

## **Usurping the Seat of Christ**

Selected Scriptures

80-405

Welcome to our Sunday evening together. As you know, tonight I want to talk to you about the pope and what is going on in the display of Roman Catholicism in front of us, from the perspective of the Word of God, the Scripture.

This is a big subject and there is much to be said and much more than I can say to you tonight. But I want to give a kind of foundation for my talk with you tonight, and it is this, that our entire discussion tonight has one purpose and that is to make sure that we understand that people caught up in the Roman system are not saved Christians. They are lost people on their way to eternal hell. We have to continue to evangelize them; we cannot be deceived; we cannot be fooled as if they belong to Christ when in fact they do not. That has been the conviction of the true church for centuries as you well know. We cannot reach a point now where we re-designate people in the Roman Catholic Church as believers in Christ, or we will cut them off from the necessary exposure to the true gospel which alone can bring them salvation. And there is no group of people in the Roman Catholic system more tragic and more desperate than priests of all kinds and any kind, because it has been imposed upon them that they should live their lives in unnatural restraint, that they should live their lives in a forced celibacy which leads to horrible sexual perversion and deviation and smitten and stricken consciences and all kinds of tragedy. We have been made aware in the media in recent years of the massive homosexuality that is rampant in the priesthood, the pedophilia which is also rampant in the priesthood, the blackmail that also occurs when this information is known. We are very much aware if we're watching the news in the last couple of weeks that the cardinal in Rome who has a twelve-room apartment in that city has on the bottom floor of his apartment the biggest gay bar in Rome. Other cardinals are housed there as well.

From time to time we hear about cardinals having to resign because of activity with regard to homosexual prostitution and pedophilia. While this happens in the world, it happens more under the horrors of this forced kind of celibacy that came in the 1100s when the Bishop of Rome wanted to stop the accumulating wealth of priestly families, so he came up with the celibacy of the priesthood, confiscated all their properties, all their possessions, and if you have no children, you can pass on no wealth. So he broke the back of those wealthy families. It certainly had no biblical purpose.

So, we're watching the fallout. The Roman Catholic Church has always been corrupt because it's always been a false religious system, and a false religious system can't deal with sin. But it's pretty remarkable when the outgoing pope, Ratzinger, resigns because it's the only way he can clean out the Vatican. He designated what existed in the Vatican as the filth. It ran so deep and so wide and he had been complicit in it so long that the only way to get rid of it was for him to resign, take himself out of the picture and once he left, everybody associated with him has to leave in the hope that it could be better in the future. It's a horrible thing to see; it's a tragic thing to see, these priests are desperate men. They need salvation; they need Christ. So do all the people in the system that they influence.

Within the priesthood in Roman Catholicism, there's a special group of priests called Jesuits. The new pope, for the first time ever in history, is from the Jesuits. The Jesuit Society is simply The Society of Jesus, nicknamed Jesuits. That's their name, their official name, The Society of Jesus, they on the surface are engaged in education. They have about 190 universities and schools in the United States. There are about 24,800 of these Jesuits. They're not parish priests. They're a special order of priests who give themselves on the surface to education and to care for the poor.

In the long war on the truth the most formidable and relentless and deceptive enemy has always been Roman Catholicism. There's no deception with Islam. There's no deception with Hinduism. There's no deception with Buddhism. There is massive deception with Roman Catholicism. There are 1.2 billion Roman Catholics in the world who are under this deception to one degree or another. And its deception lies in the fact that it's an apostate, corrupted, heretical, false kind of Christianity. It is the kingdom of Satan wearing a Christian mask. The true church of the Lord Jesus has always understood this. It's always understood it since Catholicism began to form itself in the fourth century, all the way to the Reformation, even through what was known as the Dark Ages, say from 400 to 1500, leading up to the Reformation, genuine Christian believers always set themselves against the heretical system that was developing that became known as the Roman Catholic Church. It was always rejected by the true church. And the Roman system was always going after Huguenots and Waldensians and Anabaptists; those were those who took issue with the system in favor of the truth.

