transforms lives, and St. Paul records the validity of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is controversial, and St. Paul has a tendentious writing of this historical event. “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in

Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Paul is writing a particular point of view to validate the resurrection, as we will further explore. Jesus Christ taught twelve apostles to spread the good news. Saint Paul met Christ on the way to Damascus, after the resurrection. Paul writes, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). This event transformed Paul’s life, and from then on he lived for Christ. Paul, an educated man, reasons out the resurrection with his readers through the divinely given Word of God. “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Saint Paul is a man of faith who believes in the resurrection. “And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Corinthians 15:17). The whole point of the good news is that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. Either Jesus is the Messiah and rose from the dead, or He is not. In the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul is

demonstrating an antithesis, which literally means ‘opposite’. It is a rhetorical device to achieve a contrasting effect. “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise” (1 Corinthians 15:15). Again, God’s Word says, “And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Corinthians 15:17). The dedicated missionary, Paul, is getting the reader to see the truth of the resurrection, and that his attempts to spread the gospel could not be in vain, or “then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Corinthians 15:18). Written after his first missionary journey to Corinth, Paul had labored in planting churches throughout the region, teaching the resurrection to be true. The people of that time knew that Paul would never doubt the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Obviously, Paul had no doubts whatsoever regarding the resurrection, as evidenced by his life and writings. (Continued on Page 8)

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel”

(2 Timothy 2:8)

The Unpardonable Sin (Continued From Page 1)

Let me offer two of the many Scriptures that speak of the work of Jesus Christ in this regard. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). According to these Scriptures, it is very clear that all of the sins of the believer have been paid for in full. There is not a sin that has not been paid for. To say that there is a sin that has not been paid for is to diminish the value of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). Moreover, the Holy Spirit of God dwells within every believer (1 Corinthians 3:16). The result of that fact is that the believer is sealed, which means that his or her salvation is forever secure because of the divine work (Ephesians 1:13). Therefore, we can say without a doubt that the believer cannot commit the unpardonable sin because he or she cannot undo what God has done and fall from grace. Christian, you need not worry about committing the unforgivable sin, because it is impossible. What about the unbeliever, then? Many of you were unbelievers once, and did your share of blaspheming, did you not? Did that disqualify you? Certainly not! God in His mercy has reached down to you and here you stand redeemed! The Apostle Paul can relate. He confesses to having committed the sin of blasphemy. Nevertheless, he received forgiveness because he did it ignorantly in unbelief, like

many of us did (1 Timothy 1:13). All of these things taken together with the context of the passage militate against the idea that the reference here is to the sins of an individual. Jesus affirms this truth at the beginning of verses 31 and 32.

The unpardonable sin spoken of in the latter part of verses 31 and 32 is best understood, in my opinion, a reference to the national sin of the generation living in Israel which rejected the Messiah. I will present four lines of evidence to support that point. This is, by the way, where the context of the passage becomes critical to our understanding. First, it explains the apparent contradiction within the text verses and with other Scriptures in the New Testament that affirm that Jesus paid for all individual sins in full at the cross. Second, Mark gives us the reason why Jesus spoke the words in our text: "because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:30). In context, the 'they' refers to the leadership of Israel in that day. Third, their rejection brought about a turning point in Jesus' teaching. From that point on, Jesus began to teach in parables. The only sign that the unbelieving Jews would

receive henceforth would be that of the Resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40). Fourth, understanding the blasphemy against the Spirit to be a national sin is consistent with Jesus' statement that great judgment will come upon "this generation", meaning the generation of Israel that was alive during Jesus' time on earth to see His miracles, but rejected them as the work of the devil (Matthew 12:24,39, 41,42, 23:36). The unpardonable sin is therefore the sin of the nation of Israel in rejecting Jesus their Messiah. This does not mean that some individuals in that generation—Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea come to mind—did not repent of their individual sins and put their faith in Christ. Nor does it mean that future generations of Israel or any other nation could fall under the same condemnation. This was a unique sin for a unique generation—those who should have recognized the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44). It resulted in a unique judgment—the destruction of Jerusalem. This too was prophesied by Jesus Himself. Speaking to the generation guilty of the unpardonable national sin, He said: "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that

make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:42-44). This very specific prophesy was fulfilled in 70 AD. They had filled up the measure of their father's guilt (Matthew 23:32).

