

Discernment Study

Week 6: ECUMENISM

Intro- Review

- For the last several weeks we've looked at CHURCH MOVEMENTS that have risen up over the last century
- EACH of these movements was formed in response to a perceived PROBLEM;
- EACH was organized around IDEAS they believed would SOLVE the PROBLEM;
- And EACH promoted IDEAS that obscured TRUTH because NATURAL WISDOM was placed above Divine AUTHORITY
- In the case of MODERNISM, evolution and liberalism QUESTIONED the reality of MIRACLES and a 6 DAY CREATION;
- Public confidence in the BIBLE was UNDERMINED, and Religious LIBERALS in the CHURCH feared losing INTELLECTUAL RESPECTABILITY with the WORLD
- Their SOLUTION was to adopt an EVOLUTIONARY VIEW of the Scriptures: That the Bible was NOT an INERRANT book of PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH, but a book of SUBJECTIVE religious EXPERIENCES;
- And so they REJECTED the literal truth of the SCRIPTURES, but HELD ON to their RELIGIOUS IDENTITY
- Many GENUINE Christians saw the DANGER in this, and they rightly refused to compromise on BIBLICAL INERRANCY. Their RESPONSE to the PROBLEM of Modernism was the FUNDAMENTALIST movement.
- And FUNDAMENTALISM started off well, because it was founded on a thoroughly BIBLICAL SOLUTION. It made a solid DOCTRINAL CASE for the authority of the Scriptures.
- But over TIME, the Fundamentalist movement became a FRACTURED SUBCULTURE, and it pushed away serious BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP;
- It IMPROPERLY elevated SECONDARY and sometimes UNBIBLICAL doctrinal positions, IMPOSED EXTERNAL ideas of righteousness on the SCRIPTURES, and often DIS-FELLOWSHIPED any Christians or churches who might

DISAGREE with them.

- And finally last week, we covered the CHARISMATIC movement, and PENTECOSTALISM, which grew out of the HOLINESS MOVEMENT of the 1800s.
- The Holiness movement hoped to inspire SPIRITUAL VITALITY among Christians, and PENTECOSTALISM's contribution was to claim the re-establishment of the MIRACULOUS SIGN GIFTS in the modern day Church.
- And then from there, the CHARISMATIC movement EXPANDED on that by adding ALL KINDS of experiences it claimed were the work of the HOLY SPIRIT

Learn to be Wary of Church Movements

- So as we've worked through these last several weeks, hopefully you've begun to see a PATTERN. In each CASE, someone believed there was a PROBLEM in the Church, and so they ORGANIZED a MOVEMENT around a SOLUTION;
- And in each CASE, the organizing PRINCIPLE of that movement became a GRID through which they INTERPRETED the SCRIPTURES
- For Modernism, that PRINCIPLE was the SUPERIORITY OF THE MIND OF MAN; and so science and NATURAL reason became the GRID for interpreting Scripture
- For Fundamentalism, that PRINCIPLE became OPPOSITION to the CULTURE and to INTELLECTUALISM; and so a theology of MILITANCY and EXTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS became that GRID
- And as for the Charismatic movement, that PRINCIPLE was EXPERIENCE; and so a thirst for miraculous EXPERIENCES became that GRID;
- And as part of LEARNING in this study to EXAMINE everything CAREFULLY, whenever a MOVEMENT rises up and says, "Hey, there's a PROBLEM in the Church, and we've got the SOLUTION!" ...
- ...We need to keep in mind 2 SIMPLE PRINCIPLES of our own
- 1) Just because someone SAYS there is a PROBLEM in the CHURCH, doesn't make it SO. We need to evaluate that perceived problem BIBLICALLY.
- 2) Even if someone HAS correctly identified a PROBLEM in the CHURCH, it doesn't mean their SOLUTION is the RIGHT ONE. We also need to evaluate

their proposed solution BIBLICALLY.