Genuine and discerning believers through all the history of the church, and today, understand the false priesthood. They understand the heresy of revelation by tradition. They understand the illegitimate power of the magisterium, the body of leaders. They understand the idolatry of saint worship. True believers understand the horrific exaltation of Mary above Christ, and even above God. They understand the twisted sacrament of the Mass, which attempts to re-sacrifice Christ. True Christians understand the false forgiveness of the confessional, the uselessness of infant baptism and the other sacraments, the money motives behind the invention of purgatory as a way to raise money--people giving money to the church to buy their dead relatives out of this imaginary place called purgatory. The true church has always understood the disastrous harm of indulgences, buying your own way out of purgatory by giving money to the system. The true church has always understood the false works of righteousness that assumes that you can earn your way into heaven; the abomination of the worship of idols and relics; prayers for the dead; the perversion of forced celibacy. All of these things have been very clearly heresies and the true church has always understood it. And at the top of the pile, the true church has always understood the pope as a usurper of the headship of Christ over His church.

The Reformers brought this to its focal point under Martin Luther's launch, and that's where Protestantism came from. Even at the cost of their own lives, they understood this and they preached this and the Catholic Church went about executing them whenever and wherever it could. It was Martin Luther, who was born in 1483 and died in 1546, who said that the reign of Antichrist is the papacy, and all the people did say "Amen." A holy terror seized their souls; it was Antichrist whom they beheld seated on the pontifical throne. Luther made that clear. Luther declared the papacy of the true and real Antichrist. He said, "I owe the Pope no other obedience than that I owe to Antichrist." Those were bold statements that, of course, threatened his life.

Now in 1 John 2 and 1 John 4, the writer John says there are many antichrists. So I want to make that clear. There are many antichrists. There were antichrists in John's day; there are antichrists

now. There have been many *antichristos*, those who are against Christ, those who are in the place of Christ. There have been many of them. They oppose Christ. In fact, Jesus said, "Whoever is not for Me is"...What?...*"against Me."* So there are many who have been against Christ. But the Reformers saw the Pope as the most massively influential, single antichrist force. It wasn't that one of them was the Antichrist; it was that the papacy itself was so antichrist as to be the supreme model of what antichrist can become and ascend to. There will be in the future a final antichrist, described as the Beast in Revelation 13, and introduced originally in Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8 and 11. You read about this final world ruler and then more about him in Revelation 13. He will be that final Antichrist. Paul writes about him in 2 Thessalonians 2, he is called the man of sin, the son of perdition. He is the final and ultimate Antichrist. But just to make it clear, there are many antichrists, there are many forms of antichrists. Anybody who denies that Jesus came in the flesh is an antichrist. Anyone who preaches another gospel is an antichrist. Every priest in the Roman system is an antichrist.

But the pope embodies the worst and the most powerful form of a pseudo-Christ, a false Christ, one who takes the place of Christ. So that throughout the church history, there has been strong, unflinching condemnation of whoever was in that position. It is an antichrist position that really knows no parallel in terms of influence. John Calvin said, "Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman Pontiff Antichrist." The Scottish Reformer, John Knox, who died in 1572, sought to counteract, quote: "That tyranny which the Pope himself has for so many ages exercised over the church. He finally concluded that the very Antichrist and the Son of Perdition of whom Paul speaks is the Papacy...the Papacy. Not one of them, but all of them."

Roger Williams, who was the first Baptist pastor in America, said, "The Pope is the pretended Vicar of Christ on earth who sits as God over the Temple of God exalting himself not only above all that is called God but over the souls and consciences of all his vassals, yes over the Spirit of Christ, over the Holy Spirit, yes over God Himself, speaking against the God of heaven, thinking to change times and laws, but he is the Son of Perdition." And he borrowed all that language from Daniel and from the apostle Paul.

The Westminster Confession was a statement of the Reformers in 1647, and it says this, "There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that Antichrist that man of sin and son of perdition that exalts himself in the church against Christ."

Cotton Mather, an American Congregational theologian in the seventeenth century and early eighteenth, said, "The Pope of Rome...in the Pope of Rome are all the characters of Antichrist, so marvelously answered that if anyone who reads the Scripture doesn't see it, there's a marvelous blindness upon him." And so it goes.

John Wesley said the same thing. Charles Spurgeon, who was always very bold, says the pope is the Antichrist, whoever he be. "Popery is contrary to Christ's gospel and is the Antichrist," says Spurgeon. "It robs Christ of His glory, puts sacramental efficacy in the place of his atonement and lifts a piece of bread into the place of the Savior, puts a mere fallible man like ourselves up as the Vicar of Christ."

