

**Irreconcilable Differences: Catholics, Evangelicals, and the New Quest for Unity, Parts 4-6**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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**1995**

**ANKERBURG:** We're talking about the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document as well as a new doctrinal statement clarifying the ECT that has just been signed by some of our evangelical friends and we want to talk about why we clarified some of those things. What the need was. And Dr. R.C. Sproul, I'm going to come to you with a very controversial area and that is that when you sit down with two groups that are basically holding to different views, you had 20 Protestant signees, 20 Catholic signees of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document and they said that when they sat down and basically were writing this thing that they were seeking for common ground of our corps beliefs, common ground of our corps beliefs. What's the bottom line that we can unite on?

They said they found it. And it consisted of the following, to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, affirming the Apostles' Creed, to accept the proposition, quote, We are justified by grace through faith because of Christ, to affirm, to seek more love, less misrepresentation and misunderstanding. It went on to talk about some other things as well. But those are pretty heavy little things that they have put on the table and yet when we met to talk together, we said it wasn't enough. I think particular sticking point was...isn't it good enough to say all who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ...because right after that statement in the ECT document you find "Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ." That is, anybody that can affirm the first one fits the second one if you're a Protestant or Roman Catholic. We said no, it needs to be clarified, and did clarify it. But some of the people in our television audience might say, "What in the world was wrong with that? If you can't agree on that, if that doesn't bring unity, what's the problem?"

**SPROUL:** Well, John, you've just quoted the portion of this document, and the document is some 25 pages long and most of it does not get in to theological matters like that, you've just quoted exactly the portion of that document that most distressed me personally. And I have to say before I try to answer your question that in my career as a teacher of theology and in my life as a Christian, I cannot think of anything that has come remotely close to distressing me to the depths of my soul as much as this document has distressed me. I mean, and what distressed me the most about it is that segment that you just mentioned.

Now in last week's discussion we discussed this business about...do we assume that everybody in an evangelical church is a Christian? Of course not, that's not the issue...and nor do these people ever

intend to say that everybody in the Roman Catholic Church is a Christian. The statement "Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ" does not mean that everybody in the Roman Catholic Church is a Christian or every evangelical is a Christian. Any sober reading of the document would illustrate that.

At the same time, those who have resisted this document have for the most part agreed that yes there are believers, true believers here and there in the Roman Catholic Church, in liberal churches and so on. They're mavericks to their community and I personally believe that those people who truly accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior in the biblical sense who live in the Roman Catholic Church have a moral and spiritual duty to leave that communion immediately, that they are living in sin by continuing to be a visible member of an institution that anathematizes the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, that's what I would say to that point.

But then you say, "But wait a minute, R.C., are you one of these theologians that's insisting on every...dotting every `i' and you're on a witch hunt and all that kind of stuff?" If you...Chuck, for example, Colson is very zealous to say, "R.C., you can't just read that statement in the naked way that Catholics and evangelicals are brothers and sisters in Christ, there's a context." And that's right, there is because right before that as you read it says that all who accept Jesus as Savior and Lord are brothers and sisters in Christ...evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ and the elliptical sense of this that those two statements are connected, meaning that only those Catholics and only those evangelicals who truly accept Jesus as Savior and Lord are brothers and sisters in Christ. And what evangelical would quibble over that?

Me. For this reason, precisely at the heart of the debate in the sixteenth century was not the question...is Jesus Lord? Or, is Jesus Savior? Beloved, the issue that tore apart Christendom in the sixteenth century was this, what does it mean that Jesus is Savior? How is Jesus the Savior? Is He a Savior in the liberal sense where He's an existential Hebrew, a hero, a symbol of liberation? And I believe that Jesus is my Savior in the sense that He reveals to me authentic existential existence? Do I mean that Jesus is my Savior when I say that Jesus on the cross revealed the seriousness of sin and demonstrated the love of God and so restored a moral influence to the universe and saved me in that way? Or as the Roman Catholic Church has said repeatedly, yes Jesus is my Savior in that He infuses the necessary grace into my soul by which with my cooperation I can be saved and justified before Almighty God? When my Roman Catholic friends tell me they believe in Jesus as Savior, do they mean by that statement that they are trusting in the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ to their account forensically by God through faith alone, or do they mean that Jesus is their Savior in the sense that He helps them have the ability to gain the merit necessary for God to declare them just? Do you see that that's a world of difference in understanding that sent Savior?

Now when Chuck Colson says all who believe in Christ as Savior, he's filling that with the content of his own evangelical heritage because if you ask Chuck Colson what he means by accepting Jesus as

his Savior, if you ask J.I. Packer what he means by accepting Jesus as Savior, they'll give you the unvarnished orthodox Protestant faith. But the question is, is that true for the Roman Catholic Church? Now they will be quick to say, "But we didn't...we're just talking about those 40 guys, these are just a group of individuals talking from their communion to their communion." And they have insisted on that over and over again that this is not an official document. And it isn't an official document. But I've said to Chuck and to J.I., I've said, "Look, Jim, that may be true but you're speaking about these communions. And as soon as you speak about the two communions, you've gone way beyond 40 people. You're making a blank blanket statement about evangelicals and Catholics who profess to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that they are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now if they do accept Jesus as Lord and Savior in the biblical sense, they are brothers and sisters in Christ and I have no dispute. But the doctrine of justification upon which we're united is far more than that statement that we've looked at already that we're justified by grace through faith because of Christ.