The Ecumenical Movement

- And THAT brings us to this morning's topic, which is the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT.
- ECUMENISM is very simply DEFINED as "the aim of UNITY among ALL Christian Churches throughout the WORLD"
- So that SUMS up the first issue right there. The ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT says "There is a PROBLEM in the CHURCH: We don't have UNITY!"
- And the UNITY they are working for is between ANY and EVERY religious BODY that identifies as CHRISTIAN; including Protestant mainline churches, Evangelicals, the Catholic Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church.
- Their motivation for this UNITY is three-fold:
 - 1) A concern that any kind of division among professing Christians works against the unity that Jesus prayed for in the garden in **John 17**.
 - **Read John 17:22.** "22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that THEY MAY BE ONE, just as We are one;"
 - 2) A concern that these divisions HARM our Christian WITNESS and HINDER the spread of the GOSPEL, because they are evidence of a lack of LOVE.
 - **Read John 13:35:** 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have LOVE for one another."
 - 3) A concern that these divisions UNDERMINE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE on the CULTURE, in the realm of MORAL, SOCIAL, and POLITICAL ISSUES
- So to be CLEAR, the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT was formed to address what they say is the PROBLEM of DISUNITY within CHRISTIANITY, and they often define CHRISTIANITY as ANY group that professes faith in Jesus Christ.
- And their SOLUTION to this PROBLEM of DIS-UNITY is always the SAME. Because THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES keep Catholics and Evangelicals apart, the Ecumenical movement minimizes DOCTRINE.
- They agree upon a COMMON statement of FAITH that is VAGUE enough to encompass all PARTIES, and that MINIMIZES any doctrinal differences that

might be a BARRIER to UNITY.

- This vague statement of truth then becomes the standard for SPIRITUAL UNITY, and under that banner they agree not to CONVERT one another, and they are FREE to work together on shared moral, social, or spiritual concerns.

Friendship and Fellowship are 2 Different Things

- Now, TIME OUT for just a MINUTE before we really get into this. I want you to UNDERSTAND, when we're talking about UNITY we're NOT talking about FRIENDSHIPS or SOCIALIZING.
- We can hang out with WHOMEVER we choose 😊 There's a BIG DIFFERENCE between simple FRIENDSHIPS and spiritual FELLOWSHIP.
- We're talking about SPIRITUAL UNITY. CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. We're talking about whom you should RELATE to, and whom you have SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITIES to, as a brother or sister in CHRIST;
- As opposed to whom you would EVANGELIZE with the Gospel, and that's really what's at ISSUE here in the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT.
- The central QUESTION Ecumenism has to WRESTLE with is THIS: What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? For their priority of mutual COOPERATION, Ecumenicals want the Gospel to be defined as BROADLY as possible, so that more people can fit within that definition.
- But for our priority of being FAITHFUL to CHRIST, we want to know how the BIBLE defines the Gospel. Nothing LESS than that, but also nothing MORE than that EITHER.

Our Questions for This Lesson

- So as we evaluate the Ecumenical movement this morning, there are 4 QUESTIONS we need to answer:
- **1) What is Sectarianism?**
- If denominational divisions are SIN, and the separation of Evangelicalism and Catholicism is SIN, we need to understand that. And the name of that sin would be SECTARIANISM.
- **2) What is Biblical Unity?**

- Since Christ clearly prayed for our UNITY, we need to understand what that means. We need to commit ourselves to protecting and nourishing that UNITY.
- **3) Are the MANY Protestant denominations an example of sectarianism?**
- Is it wrong that we are separated into different denominations on Sunday mornings? Is it sin that there are Presbyterians, Baptists, and non-denomination Bible churches? Should there be no denominations? Or just one BIG one?
- **4) Can Evangelical believers have spiritual unity with Roman Catholics?**
- Is the Evangelical gospel compatible with the Catholic gospel? Are different gospels even a reason to separate?

Question 1: What is Sectarianism?