It was seven years after Luther died that Bloody Mary ascended to the throne in England and took over the authority as monarch. She was a Roman Catholic. All Bibles were removed from churches. All Bible printing ceased. All Bible reading was forbidden. Eight hundred English ministers fled to

Geneva. She massacred 283 Protestants. The first one she slaughtered was John Rogers, who took the Tyndale work on the New Testament and added the work on the Old Testament to what Tyndale had done in the Old Testament, produced the first Bible--complete Bible--in the English language called the Matthew Bible. And then she just went on massacring the rest of the Protestants till she reached 283 of them. William Tyndale was martyred for translating Scripture into English. And the killer of all of these was the Roman Catholic Church.

Luther, in the Schmalkald Articles, launched the Reformation with things like this, and I'm quoting from those articles: "All things which the Pope from a power so false, mischievous, blasphemous and arrogant has done and undertaken have been and still are purely diabolical affairs and transactions for the ruin of the entire Holy Christian Church and for the destruction of the first and chief article concerning the redemption made through Jesus Christ. The Pope is the very Antichrist who has exalted himself above and opposed himself against Christ because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power which nevertheless is nothing and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. It is nothing else than the devil himself because above and against God, the Pope urges his papal falsehoods concerning Masses, Purgatory, the monastic life, one's own works, and fictitious divine worship and condemns murders and tortures all Christians who do not exalt and honor these abominations of the Pope above all things, therefore just as little as we can worship the devil himself as Lord and God, we can endure his Apostle, the Pope or Antichrist, in his rule as head of the church. For to lie and to kill and destroy body and soul eternally, that is wherein his government really consists."

No wonder Luther started a Reformation. No wonder.

Spurgeon said, "Christ did not redeem His church with His blood that the Pope might come in and steal away the glory." That's for sure. Spurgeon said, "When a fellow comes forward in all sorts of curious garments and says he's a priest, the poorest child of God may say, 'Stand away, and don't interfere in my office, I'm a priest. I know not what you may be, you surely must be a priest of Baal for the only mention of the word vestments in Scripture is in connection with the Temple of Baal.' The priesthood belongs to all saints. Call yourself a priest," writes Spurgeon, "I wonder men are not ashamed to take the title. When I recollect what priests have done in all ages, what priests connected with the church of Rome have done, I repeat what I have often said, I would sooner a man pointed at me in the street and called me a devil than call me a priest. For bad as the devil has been, he has hardly been able to match the crimes, cruelties, and villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood."

Rome is a deadly enemy and Spurgeon goes on to say, "We can make no truce."

So what is our response to what we're seeing in this current explosion of interest in popery and the Vatican cardinals. The last thing we can do is embrace these people as brothers. Are we angry with them? We're angry with their lies, but our hearts are broken over them. They're not our enemy, their teaching is the enemy of the truth. They are our mission field, our mission field.

I was getting ready to leave this morning, a gentleman walked up to me and said, "I have come to Christ. I was baptized here within the last 2 years after 75 years as a Roman Catholic." That's what we want to hear, that you were saved out of that system. We can't accept the system but we have to love the victims. The evangelical church's doctrinal ignorance, the evangelical church's cowardice is on display at times like this, when you look for evangelical leaders to rise up and condemn this false

system, they pronounce affirming statements.

The promotion of Catholicism really has had no equal in history. And because of the media today, you're seeing it at its absolute zenith. Just look at the last few weeks...well, the last few years there's a good friend of mine in our church congregation who every Sunday gives me an envelope full of all of the newspaper articles in the Los Angeles newspapers that have to do with religion. Ninety-nine percent of them for the last five years have had to do with the scandal of the Roman Catholic Church. And yet, and everybody knows it, and the butler in the Vatican steals papers that are believed to implicate the Pope and that's part of why he steps down before the blackmail can come, and the world still seems to wonder about this divine organization. The world media covers up this sickening pedophilia, the abuse issues.

It's a classic illustration of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. The pope is spiritually naked at a very time when the Roman Catholic Church is receiving its greatest exposure, and its most widespread, seductive, damning danger is on display. It seems that many Protestants and evangelical representatives are not only unwilling to resist its damnable heresies, but they are not at all willing to expose them.