**ANKERBURG:** People that are listening might say...But, boy, are you narrow minded?

**SPROUL:** I hope so. That when it comes...John, let me...let me explain that comment, I don't mean to be flip about that because I think one of the most difficult things in the Christian life is to know when to be tolerant and when to be narrow. The same Apostle Paul who tells us that we are not to be contentious and divisive and argumentative and belligerent, that the same Apostle who teaches us that the fruit of the Spirit of the Holy Spirit is the fruit of gentleness and kindness and long-suffering and meekness and goodness and so on, that same Apostle who tells us that we are to judge each other always with the judgment of charity and not harshly with a love that covers a multitude of sins, that's the same Apostle who said when it comes to the gospel you can't negotiate it ever for any reason. That's why when Luther said that this was the article upon which the church stands or falls. And I agree with Luther's assessment there. I mean, I don't think that we should fight over every doctrine and over every pedantic point of theology. But, John, this isn't a pedantic point. This is not the small print. This is the article upon which the church stands or falls, the gospel itself.

**ANKERBURG:** John, do you think that the gospel is at stake in what we're talking about?

**MACARTHUR:** Well absolutely. That is what is at stake. And I think...I was just going to mention a parallel.

**ANKERBURG:** Right.

**MACARTHUR:** The Apostle Paul in Romans 10, obviously we know his heart and his passion for Israel. He actually said he could almost wish himself accursed for their salvation. Nobody would

question that Israel was devoted to God, that they had a zeal for God, that they tried their best to follow the law and all the prescriptions. I mean, it's a very close parallel to the same kind of situation. And he says in Romans 10, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is for their salvation." I mean, it was clear that they had missed the whole point of a gracious salvation, a salvation that came from God and God alone apart from any works. He said, "I bear them witness." This I'll grant them, they have a zeal for God but it's not according to knowledge because they do not understand God's righteousness and they seek to establish their own. That is exactly what you have going on in the Roman Catholic Church. And so, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. In other words, they didn't understand the righteousness of God. They went to seek their own righteousness. Therefore they missed the righteousness of God. And he says in the next verse, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Christ is the righteousness and Israel missed it and Paul confronted it, Jesus confronted it. I mean, He blistered the Jewish leaders for their defection.

I hate to say that if I had been in the meeting with 20 Roman Catholics, I think I would have been a troubled person. I don't think we would have come out with any document which we all agreed on because I would have had to confront the fact that they have a zeal for God but it is apart from understanding the righteousness of God which is the only means by which salvation can occur. Yes, it's absolutely the definitive issue.

**ANKERBURG:** Dr. Kennedy, all through the years that I have known you, you've had the reputation among evangelical leaders of being the statesman, the one that constantly wants to bring us together, you don't want any splits. And even in this situation we met in your office. But what's at stake is that the cry for tolerance today and love between Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants is very, very strong. And when we make some of these statements, people say, "Don't you have any love for Roman Catholics? Are you guys so harsh?" Talk about love and tolerance and the priority that truth has over that...and that when we stand for the truth that does not necessarily mean that we don't love people. In fact, when we stand for the truth it means that we actually love them more.

**KENNEDY:** Absolutely, John. If we believe as Christians the truth of the Scripture, if we believe what Christ said that He is THE way, THE truth and THE life, if we believe as Peter said that there is none other name under heaven given unto men whereby they must be saved, if there is no other way than through justification by faith in Christ alone, if we are willing for the sake of some temporal earthly peace and tolerance to ignore proclaiming that truth to people, then we are not demonstrating to them love, we are actually demonstrating hate because we are allowing those people to go to the judgment of God without ever telling them the one way by which they can be justified in the eyes of a just and holy God. And that is a false love. True love confronts. And it should do it with grace and with kindness but nevertheless firmly.

You know, I've always felt that we need to have a velvet glove but as I was saying to R.C. in my office this afternoon that I've always felt there should be a velvet glove but inside that velvet glove there is to be a steel fist. And we can never become wishy-washy and spongy when it comes to the essential truth upon which the eternal wheel or woe of human beings rests. And that is the gospel. We can't compromise on this truth. We can agree to disagree on a lot of the non-essentials, as Paschal said. But when it comes to the heart of the gospel, we have to insist there is only one way and Christ is that way. And to ignore that is a false love. It is a personal apostatizing on our own part from what Christ called us to be. And I, you know, commend these men, as I commended R.C. in that meeting that we mentioned, that he made it very clear to these men what was at stake here. And what was at stake ultimately was whether or not we could maintain fellowship if they were going to leave a confused idea as to whether or not they accepted the distinctives of the Reformational theology. And happily they made it clear that they do not reject those, they do clearly accept them. And in that we do rejoice. Though we all would have been happier if they had taken their names off the document all together.

**ANKERBURG:** Yeah, R.C., summarize where we're at. I think it's very important for the people that are listening, they want to know, "Well where are we at here with Chuck and our own fellows, where do we stand?"

**SPROUL:** I'm not sure...I received a wonderful letter from Chuck just this week because this is so hard because like Chuck writes in the scrawl at the bottom, "I'm so glad we had this meeting because has been torturing my soul." He's been in tears, I've been in tears. If there's...our personal friendship that is for so long and so deep...J.I. Packer, I haven't...few people in my life have I had a deeper camaraderie with, standing shoulder to shoulder proclaiming the reformed faith to our generation, these are the last people in the world I wanted to break fellowship with. And that's certainly Chuck's heart and that's why we got together here. Now how I feel personally about these guys after that meeting is I feel a lot more comfortable about it knowing what their concerns were and they're perfectly willing to stand and say to the world, "We believe that in justification by faith alone and that that is a central to the gospel of Jesus Christ." I want them to say that from the onstart(?). But where are we? I'm delighted in that. And as I said before, it's a half-way covenant here. I mean, that was the bare minimum that I could hope for that we could be able to achieve to avert a theological war. And I think we have, at least for the time being, dodged a bullet here. I'm not sure. I mean, the truth is tenuous and I hope that we're going to be able to get more clarification because we didn't have the time to look at all of the issues here and we all recognize that there was a lot more to be done. And so part of that clarification statement that you have in front of you, John...