- OK, so let's look at Sectarianism first.
- Those who believe that denominations are SECTARIAN, and DIVISIONS between Evangelicalism and Catholicism are SECTARIAN, often quote **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** as a support for their case.
- **Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13:** ¹⁰“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you ALL AGREE and that there be NO DIVISIONS among you, but that you be made complete in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are QUARRELS among you. ¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” ¹³Has Christ been DIVIDED? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”
- Now at first glance, you may say that maybe the Ecumenical movement makes a good point. Aren't denominations doing exactly THAT? And isn't it possible that we're making TOO BIG of a DEAL about the differences between Evangelicalism and Catholicism?
- But as we look at this passage, one of the PRINCIPLES we need to remember is that the AUTHOR had a particular INTENT in writing to the ORIGINAL RECIPIENTS of this letter.
- And those recipients were who? The believers in CORINTH.

- The Apostle Paul is addressing the Corinthian Church about the LACK OF UNITY within THAT LOCAL Church. He is NOT talking about a lack of UNITY between the Churches at Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, and Rome.
- Granted, there should not be quarreling and strife between different church BODIES either, but the application for us is THIS: In the LOCAL CHURCH, we are to have a basic agreement on the TRUTH. We are to have the same MIND, and the same JUDGMENT.
- It's NOT that we all have to be in theological lockstep. On this side of heaven, it's not possible for any two Christians to have exactly the same doctrinal convictions.
- But it does mean that there MUST be a significant core of agreement.
- And it means that our ULTIMATE loyalty must be to CHRIST, and not to the TEACHINGS of any particular HUMAN LEADER.
- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:4-5:** “³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is JEALOUSY and STRIFE among you, are you not FLESHLY, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not *mere* men? ⁵ What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one.”
- So how would we characterize Sectarianism? We see it here in these 2 passages: JEALOUSY, STRIFE, QUARRELING, and DIVISION where Christians divide themselves into FACTIONS AGAINST one another.
- So here are the things we take away from this about Sectarianism:
- 1) Sectarianism is SIN. No doubt about that.
- 2) Sectarianism DOES appear to be based on disagreement over teachings, or at least teachers. But the real issue is the Corinthians' fleshly devotion to human teachers rather than divine truth, and their fleshly and immature way of handling their conflict: Jealousy, Quarreling, and Strife.
- 3) Not ALL doctrinal disagreement is Sectarianism. Not by a long shot. We can disagree in ways that are godly, gracious, charitable, and biblical, too.
- All right. Set those conclusions about Sectarianism aside, and we'll come back in a few minutes and apply it.

Question 2: What is Biblical Unity?

- So next, let's see what the Bible says about unity. Let's go back to **John 17** again and see what's there to help us understand it.
- **Read John 17:20-23** ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they MAY ALL BE ONE; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that THEY MAY BE ONE, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be PERFECTED IN UNITY, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."
- QUESTION: What do you learn about Christian UNITY in this passage?
- This is NOT some kind of prayer for UNITY in the sense that we all just GET ALONG. Nor is it a prayer for some kind of formal, organizational UNITY.
- This is a HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER that ONLY CHRIST could pray for us.
- This is a prayer for the WHOLE CHURCH of all TIME, for our BEING MADE ONE with CHRIST, and therefore ONE with EACH ANOTHER as His BODY.
- And this UNITY comes through BELIEF in the GOSPEL:
- **Verses 20-21:** "but for those also who believe in Me THROUGH THEIR WORD; that they may all be ONE; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us"
- And this UNITY is REALIZED through the SPIRIT which dwells in EVERY BELIEVER, and BY this UNITY in the SPIRIT we EACH PARTICIPATE in the GLORY and the SPIRITUAL RICHES OF GOD;
- **Look at verse 22:** "The glory which You have given to Me I have given to them, that they MAY BE ONE"
- Turn to **1 Corinthians 12:12-13**, and I'll show you what I mean.
- **1 Corinthians 12:12-13:** ¹² "For even as the BODY IS ONE and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, ARE ONE BODY, so also is Christ.¹³ For by one Spirit we were all BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were ALL made to drink of ONE SPIRIT."