The only other option we have in explaining our text is that the unpardonable sin is the sin of an individual in willfully rejecting the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, for the duration of one's entire life. I do not believe that to be the primary meaning of the text, and I have explained the reasons why. However, this is the primary application of the text. It is unbelief that will cause you to miss heaven, and not murder, suicide (self-murder), or adultery. One can be a believer and sin and still attain to heaven, but one cannot be an unbeliever and still make it there.

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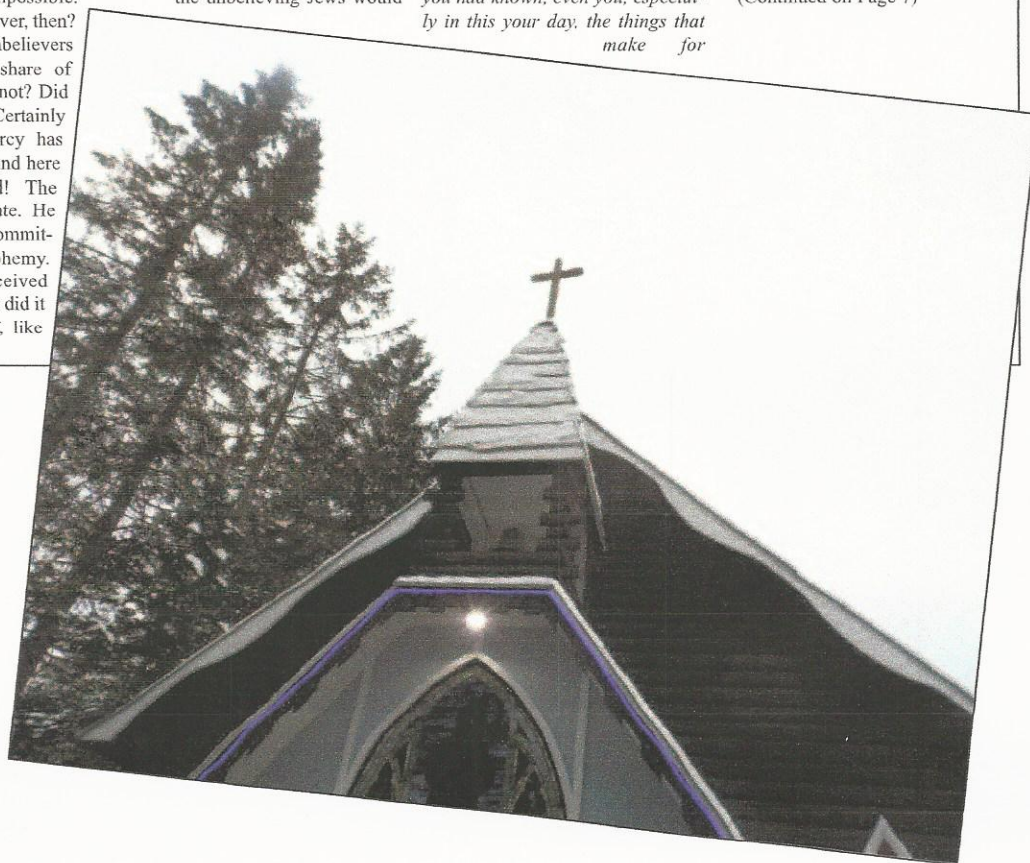