**ANKERBURG:** Point number five...

**SPROUL:** Point number five makes a commitment for those people involved there to continue this discussion because the discussions aren't over. And there's kind of a moratorium here on let's put

down the guns in the meantime, not be shooting each other in the back, and still try to get further resolution of this problem. I, you know, again with Jim, I wish they had just unsigned the document and we could all go home and be happy. But in the meantime we're trying to have as much accommodation as we possibly can without compromising the gospel.

**ANKERBURG:** Dr. John MacArthur, close us off in this session, why is it so important to be so precise and so clear in the statements that we are making about what we believe? What's at stake?

**MACARTHUR:** Because the eternal soul of every person is at stake. Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and coming to Christ on God's terms and His terms alone is the path of salvation. Everything is at stake, absolutely everything.

If I can just add one thing to what R.C. said, we're glad to agree on the doctrine of salvation, sola fide, what we don't agree on is the implications of that. We're saying that has massive implications in terms of our cooperation. They don't seem to see those implications. Therein lies the difficulty. It's implications that concern me because the implication of taking the right doctrine of salvation is you preach the truth and people can come to salvation. Confusing that is a damning doctrine.

**ANKERBURG:** Dr. Kennedy, close us off again. How can a person who is listening come in to that wonderful relationship that we've been talking about? Maybe they've been listening to all of this and their curiosity is piqued. You're saying some things that are bringing joy, is it really true? Explain it.

**KENNEDY:** Essentially there are only two religions in the whole world. One of them is "I"...I live a good life, I keep the commandments, I pray, I go to church, I follow the Golden Rule, I love my neighbor, I do the best I can, I don't do this bad thing, I don't do the other. That's called autosoterism, or self-salvation where I become my own savior, glory be to me. I'm in competition with Jesus Christ who claims to be the Savior of the world. The only other religion is the cross, symbolized and standing right behind me. All...there are over 30,000 religions in the world but when you take off the ribbon and the wrapping and open the box, you'll either find the "I" or the cross essentially. And everyone is going to either be saving himself and be his own savior, or he's going to trust in Christ and in Christ alone. And I would say to anyone that wants to know the free salvation of God to get out of the savior business, declare spiritual bankruptcy, turn to Christ and trust in Him alone for your salvation and He will freely give you the gift of everlasting life. He will come into your heart and enable you to trust Him and to repent of your sins and change your life and give you new meaning and new direction and new power to live a godly life. And He will take you to be with Him in paradise forever and ever.

**END OF SEGMENT ONE**

**ANKERBURG:** We're talking about the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document as well as the new clarifying statement that has just been signed by some of our evangelical friends that signed the ECT document. And this is going to be a wonderful program. We have questions from the audience and hopefully the very question that some of these folks are going to ask is the one that you want to ask and have answered.

Now I'm going to ask the first one and start the ball rolling here and that is...there was a very controversial area in the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document that many of the evangelical lay people picked up on right away and it was this statement right here, "Those converted whether understood as having received the new birth for the first time or as having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of Baptism must be given full freedom and respect as they discern and decide the community in which they will live their new life in Christ."

Dr. R.C. Sproul, to many people that sounded like the evangelical Protestants who were helping frame this were allowing there to be two equally valid ways of coming into a relationship with Christ...that is the new birth or the sacrament of Baptism. We objected to that statement and wanted it clarified. Tell us what's at stake and what we did.

**SPROUL:** First of all, John, let me put my theologian's hat on just for a second and beg your indulgence to get a little bit technical here with respect to that. That question as you've posed it and as it's stated in ECT represents what's called the fallacy of a false dilemma or the either/or fallacy. So in the document there was a bullet-point list of ongoing points of differences. Do we believe this or that? Which in some cases radically missed the historical points in dispute.

For example, you're saying are there two ways of conversion, one through regeneration, the other through the sacraments. That really misses the point of the historic debate between reformed theology, Protestantism and Rome because both Rome and historic evangelicalism maintain that it is necessary for a person to be regenerate. Okay? There's no dispute about that. The question is how does regeneration come to pass and what does it effect, what does it do and how is it linked to justification? On the classical Reformed view of Calvin and Luther the order of salvation went like this, that first before I can believe and meet the requirement of faith in order to receive and appropriate the righteousness of Christ for my justification something has to happen to my heart because I'm fallen and I'm dead in sin and the Holy Spirit has to change the disposition of my heart, and we call that regeneration or rebirth. As a result of that work of the Holy Spirit, now I am able to and indeed do embrace Christ in faith. So I'm reborn, I have faith, as a consequence to the faith I'm justified.

And the Roman Catholic Church has taught that the way a person comes to salvation is in the first instance they are baptized and Baptism works *ex opera operato*(?) by the working of the works virtually automatically infusing the grace of justification in the soul effecting regeneration and justifying

grace. So a person is now justified by Baptism. And that's good until or unless that person commits mortal sin. Mortal sin is called mortal sin because it destroys the grace, the justifying grace that has been implanted in them and infused into the soul at Baptism. That's why you have confession, that's why you have the sacrament of Penance which became the center of the controversy in the sixteenth century, the sacrament of Penance Rome defines and redefines at Trent as the second plank of justification for those who have made shipwreck of their souls, that is once you commit mortal sin, that sin is called mortal because it kills the grace of justification that you received at Baptism. So you need to get justified again and that comes through another sacrament namely the sacrament of Penance.

Now what that provoked in the sixteenth century was in the second question. Not only what is the grounds and the basis of justification whether it's the righteousness of Christ imputed to me or infused in me, the other question was what is the instrumental cause of my justification? Going back to Aristotelian language, the instrumental cause is defined as that cause or means by which an effect is brought to pass. And when the reformers said that justification is by faith alone, sola fide, the word "by" there meant the instrumental dative. The means by which I appropriate the righteousness of Christ and therefore am justified is by faith and by faith alone. Whereas Rome taught the instrumental cause of justification is not faith, it is the sacraments...in the first instance Baptism, in the second instance Penance. And so that was a major point of difference on the how question of how a person is saved. Does that answer it, John?