- So through the BAPTISM of the HOLY SPIRIT, and our POSITION IN CHRIST, we have SPIRITUAL UNITY with CHRIST and ONE ANOTHER
- Now turn to **Ephesians 4**, and let's have 2 people read. We just want to see two more things about this SPIRITUAL UNITY. One read **verses 1-6**, and the other read **verses 11-13**.
- **Read Ephesians 4:1-3:** "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT in the bond of peace."
- Paul is ADDRESSING a particular GROUP. The CALLED, literally the EKKLESIA, the CHURCH, those that God has UNITED in the SPIRIT.
- And Paul doesn't tell them to CREATE that UNITY, but to walk in LOVE in order to PRESERVE it.
- **Read Ephesians 4:11-13:** And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the UNITY OF THE FAITH, AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
- We are to be BUILT UP and EQUIPPED in our FAITH so that we all grow into FULLER EXPRESSIONS of UNITY with CHRIST and ONE ANOTHER.
- So we walk in LOVE to PRESERVE that UNITY, and we equip one another to GROW in UNITY.
- From those PASSAGES, we can see what UNITY IS, and what it ISN'T
- 1) We see that we enter into SPIRITUAL UNITY through the GOSPEL
- 2) We see that this UNITY is FOUNDED on truth, BESTOWED by the SPIRIT and NOURISHED as we pursue SPIRITUAL MATURITY
- 3) We see that TRUE SPIRITUAL UNITY is ORGANIC, not ORGANIZATIONAL.
- In other words, UNITY is a work of the SPIRIT. It has nothing to do with AFFILIATION or MEMBERSHIP with a particular denomination or VISIBLE earthly organization.

- We don't JOIN OR CREATE this SPIRITUAL UNITY; we're CALLED into it. And regardless of where someone goes to church, if they are IN CHRIST, then we have SPIRITUAL UNITY with them.
- BUT the OPPOSITE is also TRUE. Regardless of how RELIGIOUS, how KIND, OR how MORAL someone may be; if they are NOT in CHRIST, then we DO NOT have SPIRITUAL UNITY with them.
- So the question of UNITY comes down to whether or not someone is in Christ. And their position in Christ is a matter of the Gospel they believe and embrace.

Question 3: Are the MANY Protestant denominations an example of sectarianism?

- That brings us to our THIRD question: Are the MANY Protestant denominations an example of SECTARIANISM?
- To answer this, remember what we learned from **1 Corinthians**:
- Sectarianism is the DIVISION of Christians into WARRING FACTIONS who are given to JEALOUSY, STRIFE, and QUARRELING.
- Sectarianism IS NOT simply DISAGREEMENT over DOCTRINE. We may have doctrinal DIFFERENCES with other believers, and sometimes those differences can be SHARP.
- We may DISAGREE about God's plans for the nation of ISRAEL; whether or not it is appropriate to BAPTIZE BABIES; and the timing of the RAPTURE, the SECOND COMING of Christ, and the MILLENNIAL KINGDOM;
- And we may disagree over Church GOVERNMENT and practice; whether congregations should be RULED by the Elders, or whether congregations should VOTE; whether preaching should be EXPOSITIONAL or TOPICAL, etc.
- Though we may DEBATE those differences, if someone PROCLAIMS and EMBRACES the biblical gospel, then we have SPIRITUAL UNITY because of what we SHARE:
- We love the same CHRIST. We are indwelt by the same SPIRIT. We serve the same LORD. And we are members of the same universal CHURCH. Our UNITY and FELLOWSHIP has not been destroyed because of those differences.