R.L. Dabney, who was an American Reformed theologian from two centuries earlier, said, "Our decadent, half-corrupted Protestantism in action, blindly and criminally betraying her own interests and duties." That's what we do. Even then he could say that. Our decadent, half-corrupted Protestantism is in action.

Has Rome changed? No. Can't change 'cause the church is infallible, can't make a mistake. So if you can't make a mistake, you can't ever fix anything 'cause if you fix something, you made a mistake. We have watched the death in the last few years of one pope. We watched the demise of another pope in recent weeks. And we have watched the ascent and coronation of Bergoglio, the newest one, and his first comment was that he was sure that Mary would receive Ratzinger, the outgoing pope. I don't know why he said that. He's not dead.

What about Pope John [Paul] II, is he in heaven? Is that where Cardinal Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, is that where he's going to go when he dies? What about Pope Francis?

Well, the only way you can get to heaven is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and salvation comes by faith alone, right? Listen to what the Bible says about justification. Biblical justification refers to God's holy, objective--holy, forensic--judgment concerning a sinner standing before the law by which he declares the sinner righteous simply on the basis that the sinner trusts in Christ. I mean, this is all over the New Testament. Acts 13, "Through Him everyone who believes is justified." Romans 3, "No one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the Law." Again, Romans 3, "This is a righteousness from God apart from Law, through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." Again in Romans 3, "God justifies those who have faith in Jesus." Again, Romans 3, "We maintain that a man is justified by faith, apart from observing the Law." Romans 4, "Abraham believed God, it was credited to him as righteousness." Again, Romans 4, "God justifies the wicked. Faith is credited as righteousness. God credits righteousness apart from works." I mean, this is all over the New Testament.

Romans 10, "Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who

believes.” Romans 11, “It’s by grace, it’s no longer by works. If it were, grace would no longer be grace.” Galatians 2, “A man is not justified by observing the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” Galatians 3, “The righteous will live by faith.” Ephesians 2, “It’s by grace you have been saved, through faith not by works.” Philippians 3, “Righteousness that comes from God is by faith.” Titus 3, “You have been justified by His grace and if by grace, no longer by works.”

So what do we conclude from all of those and many more? Justification is by faith alone. I covered that in John 3, *sola fide*: faith alone, faith alone.

Listen to what the Council of Trent says, this is official Catholic dogma. Sixth Session, chapter 16, “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 to God by God Himself to be faithfully given to their good works and merits. Nothing further is wanting to those justified”...in their sense of the word...“to prevent them from being considered to have by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine Law, according to the state of this life and to have truly merited eternal life.” The Catholic Church says you merit eternal life by your works.

Let me just take...out of the Council of Trent, that’s 1545, Canon 9, 11, 12, 17, 23, 24, 32. They’re not long, but just listen. This is a direct quote. “If anyone says the sinner is justified by faith alone, let him be damned. If anyone says that men are justified by the sole imputation of the righteousness of Christ, let him be damned. If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, let him be damned. If anyone says that the grace of justification is shared by those only who are predestined to life, let him be damned. If anyone says that a man once justified can sin no more nor lose grace and that therefore he that falls and sins was never truly justified, let him be damned.”

In other words, if you say that you can’t lose your salvation, and if someone falls away, they never were justified, you’re damned.

“If anyone says that the righteousness received is not preserved and increased before God through good works, let him be damned. If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such a manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified, let him be damned.”

Damnation after damnation after damnation on the very thing that the New Testament teaches, that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone apart from works. Do any of these popes believe the truth? They can’t be; they’re the guardians of this dogma.

When Pope John [Paul] II died, on the death of John, things began to surface about his commitments but they started long before that. He disbursed paper crests of himself and it was a simple coat of arms and in the middle of it was a massive “M” for Mary. His logo was *Totus tuus ego sum Maria*, “I am totally yours, Mary.” He said this, “The history of Christian piety teaches that Mary is the way that leads to Christ.”

He wrote a book and talked about how to have a deeper relationship with Jesus and His mother. The table of contents lists the title that the popes give to Mary. Here are the papal titles for Mary: The Gate of Heaven, The Mediatrix of All Graces, The Mirror of Perfection, The Mother of the Church, The Mother of Mercy, The Pillar of Faith, and the Seat of Wisdom.