**ANKERBURG:** Yeah, talk about that thing of faith then because obviously if a Roman Catholic baby is baptized, where does faith come in? They're not even conscious at that point.

**SPROUL:** No, that the faith would come, they would presume that it would come later as a consequence of their being in a state of justifying grace. It would be a result. It would be for them the same place it is for us, that faith is a result of regeneration ultimately. Although, the difference from the Reformed perspective, although there are many professing evangelicals that don't agree with this, they would say that regeneration makes it possible for a person to have faith but it doesn't necessarily yield the fruit of faith. And that would be the case in the Roman church but not in the case of the....

**ANKERBURG:** Why did we want that clarified and why has it been so objectional to the evangelical community then?

**SPROUL:** Because for the most part the evangelical community is aghast at any idea that the sacraments can in any way automatically confer justifying grace, that a person could be saved through the sacraments without faith. So what they're...you have a double-edged sword here. On the one hand you have that view seemingly to suggest that a person can be saved without faith and the other view of Rome that a person can have faith and not be saved. Now that gets confusing. But let me say this. That that's only in the case of infants. When it comes to the adult person who has



committed mortal sin, according to Rome, they not only must go through the sacrament of Penance but they must also have faith. Their faith is a requirement in the case of adults.

**ANKERBURG:** Well let's pick it up right there, too. With the adult they're not saying it's faith alone either because then you have to go back to the sacraments and the Mass...

**SPROUL:** If you look at their section in Trent on the sacrament of Penance as well as session six of the Council of Trent on justification, on the Canons and Decrees of Justification, Rome spells this business of mortal sin out and goes on to say that if a person has true faith and commits mortal sin, that mortal sin destroys the grace of justification but does not destroy the faith. So there you have a clear statement by Rome...I should have brought the Canons and Decrees of Trent with me to read it to you exactly, but the thing there, John, is that it clearly states that a person can have faith, true faith, not just a profession of faith but true faith and not be justified...which couldn't be any more clear of a repudiation of the New Testament concept of justification by faith alone.

**ANKERBURG:** All right, let's finish this up. Flip the coin because Catholics are...do not have assurance that they're in heaven because they have to get more and more justifying faith through the sacraments...once they have come in via Baptism...

**SPROUL:** Well they don't normally have the assurance of salvation because again Trent declares that it is possible to have assurance of salvation in the sense of knowing that you are going to be saved by special revelation in special circumstances like in the case of Mary and in some of the saints. But the normal rank and file believer cannot have the assurance of perseverance or the assurance of salvation, except beyond that of what the church encourages them.

**ANKERBURG:** Finish this off here in the sense that...talk about salvation as a final act that is completed...in other words, in the forensic sense that God makes a judgment, an eternal judgment about my status because of Christ versus Catholicism that it's not a completed act all at once, it's a process. Define those two for us.

**SPROUL:** For the Protestant for the biblical view as I understand it, John, and embrace it, justification technically and narrowly considered, and what the word means in the Greek, in the Hebrew and I believe originally in the Latin until it got corrupted in the Roman judicial system when that was where one of the problems came in with the Latin *justiprecara*(?) which means to make just and that planted the seeds in some of the Latin fathers to thinking that justification means a making just, but the biblical concept *dikaiozona*(?) and so on clearly teaches that justification narrowly considered is the declaration of God, the legal declaration what we call forensic declaration. You hear about the forensics in trials and forensic medicine and forensic pathology and so on, that what we're talking about there is the justification specifically and narrowly refers to God's declaration of a person being righteous in His sight. Okay? That's what justification means and that is a once-for-all thing. What the

New Testament teaches is at the very moment has authentic faith in Jesus Christ, at that instant God the Father declares that person in Christ and acceptable in the beloved. He now remits or removes their sins forever, the eternal punishment of sin has been removed and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to that trusting and believing person. They are now pronounced just and Luther said they are simile eustos et peccatar(???), at the same time just and sinner while they're still unclean in themselves though the seed and the beginning of their transformation has already taken place, they're still sinners and they remain polluted by sin until they're glorified by God in heaven. The process of sanctification goes until we die and go into heaven but the status that you're referring to, our condition of being declared just before God is a once-for-all single instantaneous action the moment faith occurs.

**ANKERBURG:** Great. Question.

**QUESTION:** My question is to any of the three. I know that there were 20 evangelical signatories to ECT and there were a number of other evangelicals who endorsed it...to your knowledge as of this date have any of the signatories disavowed the document or had their names removed or have any of the other evangelicals such as Pat Robertson and Os Guinness(?) removed their endorsement from ECT?

**SPROUL:** Only one that I know of has removed his name and that was John White president of Geneva College. And Jack, you know, he's a friend of mine, Jack struggled with it and he did remove his name partly I assume because his denomination encouraged him to do so. In fact, they may have even commanded him to do so, I don't know. But to my knowledge that's the only one who has removed their name. I have not talked to all the other signatories. I have talked with Os about it and Bill Bright and so on, I've urged them and pled with them to remove their names, but to this...so far it's been to no avail.

**MACARTHUR:** I would just add, maybe you guys know this, has anybody other than the men that we met with added their names to the document that we came up with?

**ANKERBURG:** Some have and at this moment though those are still in the mail going to the other Protestant signees and we're waiting to hear. I see no reason why they wouldn't all sign the clarifying doctrinal statement. I'd really be surprised if they didn't.

**SPROUL:** It would be interesting to see if the Roman Catholic signatories would be willing to sign that statement...seriously because if they really do have a united view of justification as they're claiming, they should be willing to sign it as well.