- Now, someone may say: That SOUNDS nice. But it rings HOLLOW. After all, you've separated yourselves into DENOMINATIONS or independent churches. You are SEPARATE. Your UNITY isn't REAL and PRACTICAL; it's just POTENTIAL and THEORETICAL.
- I'll give TWO RESPONSES to that, and I'll use Saving Grace Bible Church as an example. 1) Most of us have FELLOWSHIP with believers in other churches and DENOMINATIONS. Our CIRCLE of Christian fellowship is not just confined to SGBC.
- We PRAY with Christians in other churches and denominations, and we FELLOWSHIP with them. We ENCOURAGE them in the WORD, and they encourage US.
- We do this because true SPIRITUAL UNITY crosses beyond local church bodies and denominations, and WE RECOGNIZE that. We recognize that there is no visible Church organization that is THE ONE TRUE CHURCH.
- 2) We don't worship separately in different denominations or different churches because we are opposing FACTIONS. We do so because we're committed to different CONVICTIONS. Yet all genuine Christians ARE UNITED in their belief of the biblical gospel.
- For example, ALL believe in the DEITY of CHRIST- the SINLESS SON of GOD, the SECOND PERSON of the TRINITY. ALL believe in HIS VIRGIN BIRTH. ALL confess their SIN against GOD and need for FORGIVENESS and RIGHTEOUSNESS. ALL believe in Christ's SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT.
- ALL believe in His BODILY RESURRECTION. ALL believe that salvation is by God's GRACE ALONE through FAITH ALONE. ALL believe that CHRIST is their LORD and SAVIOR.
- We ARE ABSOLUTELY UNITED in the Fundamentals of the faith. On those fundamentals, we ARE in lockstep. Yet, on some secondary doctrines, we may DISAGREE. We may have different convictions.
- Those different convictions may lead us to gather into LOCAL BODIES or DENOMINATIONS with others who SHARE our convictions. And we can do that WITHOUT being accused of being SECTARIAN;
- Provided our debates are not given to jealousy, strife, quarreling, and factionalism. And provided we are not making SECONDARY doctrines tests of genuine faith and DIS-FELLOWSHIPPING those we disagree with.

- And in truth, I think there is some WISDOM in gathering together in separate assemblies when we have significantly different convictions. Because for a LOCAL CHURCH to function well, there must be substantial agreement on secondary doctrines as well.
- IMAGINE if in the name of UNITY, we tried to force all born again believers into one DENOMINATION. People with very different CONVICTIONS about church government, and other SECONDARY issues.
- It would be DIFFICULT for that body to be united in purpose in the practical matters of church ministry, given all of the ways that those secondary convictions IMPACT our priorities, how we MINISTER, and how we make DECISIONS
- And I know that YOU AGREE with me on this. Do you know HOW? Because of the REASONS that many of you have for coming to SAVING GRACE BIBLE CHURCH.
- I know from MANY CONVERSATIONS over the years that you made your decision based on your convictions. Some of you came because of our convictions on ELDER RULE, or EXPOSITORY PREACHING.
- And I also know from MANY CONVERSATIONS over the years that you fellowship with believers who may have different convictions from you.
- So to answer the question: “Are Protestant denominations an example of SECTARIANISM?” I would have to say in and of itself, NO it IS NOT.
- That’s not to say that SECTARIANISM does not OCCUR. I think we saw that it DOES when we studied LATER FUNDAMENTALISM 2 weeks ago.
- BUT separating into different church bodies based on doctrinal conviction is NOT AT ALL the same as DIS-FELLOWSHIPPING. We may disagree on some IMPORTANT matters, but we are SPIRITUALLY ONE with every believer who holds firm to the ESSENTIALS.
- Now, Roman Catholicism would disagree strongly on this, because Roman Catholicism has a very DIFFERENT view of UNITY. One that is supported by Roman Catholic TRADITION, but NOT by the SCRIPTURES.
- They believe that the UNITY that Christ prayed for was ORGANIZATIONAL; the UNITY of all Christians with a visible hierarchical organization and religious system.

- Roman Catholic doctrine says that the CATHOLIC CHURCH IS THE ONE TRUE CHURCH, because of something called APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION. They believe that the POPE is the VICAR of CHRIST, the REPRESENTATIVE of Christ on Earth, the LEADER of the CHURCH.
- They believe that there is a direct line of apostolic authority from the Apostle Peter right down to the present day Pope Francis. To reject the Pope's authority is to reject apostolic authority; to reject the earthly leader of the Church that Christ established.
- And therefore to reject the POPE and HIS TEACHING is to put yourself OUTSIDE of the CHURCH. And in doing so you make yourself a schismatic, someone who is SECTARIAN.
- Now, the Catholic Church may have softened its language toward Protestants in the last 50 years, but it's essential position has not changed since it pronounced anathemas, curses, on the Protestant Reformers 500 years ago.