Photo Credit: Tanya Hay

What is Your Treasure? Thoughts of the Upswing of Accepting Jesus into My Life

By Scott Lanctot

As a Christian, this is believing in faith that what the Bible says is true. Prior to being a believer in Jesus Christ, I was a lost soul. My thoughts were evil, my motives were impure, and I ruled myself, not knowing that I was taking myself off a cliff. But that all changed. "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). There is a purpose and meaning in life today: to serve the Living God and walk worthy as a repentant sinner. Today being comfortable in my own skin, to have peace of mind, to know that I am a child of the Most High God—these are priceless gifts that I have received from God. "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). The Holy Spirit dwells within me and guides my life, pointing me to Jesus Christ, my Rock and Fortress. No matter what happens in life, good or

bad, He will be there to get you through your trials. His promise is to all who believe. "I will not leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5). Pray daily to the one to whom you profess and serve. Seek Him early and often. Read His Holy Bible. Learn and study daily. Be like the Berean church of old, "in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). A Christian receives the gift of the Holy

Spirit upon believing in Jesus Christ. Let's not grieve the Spirit, but instead grow and thrive spiritually. God wants His children to grow and learn, to build up His Kingdom. A Scripture that comes to mind that can sum up questions and answers for a Bible reader is 2 Timothy 3:16-17. "All Scripture is

given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." It takes time and effort to study God's Word. The reward is to know the gospel truth. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make

you free" (John 8:32). Free from self and bondage to sin. You can know what is true and false from the Bible. Here is a Scripture promise for believers: "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). It is comforting to know that we as believers have a home in heaven, not a future of separation from God in eternal torment (Cf. Revelation

20:11-15). The goal of the Christian is to be more like Christ. We are to strive for this daily by following His example, imitating Him, informed by the study of His Word. It is so important to learn, study, and grow daily in the Holy Bible. Pray for wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. The Holy Spirit will guide you and help you (Cf. John 16:13). Going to church weekly and attending Bible Study will help you grow as a Christian (Cf. Hebrews 10:24-25). Finally, we must remember that we must have actions behind our words. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). There must be evidence, fruit of the Spirit (Cf. Galatians 5:22-25). In closing, I challenge you to examine yourself in light of the following quote from the late Billy Graham. "Just because you stand in a garage doesn't make you an automobile." Make sure you are truly a Christian. Your eternal future depends upon it.

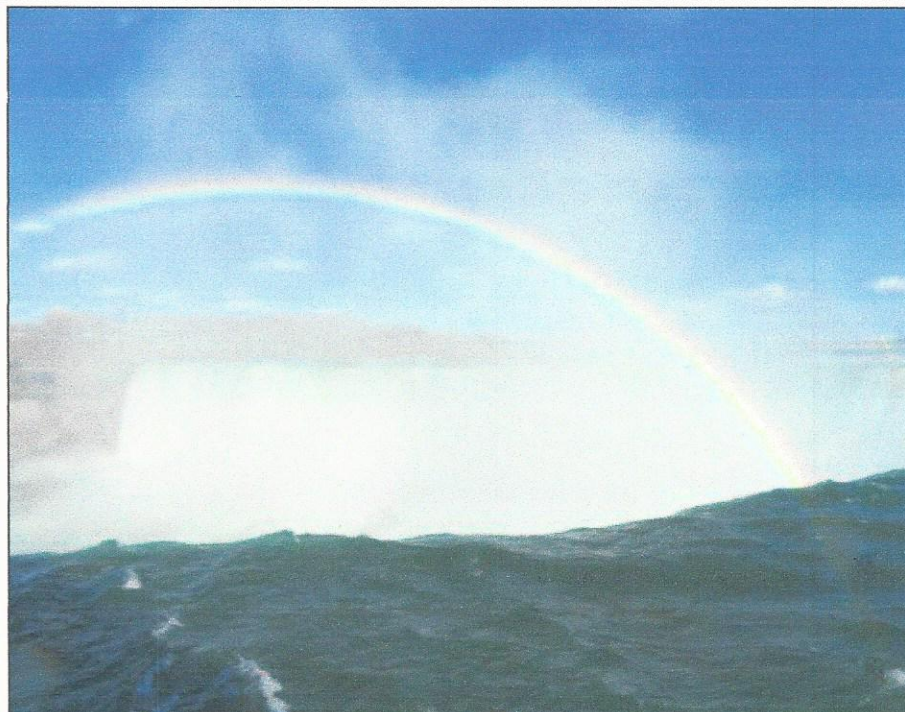
"Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Carried by Four (Continued From Page 2)