**ANKERBURG:** Yeah, the men around the table.

**SPROUL:** Yes, not the...the ones who came...those who have come...

**ANKERBURG:** Question.

**QUESTION:** I come from Brazil the largest Roman Catholic country in the world, I heard you gentlemen say that what is at stake here is the gospel therefore aren't those who advocate Lordship salvation views guilty of the same mistake as Roman Catholics are by adding works to the gospel and therefore denying justification by faith alone?

**ANKERBURG:** MacArthur, we knew that question had to come up tonight somewhere...very good. All right, it's time to answer it, John.

**MACARTHUR:** I've written on that question, haven't I? Look, that is a straw man to say that lordship salvation, whatever that term might mean to people, has the connotation that you must believe in Jesus as Lord in order to be saved. I don't know how that all of a sudden became an aberrant view but somewhere down the path it has become aberrant in some circles to affirm the lordship of Jesus Christ in spite of the fact that Paul said you have to confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord in order to be saved. But the implication that people want to read into that is that if you have to do that, that's a work, that's a presalvation work that you have to do. And then they take repentance and they say we don't believe in repentance either...in other words, salvation is purely grace, you don't commit to anything and you don't repent from anything. And you say, "Well repentance is in the Bible." Well those people who are against lordship salvation, they will redefine repentance as changing your mind about who Jesus is or changing your mind about whether you can save yourself, but it does not mean turning from your sin because if you had to turn from your sin that would be a presalvation human work. Or if you have to submit to Christ and bow your knee to His lordship, that would be a presalvation work.

The simple answer to that is that that is exactly what R.C. was talking about when he talked about regeneration. You couldn't repent if it were a presalvation human work and you couldn't submit to Christ if it were a presalvation human work. None of it is a presalvation human work, it is all encompassed in the redeeming work of God. It is all the work of God. God grants repentance, Paul said that to Timothy. God grants repentance. God grants submission. God breaks the human will. God terrorizes the soul over the results and the implications of sin. God bows the knee to Christ. And to take any less than that is not...is nothing more than limiting God. Are you saying that God can save, He just can't make people repent? Or God can save, He just can't make them submissive? I mean, it strikes a blow against the power of God, it doesn't say anything about human works. I would never advocate there's any component of human effort in salvation, it's all of God, let's just not strip out what God is doing and say He's not doing it.

**KENNEDY:** John, I think if I could add to that the person who objects and coins his phrase "lordship salvation" which is the view that we are to believe in Jesus Christ both as Savior and Lord which is to say we are to believe and repent, this has been the view of the church down through the centuries and now it has been made as some kind of aberrant view by some in recent times. Now the truth of the matter is that these people are guilty of doing the very thing that they're charging those who believe in what they now call lordship salvation because they do not see that salvation is all of God and they say, "Well we can't repent, that would be a human work, all we can do is believe and so therefore we will believe in Jesus as our Savior and that is salvation by grace. But we are not able to repent." But they are the ones that are declaring that man has some ability to do something, namely to believe. The truth of the matter is the unregenerate man is blind, he has eyes and sees not, he has ears and hears not, his mind is darkened, his heart is as stone, he's at enmity with God and he is dead in trespasses and sins. He can no more believe than he can repent. He can't even understand the gospel for the things of the Spirit of God of which the gospel is the heart of those things are foolishness to the natural man, neither can you know them...adunati, it is not possible that he can know them. The fact of the matter is that what God requires for salvation is faith and repentance, faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and repentance and submission to Him as Lord. And that which God requires for salvation, that God also freely gives by His grace in regeneration so that the whole thing may be of God. Salvation is by faith, by grace...excuse me, by faith in order that salvation may be of grace, why? In order that salvation may be of God. That is the essence of evangelical religion, salvation is of God from eternity to eternity from alpha to omega, man has no part in it, neither his repentance nor his faith or his good works or anything else. And to God be the glory, it is all of God. (Applause) I've been wanting to say that for a long time.

**SPROUL:** John, I think it's critical that as part of the question that was raised there about lordship salvation does not the lordship salvation concept undermine sola fide, justification by faith alone because of its insistence on works? And we haven't discussed that quickly. The Reformers said that justification by faith alone but not by faith that is alone. And the point was this, following James, that true faith, the faith that brings us into a saving relationship to Christ by which we receive His righteousness that is the alone basis for our salvation where our works contribute nothing of merit or value or contributing anything to the basis of our salvation, that is received solely by faith. But if that faith is a true faith, immediately, inevitably necessarily that faith begins at the moment of its inception to show forth the fruit of redemption and of justification. So if the question is this, is it possible for a person to have faith, be justified and never have works. What John is saying, that we're all saying is that that's absolutely impossible. There's no such thing as a carnal Christian in that sense, that they are utterly carnal and at the same time a Christian. I hope that helps.

**ANKERBURG:** Explain it then, Dr. MacArthur, in terms of for the person has listened to simile eustos et peccatar(?), at the same time that he's just he's also a sinner for the people that are the soft hearted ones that are listening, okay? For the people that say, Okay I have made my commitment to Jesus as

Lord but I haven't lived perfect every step, does that mean that I have not really accepted Jesus' lordship? Talk to those folks.

**MACARTHUR:** Well I like to say to people like that it's not the perfection of your life, it's the direction. Paul said, "Not as though I have attained but I know the direction I'm going, I'm going toward Christ's likeness." And that's my passion. And I think the way you get in touch with the reality of your salvation is not by counting up your righteous acts but it's by listening to your heart longings. The Puritans used to talk about holy aspirations. I think the evidence of a regenerate heart is a hatred of sin, is a love for God and a longing to obey. I don't think it's perfect obedience, it's not perfect love toward Christ and it's not a perfect hatred toward sin, but it is animosity toward sin, it is revulsion toward sin and mostly in me, not in you, or in the culture. And it is a love for God that comes forth in a desire to commune with Him, a desire to do that which is well pleasing in His sight, a desire to sing His praises. It comes forth in a love of His truth, a hunger to know that truth and to apply that truth in your life. I think it's the cry of the heart. I mean, David said it, "As the heart pants after the water brook, so my soul pants after Thee, O God. When will I come before You?"