Can Evangelical believers have spiritual unity with Roman Catholics?

- So that brings us to our final question: Can Evangelical believers have spiritual unity with Roman Catholics?
- To answer this last question, we need to be clear on what UNITY is, and exactly how it is GAINED. So we will just recall those three conclusions we made about SPIRITUAL UNITY earlier:
 - 1) We see that we enter into UNITY through the biblical GOSPEL
 - 2) We see that this UNITY is FOUNDED on truth, BESTOWED by the SPIRIT who NOW indwells us, and is NOURISHED as we pursue SPIRITUAL MATURITY
 - 3) And we see that TRUE SPIRITUAL UNITY is ORGANIC, not ORGANIZATIONAL.
- So really, the question of whether or not Evangelicals and Catholics can have SPIRITUAL UNITY comes down to the essentials of the FAITH. What we believe about GOD, MAN, SIN, and the PERSON and WORK of CHRIST.
- And this is where it gets difficult for many Evangelicals. Because EVANGELICALS and CATHOLICS do AGREE on SEVERAL ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES.

- For example, unlike MORMONS, Catholics and Evangelicals both believe that CHRIST is ETERNAL GOD. We both affirm TRINITARIAN doctrine.
- Unlike LIBERALS, Catholics and Evangelicals both believe that MAN is separated from God because of his SIN, and in NEED of SALVATION.
- And BOTH affirm the BODILY Resurrection of Christ. But there are also MANY differences as well, and we'll look at ONE in PARTICULAR that is CRITICAL.
- And that's the Doctrine of JUSTIFICATION. If you don't get JUSTIFICATION right, you don't get the GOSPEL right, you don't get SALVATION right, and therefore you have no BASIS for SPIRITUAL UNITY.
- But before we contrast the biblical and Catholic doctrines of JUSTIFICATION. Let me make a point about SEPARATION from Galatians.
- **Read Galatians 1:6-9:** ⁶“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a DIFFERENT GOSPEL; ⁷ which is *really* NOT another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to DISTORT THE GOSPEL of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel CONTRARY to what we have preached to you, he is to be ACCURSED! ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel CONTRARY to what you received, he is to be ACCURSED!”
- The Apostle Paul is drawing a very clear line in the sand here. He's saying that a DIFFERENT GOSPEL is NO GOSPEL AT ALL.
- **Read Galatians 3:1-2:** “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified? ² This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you RECEIVE THE SPIRIT by the WORKS OF THE LAW, or by hearing with FAITH?”
- And in this CASE, this FALSE gospel included WORKS. What were those works? Turn to **Acts 15**.
- **Read Acts 15:1:** “Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are CIRCUMCISED according to the custom of Moses, you CANNOT BE SAVED.’”
- These were the JUDAIZERS, and these men would have AFFIRMED most every ESSENTIAL doctrine. They would have affirmed JESUS is the CHRIST, and the necessity of FAITH in HIM.