By C.H. Spurgeon

One convert will bring another, and that other a third. But this narrative seems to show that there are cases which will neither be brought by the general preaching of the Word, nor yet by the instrumentality of one. They require that there should be two, or three, or four in holy combination who, with one consent, feeling one common agony of soul, shall resolve to band themselves together as a company for this one object, and never cease from their holy confederation until this object is gained and their friend is saved. This man could not be brought to Christ by one, he must have four to lend their strength for his carrying, or he cannot reach the place of healing. Let us apply the principle. Yonder is a householder as yet unsaved. His wife has prayed for him long. Her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed you with a son who with you rejoices in the fear of God. Have you not two Christian daughters also? O you four, take each a



NIAGARA FALLS. PHOTO CREDIT: TANYA HAY

"I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth" (Genesis 9:13)

corner of this sick man's coach and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Savior. A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ. You are praying for your children, never cease from that supplication, pray on. Perhaps

one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sabbath school teacher will make a third. He will take one corner of the bed, and happy shall I be if I may join the blessed quaternion and make

the fourth. Perhaps when home discipline, the school's teaching, and the minister's preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child.

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The Cultural Accommodation Crowd Has a Lot to Answer For (Continued From Page 1)

No one is insisting that pipe organs and upright pianos are scriptural. But when ushers have to hand out ear plugs at the door, something is bad wrong. Next, we had to get rid of the hymnals and go to screens, forget the hymns and bring in the latest choruses. Some of those choruses are great. But so were many of the hymns. Why did the church feel it had to turn its back on what had served it well for hundreds of years in order to be contemporary? Then, the church people had to get rid of suits and ties and the preachers were to start wearing blue jeans, sneakers, and sweatshirts. I'm personally giving Rick Warren credit for much of this with his Hawaiian shirts. You have to wonder, did pastors actually think if they started wearing those gaudy things would they soon be running ten thousand in worship? When I point out that the commentators and broadcasters of televised sporting events all wear suits—three piece, even, and with neckties!—and that airline pilots wear uniforms for a reason (to inspire confidence), those defending their sloppy Sunday appearance get ballistic and accuse me of all sorts of unchristian behavior.

All of this was supposed to bring the world into the church to hear the Gospel. How's that working out? How. Is. That. Working. Out. When you enrolled in that physics course in high school, did they tell you

that since you would not understand such terms as the laws of motion, electromagnetism, and relativity, they would simplify them in order to make this easier for you? Did the math teachers throw out terms like "the value of the integral" and "sines, cosines, and algorithms" to make math more accessible? Yeah, right. When medical students begin classes, are they offended that the language of medicine is arcane and sometimes difficult and unknown to the laity? Only in the church. Only in the church have we been so afraid of offending the outsider that we jettison two-thirds of the things we were doing in order to make him feel welcome. Lest someone accuse me of callousness, I do want the outsider to come. I do want us to reach the lost with the gospel. The question is not whether we want that but how we accomplish it. And he's still not coming. Yet, we keep doing those silly things. A long, long time ago I read of a fellow named Mark Sabre. He stood outside the

church—in Australia or New Zealand, it seems like—and noticed what the church was doing. It was giving dances and parties and remaking itself in the image of the community around it. "They call it making religion a living thing of the people," Mark observed. So people could join the church without having to give up anything. And then Mark Sabre made an observation that has remained with me for at least half a century....A man wouldn't care what he had to give up, if he knew he was making for something inestimably more precious. Let us never forget the old adage: He who marries the culture today will be a widower tomorrow. The gospel is unchanging. Our Savior, the Lord Jesus, is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). "I am the Lord; I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Should the church be flexible and willing to adapt its methodologies to the culture, to the language, to the peculiarities of a tribe? That seems to be the message of the new wineskins. New wine must be put into new wineskins (Mark 2:22).