## **END OF SEGMENT TWO**

**KENNEDY:** John, I think also on that, that the unregenerate man loves sin and he hates righteousness. Righteousness, godliness is a burden. He doesn't like to go to church if it's a godly church. If you want to see that, watch what happens when his wife truly gets converted and becomes a godly woman...he rebels against that. The ungodly person loves sin and righteousness is a burden to him.

The godly person, the regenerate person loves God, seeks after holiness, falls into sin but he hates sin. And that is a great burden to him. It weighs heavily upon his soul. It's the difference between a pig whom if you take it and wash it in the bathtub and put a pink ribbon around its neck, as soon as he gets outside and finds a mud puddle, and he begins to wallow in it. Whereas if a lamb should trip and fall into the mud, or a cat, it will immediately get up and the cat will begin to lick itself and the lamb will try to get itself cleansed because it has a different kind of a nature. And the unregenerate person has the pig nature, the regenerate person has the lamb or cat nature. (Applause)

**ANKERBURG:** Here's another question.

**QUESTION:** How do you reconcile your doctrine of sola fide with that..those passages in the Bible that...where Jesus is in a judgment position saying I was hungry, you didn't feed Me, I was naked, you didn't clothe Me, I was in prison, you didn't visit Me, which appears to be a judgment on their non-response to human needs or works?

**KENNEDY:** Well, let me take a crack at that. I think that throughout the Scripture we find that salvation is by grace through faith, judgment is by works. This is found throughout the Scripture. The reason for that is that faith is invisible. As James says, "Show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works." And the only visible representation of faith is our works...and so therefore our judgment is based upon our works which are the evidence of our faith. But salvation is uniformly declared to be of faith.

**MACARTHUR:** And it is true that consistently through the Scripture judgment is predicated on works. And again, those works are the evidence. And that's again...you get back to that lordship salvation debate, those people who denounce lordship salvation want to have a salvation without works. And that's...James says that's not a legitimate salvation.

**SPROUL:** Yes, it's where the works come in. They're not the grounds of my justification, but if they're not present, if there are no works, that means...what? There is no faith. And if there is no faith, there's no justification.

**KENNEDY:** As it has been said for centuries, works are not the root of our salvation but they are the fruit of our salvation and the evidence of it.

### **BEGINNING OF SEGMENT THREE**

**QUESTION:** During the last several Ankerburg shows there was only one reference to why ECT was written to begin with and it might be helpful to the people in the audience here as well as to the viewers to clarify that and point out maybe also that the writing of ECT crippled the goal that they were trying to accomplish.

**SPROUL:** I'd like to speak to that because I did mention earlier what the driving force according to Chuck Colson and others was. Chuck Colson is an international Christian. He has been a spokesman for the cause of Christ across borders like few people have, particularly in the level of prisons...in eastern Europe, in the East, all over the place. He has seen the rising specter of increasing hostility of a paganism, a neopaganism that is radically hostile to historic Christianity. He has been in the White House, he has watched the systematic dismantling and disintegration of anything Christian to our culture and speaks to us against the night. This has been a driving passion for Chuck Colson to be an activist and apologist for Christ in the marketplace, in the prison, in the world defending Christian truth against secular paganism. Okay? And it was that concern that I believe was the overarching concern along with his concern that there's been blood shed around the world, in Latin America, particularly of conflicts between Catholics and evangelicals.

Also in Chuck's work, particularly in the prison ministry where I've been with him in these prison ministries, he's encountered many Roman Catholic chaplains who have welcomed him with open

arms and encouraged him to preach his gospel in these circumstances. And he's saying if we can have this kind of cooperative activity at the grass roots, it's time now to put the old ranker aside and try to find more and more and more venues of cooperation and acknowledging that we are...that we have more unity of faith than anybody dreamed of prior to this time. I think that's the motivation force behind this, this document. I think it goes too far, as we've been saying all along.

**MACARTHUR:** I think there's one other thing that came up in the meeting several times and that is that both Chuck Colson and J.I. Packer are convinced that effective evangelism is dependent on a pre-theological sort of moral consensus. In other words, you can't just evangelize a culture in a vacuum, they believe that to create...Francis Shaeffer used to talk about pre-evangelism and there in that idea that if we can create a context of Christian morality, the gospel becomes much more readily received. And that is...they're convinced of that. Although personally I'm not convinced that that's an issue. Certainly it wasn't an issue for the Apostle Paul throughout the whole Gentile world. But they're convinced that that is going to have a great impact on the acceptability of the gospel.

**KENNEDY:** May I add one other thing to that because having listened to the excellent exposition of the motives for the ECT document, for those who have seen none of the other problems...programs, excuse me, they may wonder what the problem is because all of that sounded so good and so noble. The problem is that in creating this document of co-belligerency to face the evils of the secular neo-pagan world, it was the opinion of many, including the three sitting here, that they presented vague and apparently compromising statements concerning the essence of the Christian gospel and put the whole heart of Christianity into jeopardy. And that's why we had the meeting here a few weeks ago to try to resolve it and that's what we've been discussing about for the last few weeks.

**ANKERBURG:** And, R.C., where does it stand right now?

**SPROUL:** Well, it stands that so far we have a minimal statement of clarification by which some of the framers of the document, Chuck Colson, Jim Packer and Bill Bright, have affirmed their personal belief in the central importance of the historic doctrine of justification by faith alone among other clarifications that they've gone on record that they did not intend in any way to imply in ECT and negotiation of that centrality to the gospel, they are now taking that document to the other Protestant signatories and asking them to sign it and they have made a commitment to release this statement of clarification to all of the same media agencies that ECT was originally given to the press, to the New York Times, to the Washington Post, to C.T. and others. And at the same time it stands wherever there's a commitment to ongoing discussions to try to resolve this problem further.