Here's what they say about Mary. "She shares our human condition but in complete openness to the grace of God. Not having known sin, she is able to have compassion on every kind of weakness. She understands sinful man and loves him with a mother's love, precisely for this reason she is on the side of truth and shares the church's burden in recalling always and to everyone the demands of morality. For every Christian, for every human being, Mary is the one who first believed and precisely with her faith as spouse and mother, she wishes to act upon all those who entrust themselves to her as her children." Further, "Nobody else can bring us as Mary can into the divine and human dimension of the mystery. We can turn to the Blessed Virgin, trustfully imploring her aid in the awareness of the singular role entrusted to her by God, the role of cooperator in the redemption which she exercised throughout her life and in a special way at the foot of the cross."

When Pope Ratzinger took his place, he declared at the start that he was placing the Church and himself into the hands of Mary. And just the other day when Bergoglio took his place, he did the same thing, hailing Mary repeatedly.

In an encyclical, *Redemptio Mater*, the papal office says this: "Just as all are included in the creative work of God in the beginning, so all are eternally included in the divine plan of salvation." That's universalism. Developing in Roman Catholicism is this notion that everybody is going to end up eventually in a good place.

Well, I don't need to say more about that. You can talk about the Mass, you can talk about the denial of Scripture. But let's just kind of finish up talking a little bit about the pope. Here is the summation of papal infallibility from Ludwig Ott, which is the book called *The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*. It's a Catholic book. I've been reading that book for many years. Here is the statement on the infallibility of the pope: "The Roman Pontiff, or the Pope, when he speaks *ex cathedra* from his seat, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith and morals, and therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves." That's the end of the discussion, you can't change them because he has been endowed with infallibility somehow in his connection to Peter. This was voted in in 1870; kind of coming late, 1870.

What do we have here? We have in this whole Roman system a kind of macrocosm of the Pharisees at the time of our Lord--whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones, producing sons of hell. What describes them in Matthew 23 describes the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church exactly in the same words.

What do we do about this? We understand it for what it is. The papacy is patently unbiblical--just make a couple of comments--it is unbiblical. There is not one shred of evidence in Scripture for the papacy, for the role of pope, for any kind of priesthood other than the priesthood of believers. We are a kingdom of priests, isn't that what Peter said? They say Peter was the first pope. Peter says we're all priests. Peter doesn't buy it.

And yet it says in their theology, "If anyone says that the blessed Apostle Peter was not constituted by Christ our Lord, prince of all the Apostles, and visible head of all the church militant, or that Peter

directly and immediately received from our Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction, let him be damned.”

If you deny the papacy of Peter, the primal papacy of Peter, you're damned. That's Catholic theology. If anyone says the pope is not the successor of Peter, let him be damned. This would be a horror if Peter knew; he doesn't know. It would be a horror.

Paul wrote Romans in the year 56 and sent a letter to the Romans, made no reference to Peter and had a whole bunch of greetings in chapter 16 and didn't greet Peter. Peter was supposed to be the pope of Rome by then. When Paul was later in prison in Rome, where he wrote four letters in about 60 to 62 in that first century, he included everyone who came to him. Peter never came. If he's the Bishop of Rome, where is he? Peter was not holy, by the way, in case you wondered. Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, Satan." Peter wasn't even the head of the Jerusalem church; James was.

How did Peter refer to himself, as Pope Peter? In 1 Peter he calls himself, "Your fellow elder." That's what I was saying this morning, he sees himself as no different than any other believer who has been given a responsibility of spiritual leadership. He's a fellow elder. And when he writes about how you are to conduct yourself in chapter 5, as we saw this morning, he talks about humbling yourself, humbling yourself. Peter declared the priesthood of all believers, 1 Peter 2:5 and 9. And by the way, Peter disappears from everything by the fifteenth chapter of Acts; he's gone. If he played some kind of papal role, where is he? "Oh, they say, well Jesus said to him, you know, 'On this rock I will build My church.'" Yes, on the confession of Peter, the truth of the confession; Christ, not Peter. Because it was right after that that He said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." There's no link between Peter and every pope. They call it papal succession.