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is, without doubt, that new wine from Heaven which the old forms would no longer hold and which burst out of their confines before our eyes in the New Testament. That gospel has been bursting through all attempts to corral it ever since. The Lord's message is "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes" (Romans 1:16). There is nothing else like it on the planet. It's the best news ever. The one thing the gospel does not need is you and me reshaping it into a crude imitation of the world around us. The glitter of the world and its shallowness will all pass away. But the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ will reign forever. Let us stand firm and be who He made us. For Jesus' sake. A man wouldn't care what he had to give up, if he knew he was making for something inestimably more precious.

Taken from www.joemckeever.com; "Joe McKeever is a New Orleans pastor. His writings can be seen at www.joemckeever.com"; Used by Permission.



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Christina Correia

How We Got the Papacy (Continued From Page 2)

By Judy Aurelio

Furthermore, Peter doesn't assert primacy over all the other elders (or bishops). In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter himself clearly states, "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."



Tradition is unanimous that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome, in the latter years of Nero (68 AD at the latest). Peter made his way there for sure, probably more than once, but evidence mitigates against him being Bishop of Rome for anything more than (possibly) a brief period. So, Peter being the first Pope is pure fiction and not fact! He wasn't even living when the papacy came into being.

Halley notes that Leo I (AD 440-461) was the first Pope. He took advantage of a good opportunity. Rome was falling apart. The East had lots of controversies. "The West, under weak emperors, was breaking up before the Barbarians." Leo was a strong man. "He claimed that he was, by divine appointment, Primate of All Bishops, and in AD 445, he obtained from Emperor Valentinian 3 imperial recognition of his claim." Leo proclaimed himself head of the whole church, and advocated an exclusive universal papacy. But in spite of all this, the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), composed of bishops from all over the world, "gave the Patriarch of Constantinople Equal Prerogatives with the Bishop of Rome."

Halley also notes "The First Real Pope" as Gregory I (AD 590-604). "He appeared at a time of political anarchy and great public distress throughout Europe. Italy, after the fall of Rome (AD 476), had become a Gothic kingdom." Gregory "established for himself complete control over the churches of Italy, Spain, Gaul, and England." He had great influence over the Eastern Church, but he did not claim jurisdiction over the Eastern Church. To his credit, Gregory was a good man, one of the purest and best of the popes. He put in a lot of effort towards promoting justice for the oppressed and abounded in charity for the poor.

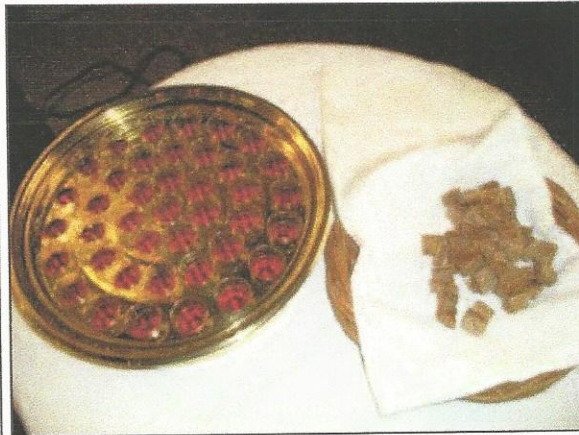
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Firm Foundation Christian Church meets at 84 Cumberland Street, Woonsocket, RI, Sundays at 10 am, and Fridays at 7 pm. We invite you to come

visit us soon.
TV Bible Study:
RI Cox 14/Verizon 33, Sundays at 4 pm, and Wednesdays at 3:30 pm
Northern RI Cox 18/Verizon 23, Tuesdays at 10 am, and Saturdays at 10 am.