**QUESTION:** A stumbling block to many Roman Catholics at the time of the Reformation and today is James chapter 2 verse 24 in its proper interpretation. You see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith alone. Would you please explain that verse?

**KENNEDY:** I think that the key in that passage is that James is dealing with people who profess to be Christians and yet they don't evidence the reality of their faith by their works. And he says in verse 18, "Yea a man may say thou hast faith and I have works, show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works." And he says in verse 16...15, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food and one of you say unto him, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled. Notwithstanding you give him not those things which are needful for the body, even so faith if it hath not works is dead alone." And over and over again in this he makes clear that people will say they have faith and they don't have works and James is saying that real faith always produces works as a result. And a key in this, I think, are the words "say and see." They are repeated throughout this whole second chapter of James.

And the question is a man may say that he has faith, will that faith justify him if it's just a said faith? No it won't. To give you an illustration, one time years ago I talked to a woman and I shared with her the gospel and she said to me, "Do you mean that all I have to do is say that I believe in Jesus Christ and I will be saved?"

I said, "No ma'am I didn't say that."

She said, "You didn't? What did you say?"

"I said, if you would put your trust in Jesus Christ you would be saved."

She said, "There, you said it again, all I have to do is say that I trust in Jesus Christ and I'll be saved."

I said, "No, ma'am, I did not say that, I have never said that in my life."

She said, "You just said it."

I said, "No I didn't."

I wonder if everybody here noticed how she distorted my statement. I said if you would trust in Christ, if you would believe in Christ you would be saved. She said that I said if you would say that you trusted in Christ and say that you believed in Christ you would be saved. There is a gulf, a vast gulf between saying that you have faith and having faith. And that is the difference between salvation and eternal perdition. What we need to do is trust in Christ, and if we do that works will inevitably follow as a result of that.

**SPROUL:** I'd like to add to that John. That really is a critical statement and Trent is virtually filled with quotations and citations of James 2:21 and 2:24, the seat of Abraham was justified by works when he offered Isaac on the altar and then James 2:24, we see then that a man is justified by works and not



by faith alone. Now there the holy scriptures, what could be a clear more demonstrative categorical repudiation of sola fide than that? We see then by conclusion that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. That would seem to put Luther out of business as clearly as anything could possibly could. And the Catholic theologians in the sixteenth century said read this, read this, read this.

All right, we have to answer that. But, Jim, of course, put his finger on it so that the issue that James is dealing with there by citing Abraham and the thing that the plot thickens is that both Paul in Romans 3 and James in James 2 are talking...use the word "justification," they use the same Greek word, they appeal to the same person, it's their exhibit A to prove their case...Abraham. Was not Abraham our father justified when he offered Isaac on the altar? Paul labors the point in Romans 4 that Abraham is justified by faith, not in chapter 22 of Genesis that James quotes but in chapter 15 of Genesis when Abraham believes God and it's counted to him, reckoned to him, imputed to him...there's a great reform text for righteousness. And so they both appeal to Abraham but to different points in their life.

How do we reconcile this? I think Jim's on the...right there. The question that James is answering is the question...he starts off with this thing is if a man says he has faith and has not works, will that faith save him? The issue here under the microscope of the Apostle is what constitutes saving faith? And, of course, and this is where evangelicals stumble because we have created a whole milieu and environment in the twentieth century evangelical world that tells people that all you have to do to be saved is raise your hand, come forward, pray a prayer...you know, say the sinner's prayer, make these statements. No! Still, the requirement is faith. All of those things that we're talking about are outward manifestations, demonstrations or professions of faith. The Bible does not teach, never did teach that a person is saved by the profession of faith, it's the possession of faith that alone links us to Jesus Christ. And that's what James is laboring and chapter 2 would take another half an hour or hour to follow that all the way. But that's the summary.

**KENNEDY:** Right, go through the second chapter of James, underline every instance of "say" and "see," and I think you'll understand the difference between a professed faith and a possessed faith and whether we can see by the evidence of his works the reality of his faith or not.

**ANKERBURG:** All right, question.

**QUESTION:** Looking down the road a few years, do any of you gentlemen see the ECT as a preliminary document which could eventually and perhaps unwittingly evolve into a synthesis document for a global one-world religion?

**MACARTHUR:** I'll take a shot at that and I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet so I don't want to be stoned if I'm wrong here. But I am convinced that this is only the beginning of a rather large movement that is going to continue to escalate. And it isn't primarily because of this document, it's

primarily because of the reigning cry for tolerance, because of the lack, the abysmal lack of discernment in the church because of this tremendous impetus that this unity mentality has and things like Promise Keepers and any other kind of expressions of evangelical ecumenism are creating a grease slide for this. And I think it is going to escalate. I think you've got powerful media people such as Trinity Broadcasting who have got this high on their agenda and they're going to pump this thing nationwide all the time. I think it's very conceivable and we would not all agree on how we interpret the book of Revelation but if you take the futuristic...futurist's view of the book of Revelation, it would very, very much fit the scenario of moving rapidly toward a one-world false religion that is described in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Revelation which will be bigger than Rome but obviously it's connected to the city on seven hills that is called the harlot and drunk with the blood of the martyrs and all of that kind of thing.

So certainly from my tradition, looking at that and looking at Revelation in its prophetic implications, I'm not going to say this is that. But it certainly could fit that scenario.

**QUESTION:** While you took the Catholic religion to task, why is it that you are not strong against the twenty evangelicals who signed and produced that pact and did it without doctrinal justification? And number two, why wasn't the second meeting held first so you would resolve all the evangelical issues before any pact was ever produced?