There were big chunks of time when there wasn't even a pope--fourth century, seventh century, eleventh century, thirteenth century, fourteenth century, fifteenth century. There was no pope [for] periods of time. There's no succession. If you want to study the history of the papacy, it's really a sordid mess--blood baths, mob violence, corruption, sexual perversion, buying and selling of papacy power; it's an unbelievable horror. The claim of some unbroken papacy is absurd. And by the way, when Cardinal Ratzinger just walked out and said, "I'm done," everybody knew at that moment it was a job, and he didn't like it. It's not some kind of divine succession. It's an unholy position. It's a usurpation of the authority of Christ that comes only through His Word, through His faithful ministries. Even Ratzinger wrote this, "For nearly half a century, the Church was split into two or three obediences that excommunicated one another," so that every Catholic lived under excommunication by one pope or another pope. And in the last analysis, no one could say with certainty which of the contenders had a right on his side. So here are popes excommunicating everybody else so that everybody's excommunicated. That's the kind of chaos and conflict even admitted by them.

I think probably the papacy is the biggest hoax foisted upon the world in the name of Christianity. There is a lot more to say, but I think we can leave it at that. Let me just give you a little history, a snippet.

Deprived of the support of the Empire, the papacy became a possession of the great Roman families, a ticket to local dominance for which men were prepared to rape, murder and steal. A third of the popes elected between 872 and 1012 died in suspicious circumstances. John VIII was bludgeoned to death by his entourage. Stephen VI was strangled. Leo V was murdered by his successor Sergious III. John X was suffocated. Stephen VIII was horribly mutilated, a fate shared by

the Greek antipope John XVI, who unfortunately for him didn't die from the removal of his eyes, nose, lips, tongue and hands. Most of these men were maneuvered into power by a succession of powerful families. The *Theophilax*, the *Crescentie*, the *Tuscalani*. John X, one of the few popes of this period to make a stand against aristocratic domination, was deposed and murdered in the Castle San Angelo by one group, the very group that had appointed him in the first place. I mean, that's how the history goes. There's a lot more than that.

You know, in the end, let me just say this, it's an arrogant idolatry, it's an arrogant, arrogant idolatry, a horrible thing. As J.C. Ryles said, "A gigantic system of church worship, sacrament worship, Mary worship, saint worship, image worship, relic worship, priest worship, and Pope worship...a huge organized idolatry." That's what it is and that's what you have to see it as. A man wearing a gold crown, triple decked with jewels worth millions. The cardinal's garb is worth tens of thousands of dollars. What a contrast to Acts 3:6 where Peter says, "Silver and gold have I none." Or Paul in Acts 20, "I coveted no man's gold." The pope is surrounded by this dazzling display of arrogant over-indulgence; is a theater and nothing more to give the illusion of transcendence, the illusion of holiness, the illusion of spirituality. All of this pompous display of wealth and lavish indulgence and ridiculous buildings and robes and crowns and thrones covers a sinful system. It seduces; it's satanic. The true church has nothing to do with it. It is Christless.

The head of the church, as I said to you a couple of weeks ago when we were going through this to start with, is none other than Christ. Colossians 1:18, He's the Head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead so that He himself will come to have first place in everything. That's what I was saying this morning. Diminish Christ and you lift up the ministers. Exalt Christ and the ministers disappear.

Don't be fooled. It is possible that the final Antichrist could be a pope. The final, dominant world leader, headquartered in a seven-hilled city, according to Revelation, could be Rome. Can you imagine evangelicals embracing that Antichrist? We wouldn't want to think of that, so why would we embrace this one?

So as I said, we welcome a new antichrist, but with grief in our hearts, and all the more resolved in the time that we have--who knows how much time we have--all the more resolved in our hearts to communicate the gospel to people caught in Catholicism. Reach out to your Catholic family and friends.

I was talking to one of the men earlier who said, "My father is not open; he won't respond." I just encouraged him to keep praying, don't give up, don't give up. Remember the man who I talked to this morning who came to Christ after 75 years in Catholicism. You're snatching a brand from the burning. We're called to this.

Father, thank You for Your clear Word. We understand this; we get it. Satan is going to counterfeit; he's going to lie; he's going to create false systems. He is and all his minions disguised as angels of light. They're wise in wickedness--crafty, subtle, deceptive. They've been around a long time. The machinations have become a demonic art form, their deception is powerful. May we not be deceived and may we be all the more eager to be used by You to bring the beautiful, simple, glorious truth of the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works, to every Catholic we know, to fill that terrible emptiness in their religious hearts. That religion cannot fill, but only Christ can. Use us that way, we pray in His name. Amen.

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