The Body and Blood: The Communion Table



"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

By James Moriello

The Lord instituted the ordinance. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'" Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:22-24). Jesus prophesied His bodily death. "So the Jews answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?'" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2:18-22). Jesus' bodily death is recorded. "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!'" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But

when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:30-34). Jesus' bodily resurrection is affirmed. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). Christ's blood is the basis for divine forgiveness of sin. "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus' blood sacrifice is sufficient. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God...who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 10:12, 7:27). It is through the blood of Christ that we find peace with God. "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:17-19).

The Unpardonable Sin (Continued From Page 4)

By James Moriello

The fact that the nation of Israel in that day wound up facing judgment as a result of their rejection of

Jesus teaches us that if we follow in the footsteps of the Sanhedrin, we too will face certain judgment. The offer of individual salvation stands for you. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? Ask yourself, O unbeliever: 'How shall I escape the wrath of Almighty God if I persist in my unbelief and refuse to repent of my sin and turn to God'? What then will be my future? Do not fool yourself; there are two places you may go and a great gulf is fixed between them. There will be no passing from one place to the other then, but it is possible now. Christian, be reassured that you cannot commit the unforgiveable sin. You are forgiven already! There is no condemnation for you. "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36)! You are free to travel the Highway of Holiness as a man or woman redeemed. Take heed, however, lest you slide back into your old patterns of sin, for God does indeed discipline those who are of the faith. He does not wink at sin but He addresses it, as our text makes abundantly clear. It is my prayer that these words have served both to encourage and to convict those in my hearing. May the result be that Christ Jesus gets all the glory! Amen.



If you have read this article, or any other article in this newspaper, and now believe for the first time that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead, we would love to hear from you. Please call us at 401-765-0107, that we may rejoice with you and pray for you as you begin your spiritual journey.

What is the Difference Between Christianity and All Other Religions? (Continued From Page 3)

By Cheryl Correia

The Old Testament predicts a Messiah who will not only free us from sin, but be resurrected from the dead. Isaiah 53:10-12 states, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His

seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors." The book of Isaiah contains powerful predictions about the future Messiah, before He was even born. David adds, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:9-10). The resurrection of Christ is unique to Christianity, and as proof, all of His faithful apostles were willing to die as martyrs for their belief. There are very few things that men will die for—absolute truth being one. Hundreds of people were witnesses to the risen Christ. Eleven eyewitness accounts are referred to in the book of Acts, "to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Only Christianity boasts of a Messiah (God the Son) who rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father. He was the only One to be crucified, died, and resurrected on the third day. The New Testament was written to testify of this. Further still, there is God the Holy Spirit, who quickens men's hearts to know the significance of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



How We Got the Papacy (Continued From Page 7)

By Judy Aurelio

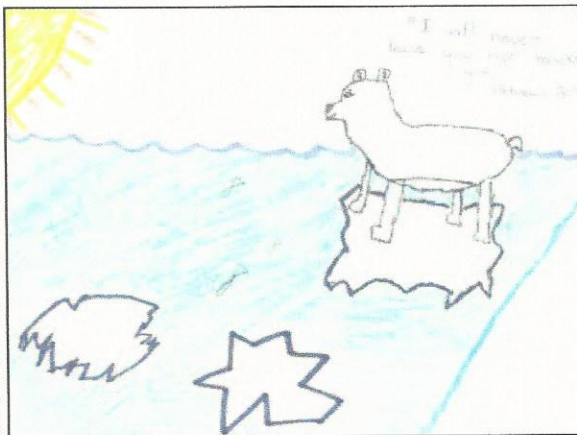
In summary and conclusion, the papacy is not the church, but a political machine that got control of the church, and assumed prerogatives, setting itself between God and God's people. In the end, God

always has a plan, and according to Halley, it just may be that in the providence of God, the papacy served the purposes in the Middle Ages of saving Western Europe from chaos and in blending the Roman and German civilizations.