**KENNEDY:** Well I can answer part of that and that is, I never knew that the consultation was under way until after I had heard about the signed document. So consequently I was able to do nothing about it beforehand. And if I had known about it, then I perhaps could have done something beforehand. I think another factor that needs to be considered is the fact that the second meeting that was held here did result in those major players in that signing a clarifying document that they believe the basic Reformational teachings of sola fide and the other related doctrines, but I think that there have been some statements here from a number of people that we wish that they had been willing to take a clearer stand and remove their names all together from the document. And we must confess that we all find it very difficult to see how they really can keep their names on both of those documents. They seem to find no problem because they say that's what they meant all along and now they're clarifying that. But we see that first document as so ambiguous and confusing and misleading that we do not see how a person believing what they signed in the second document and we don't doubt...we do not question that they believe that, we don't see how they can ignore the implications and leave their name on the first document.

**SPROUL:** One of the things for which I was grateful and I expressed by gratitude to Chuck Colson and I wasn't being facetious or cynical about it was that as soon as this document was released and I responded to the press about it in a negative way and Chuck and I talked about it, he said, "You know, R.C., I didn't send you a copy of this and I didn't ask you to sign this document because I knew that you wouldn't." And I was sincere at that point when I said, "Thank you," because I very much

appreciate that he understood up front there's no way in the world that I would ever sign a document like that.

**QUESTION:** My question is for Dr. R.C. Sproul, do the drafters of ECT say anything about papal authority over the church? What is their position on that if any at all?

**SPROUL:** I'm trying to recall whether there's even anything said about papal authority. I mentioned earlier that in one section of ECT there is a list, a bullet-point list of those points of continuing ongoing disagreement between evangelicals and Roman Catholics. And one of them, again insouciantly and not very accurately sets in contradistinction the authority of Scripture and Tradition...or the magisterial authority of the Church and so on...which is a sort of a misunderstanding of the critical issue there in the sixteenth century on sola scriptura. Sola scriptura had to do with two things...one, that the Scripture and the Scripture alone has the authority to bind our consciences and impose divine obligations upon us...no church council, no church leader can do that. And secondly, that there's only one source of written special revelation, namely the sacred scriptures, whereas Trent has a dual source theory of two sources that the church has of special revelation, namely the Scripture and the Tradition of the Church which is ruled over by a Pontiff in whom is vested this ex cathedra infallibility.

There's very little discussion of that in Vatican II but that really does get to the heart of the historic division because...as well as Catholic theologians continue to complain about within Rome, they are convinced that they as theologians have very little authority and very little influence on the church but it's the magisterium that determines what is to be believed in the Church, not the theologians or the scriptures or anything else. And I frankly think in practical terms, the biggest thing that got Luther in trouble in the sixteenth century was not so much he challenged the doctrine of the Church as he challenged the authority of the Church. And when he challenged the authority of the Church councils and of the Pontiff in Rome, that's when Cajetan and Eck and Selon(?) linked him with John Huss and that's when the church moved to excommunicate him.

**END OF SEGMENT THREE**

**CLOSING REMARKS ARE MARKED BELOW THE NEXT QUESTION**

**ANKERBURG:** All right, our last question.

**QUESTION:** Gentlemen, would you say that the blurring of distinction today between today's evangelical movement and the Catholic Church is the direct outgrowth of the semi-Pelagian views of Charles Finney and his distaste of Reformed theology?

**MACARTHUR:** YES!

**ANKERBURG:** Explain that now.

**MACARTHUR:** Yeah, I would...I'm not going to take time to explain all of that but I would agree with that. I think God knows the immense impact that Charles Finney had. In fact, apart from the Reformed faith, Charles Finney basically defined the rest of evangelicalism...apart from the Reformed faith. I mean, I'm not just talking about its theology, I'm talking about its format. If you...if you understand how people preach, how they conduct evangelistic meetings, how they call sinners forward...that whole thing, all of that is basically Finney's style, which, of course, was based on the fact that he believed with all his heart that in order to get people saved you had to manipulate their will any way you could because it was all up to them. There is a...it's amazing how that found its way into the fabric of evangelicalism...Billy Sunday, D.L. Moody and right through that down to Billy Graham. And it isn't so much that you see it in the message as you see it in the manipulation, you see it in the way things are done, although it's in the message, too. You tell people you need to make a decision for God and the decision is not for you to decide on God but for Him to decide on you...if you understand the Scripture. So I think it's endemic within evangelicalism, no question about it.

**SPROUL:** Charles Finney is known for being the most effective evangelist in the nineteenth century. And he is considered to be the paragon of evangelistic outreach. And I think that he certainly was evangelistic, but I don't see any remote way that Charles Finney was in the broadest meaning of the term anywhere close to being an evangelical Christian. Charles Finney rejected more classic orthodox Christianity than the Roman Catholic Church ever dreamed of. I mean, he wasn't just semi-Pelagian, as Arminian evangelists are, he was an unvarnished Pelagian and he was militant about it in terms of his denial of the doctrine of original sin...not just the Calvinistic view of original sin but any view of original sin...Charles Finney who is celebrated as a hero among evangelicals loudly and systematically denied the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ in a manner that would have made liberals in the nineteenth century blush. But he was effective in eliciting these responses evangelistically in mass evangelism and did more to set the format for mass evangelists than anybody probably in American history. But I am serious about this, John, the man was not a heretic, don't say that R.C. Sproul said that Charles Finney was a heretic, get it straight, he was an arch-heretic. Other than that I don't have an opinion on Charles Finney.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

**ANKERBURG:** Guys, I want to say thank you for your willingness to come and to talk about something that has been very troubling to all four of us. The good news is that we have a clarifying statement, we are waiting to see how many of the evangelical Protestant signees of the ECT document will sign it. I would assume that all of them will. And then there's the hope for future discussion on some of these other issues that we have discussed tonight. And I want to say thank you for your coming, for being brave enough, courageous enough to speak out on some of these

very, very touch issues. Thank you very much. Let's give them a hand of appreciation.

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