- But they ADDED just one little WORK to our JUSTIFICATION: You must be CIRCUMCISED or YOU CANNOT BE SAVED.
- That ONE WORK, despite ALL of the other areas of AGREEMENT, made the JUDAIZER's gospel a DIFFERENT gospel that Paul called ACCURSED, and so there could be NO SPIRITUALLY UNITY between believers and Judaizers.
- I make that point for one reason: We can't base SALVATION on someone getting the gospel ALMOST RIGHT. Therefore we can't base our SPIRITUAL UNITY on that either.
- So let's finish up and answer this question by COMPARING the BIBLICAL gospel and the CATHOLIC gospel.
- First, the CATHOLIC system of JUSTIFICATION from the Council of Trent, which still STANDS today: "Hence, to those who WORK WELL unto the end and trust in God, eternal life is to be OFFERED, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a REWARD promised by God himself, to be faithfully given to their GOOD WORKS AND MERITS."
- In the Catholic system, people ARE CALLED to FAITH in Christ. And they acknowledge that RIGHTEOUSNESS is ROOTED in the grace of God. BUT they believe that the GOOD WORKS that flow from this grace are TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT in the PRONOUNCEMENT of righteous STATUS before God.
- In other words, your JUSTIFICATION, your salvation and eternal life, are in some measure dependent upon WORKS that are YOURS. God declares you righteous when you have your OWN righteous deeds to show Him.
- In the Catholic system, you build up MERITS for justification through good works and the sacraments through which you get INFUSIONS of grace. That grace is depleted by SIN, and more infusions of grace are regularly needed.
- Now compare that with the biblical view of Justification.
- **Read Romans 3:19-28:** ⁹"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the WORKS OF THE LAW NO FLESH WILL BE JUSTIFIED in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. ²¹But now APART FROM THE LAW *the* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even *the* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴BEING

JUSTIFIED AS A GIFT by His GRACE through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of WORKS? No, but by a law of FAITH. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is JUSTIFIED BY FAITH APART FROM THE WORKS OF THE LAW.”

- BIBLICAL Justification is ALL OF GOD, and NONE of MAN. It is justification by GRACE ALONE through FAITH ALONE, and THAT not of OURSELVES because it is the GIFT of GOD, as it says in Ephesians 2.
- CATHOLIC Justification is a COOPERATIVE WORK between MAN's RIGHTEOUS WORKS and GOD's GRACE. Therefore like the gospel of the Judaizers, it is a DIFFERENT Gospel, and therefore NO Gospel at ALL.
- So in answer to the 4 questions we had this morning: 1) What is SECTARIANISM? It's the sin of FACTIOUSNESS, not simple DISAGREEMENT over secondary doctrines.
- 2) What is biblical unity? It is the SPIRITUAL ONENESS of all who are IN CHRIST. It's not AFFILIATION with an earthly organization.
- 3) Are Protestants guilty of the sin of Sectarianism? ONLY if we're being FACTIOUS. We are NOT SCHISMATIC if we SPIRITUALLY SEPARATE with the Roman Catholic Church or ANYONE ELSE over ESSENTIAL doctrines. And we are NOT SECTARIAN if we choose to assemble with believers who have SIMILAR convictions on secondary doctrines.
- 4) Can Evangelical believers have spiritual unity with Roman Catholics? If they embrace a DIFFERENT GOSPEL than the BIBLICAL GOSPEL, the answer is NO, we cannot have spiritual unity with them, because there is NO SPIRITUAL BASIS for it.
- We can LOVE them, minister to them, and certainly we should give the TRUTH to them.

Questions

1. What do you think are the main motivations behind Ecumenical Movements like ECT “Evangelicals and Catholics Together”?
 - *One of the primary reasons for ECT was to unite Evangelicals and Catholics in the American Culture Wars.*
 - *But compromising or confusing truth by the public linking of Evangelicalism with Catholicism is unwise. If both Evangelicals and Catholics are against something, let both address it. There is no need for us to join us one voice.*
2. If you were on an Elder board and were trying to decide whether or not to participate with other churches in some kind of ministry event, what factors would you need to consider?
 - *Are the goals of the event aligned with your church’s philosophy of ministry?*
 - *Could being linked with this event harm the name of the church or the integrity of the leadership?*
 - *Could being linked with any of the participants harm the name of the church or the integrity of the leadership?*
 - *What spiritual purposes will this event accomplish? How are those purposes accomplished better by joining in common cause with these other ministries?*
3. Ecumenical organizations often are concerned more with social issues or political influence than spiritual work. What are the dangers in this?
 - *The mission of the Church in proclaiming the Gospel can be confused or harmed by focusing on political or social objectives*
 - *By aligning too closely with a political party, the Church loses objectivity and moral standing to speak to sin in the culture*