Halley concludes with a great thought. Just imagine, if the church

had never been made a state institution, and had avoided the pursuit of secular power, and maintained its "original policy of winning converts to Christ and training them in His ways. There might have been the Millennial Kingdom instead of the Dark Ages." Wow, what a thought!

Carried by Four



Artwork by Alexandra Hay

"I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)

Dear brother, you are thinking of one whom you have long prayed for. You have spoken to him also, and used all proper means, but as yet without effect. Perhaps you speak too comfortingly to him. It may be you have not brought that precise truth to bear upon him which his conscience requires. Seek yet more help. It may possibly be that a second brother will speak instructively, where you have only spoken consolingly. Perhaps the instruction may be the means of grace. Yet may it possibly happen that even instruction will not suffice any more than consolation, and it may be needful for you to call in a third, who perhaps will speak impressively with exhortation, and with warning, which may possibly be the great requisite. You two, already in the field, may balance his exhortation, which might have been too pungent by itself, and might have raised prejudice in the person's mind if it had come alone. All three of you together may prove the fit instruments in the Lord's hand. Yet when you three have happily combined, it may be the poor paralyzed one is not yet savingly affected. A fourth may be needed, who, with

deeper affection than all three of you, and perhaps with an experience more suited to the case than yours, may come in, and working with you, the result may be secured. The four fellow helpers together may accomplish, by the power of the Spirit, what neither one, nor two, nor three were competent to have done. It may sometimes happen that a man has heard Paul preach, but Paul's clear doctrine, though it has enlightened his intellect, has not yet convicted his conscience. He has heard Apollos, and the glow of the orator's eloquent appeals has warmed his heart, but not humbled his pride. He has later still listened to Cephas, whose rough cutting sentences have hewn him down, and convinced him of sin, but ere he can find joy and peace in believing, he will require to hear the sweet affectionate words of John. Only when the fourth shall grasp the bed and give a hearty lift will the paralyzed person he laid in mercy's path. I anxiously desire to see in this church little bands of men and women bound to each other by zealous love to souls.

(Continued in Column to the Right)

(Continued From Page 5)

By C.H. Spurgeon

I would have you say to one another, "This is a case in which we feel a common interest. We will pledge each other to pray for this person. We will unitedly seek his salvation." It may be that one of our seat holders, after listening to my voice these ten or fifteen years, is not impressed. It may be that another has left the Sabbath school unsaved. Let brotherly quaternions look after these by God's help. Moved by one impulse, form a square about these persons, beset them behind and before, and let them not say, "No man cares for my soul." Meet together in prayer with the definite object before you, and then seek that object by the most likely ways. I do not know, my brethren, how much of blessing might come to us through this, but I feel certain that until we have tried it we cannot pronounce a verdict upon it. Nor can we be quite sure that we are free from all responsibility to men's souls until we have tested every possible and probable method for doing them good. But I am afraid that there are not many, even in a large church, who will become sick-bearers. Many will say the plan is admirable, but they will leave it to others to carry it out. Remember that the four persons who join in such a labor of love ought all of them to be filled with intense affection to the persons whose salvation they seek. They must be men and women who will not shrink because of difficulty. Who will put forth their whole strength to shoulder the beloved burden and will persevere until they succeed. They need be strong, for the burden is heavy. They need be resolute, for the work will try their faith. They need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain. They must be believing, or they will be utterly useless—Jesus saw their faith, and therefore accepted their service, but without faith it is impossible to please Him. Where shall we find quartettes such as these? May the Lord find them, and may He send them to some of you poor dying sinners who lie paralyzed here today.

