

Bob Bush

Once a Jesuit, Now a Child of God

I began my Catholic journey in a little country town in northern California in the U.S.A. The town was so small that we did not have Mass every Sunday, but a priest used to come once a month if he possibly could to hold Mass in a big public hall.

I have both an older and a younger brother. My father had been trained at the University of Santa Clara. As a result, my parents thought it would be a good idea for us to attend a Catholic boarding school. The Jesuits ran the school, and I was a student there for four years. Academically, it was a very good school, but the only type of religion to which we were exposed was Catholic theology and tradition with no emphasis on the Bible.

Desire to Serve God and Mankind

As graduation approached, I considered what I should do with my life. I thought that becoming a Jesuit priest could be a good way to honor and serve God and help mankind; that was all I knew. At that time, even when I left high school, I had a longing and a hunger in my heart to meet God and to know Him. In fact, once when I was a senior (fourth and final year) in high school, I remember going out to the football field and just kneeling there in the dark with my arms up to the sky. I cried out saying, “God, God, where are You?” I really had a hunger for God.

Jesuit Seminary

I entered the Jesuit Order in 1953 after graduation from high school. When I entered the Order, the first thing that happened was that I was told I had to keep all the rules and regulations, that to do so would be pleasing to God, and that is what He wanted for me. We were taught the motto, “Keep the rule and the rule will keep you.”

We read a lot about the lives of the saints, and right from the beginning I was trained to look at them as models to follow, not realizing that they had become saints because they had served the Catholic Church. I did seminary studies for a total of 13 years, taking course after course and studying one thing after another. It finally ended in a study of theology culminating in ordination in 1966.

Hunger for God but No Peace

I still had a hunger in my heart for God. I had not met the Lord yet and still did not have peace. In fact, at that time I used to smoke and I was very nervous. I would pace back and forth in my room puffing one cigarette after another because of my inner unrest.

I entered a postgraduate program in Rome thinking I would be on top of the mountain, but the hunger in my heart persisted. I even spoke to a priest who was in charge of missionaries to Africa, since I wanted to go there as a missionary. I was aware that if I went to Africa, however, the only thing I could do was to tell people about what I had learned about the Catholic doctrines and what the Catholic Church had to offer, even though it had not satisfied me. I did not see how it could satisfy them either.

I studied during the years of Vatican Council II (1962-1965) and was ordained a year after it ended. The documents from Vatican Council II were coming out from Rome and I thought everything would change. It was a time of discovery. I thought I would get to the rock bottom truth, and this would change the world. This idea was the force that drove me. But I was not aware of any changes, as the same Catholic doctrines from the Council of Trent were still in place. So, I did not go to Africa, but returned to California where God had a surprise in store for me.

Leading a Prayer Group

While at a retreat house where I said Mass, a lady asked me if I would lead a home prayer group in her home. I had never led a prayer meeting in my life and did not know how it worked, but I thought that as I had been trained for all those years, I should be qualified to do it and assented. It was held every Thursday from 10 A.M. until noon. A group of people would gather and read only the Bible, sing praises to the Lord, and pray for one another's needs. I was still smoking at that time. Early on the morning, when the prayer meeting was due to take place, I paced back and forth and thought, "Oh, why did I say I was going to go there?" I had not been at all enthusiastic about going, but when noon came, I did not want to leave. The power of the biblical Word was beginning to touch my heart and life.

Surprised by God's Grace

The great surprise the Lord had in store for me happened in this way. One night we went to a retreat house with a group of people from the home prayer meeting. The speaker asked at the end of his address, "Now if there is anyone here who is hungry for God and has not been touched by God and wants God to touch his life, then come forward and we will pray for you." It happened that a lady called Sonia came up to me and asked, "Would you please ask my husband Joe to go forward and get prayed for?" I told her, "Sonia, I can not do that. That would not really be honest because I have not been prayed for myself, so how can I ask him to go forward?" Now I am about six feet four inches tall and she was a very short lady. I will never forget it; she looked me in the face and put her finger up to me and said, "I think you need to get prayed for yourself." I laughed and said, "Yes, I do." What she did not realize was that there was great hunger in my heart. After all the years of studying I had not met God. I read my Bible at the prayer meetings, but I still did not know the sovereign God of the Bible or myself as a lost sinner before Him.

This was the moment I prayed that God would change me, so I went forward and they laid hands on me and prayed over me. It was not because of any works that either they or I did, but it was truly by God's grace that I was born again. Jesus became real; the Bible became real. I just became a fire in the love of God. He changed my life. To those who read this, He is real and life changing. JESUS CHANGED MY LIFE. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5).

We Try to be Bible Based

It was August 1970 when God's grace truly touched me. I began working in the charismatic movement, which was a fresh movement in the Catholic Church. While there were all kinds of decrees and dogmas coming out of Rome, the movement at the beginning tried to have just one manual - the Bible.

We started a prayer group in a high school and it grew so large we had to move to a gymnasium. Before long we had 800 to 1,000 people coming every Friday night. We were stressing praise and worshiping and glorifying God. Based in the gymnasium where there were no statues or any other such thing, we tried to stay in the Bible.

I had a lot to learn. It took me many years to realize that I was compromising by staying in the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout all of those years, I continued to stress that salvation is only in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and not in infant baptism; that there is only one source of authority, which is the Bible, the Word of God; and that there is no purgatory, but rather that when we die we either go to heaven or hell.

Here is where the conflict came. Seeing people depend upon such false and deceiving beliefs for their salvation was heart wrenching to me. I felt that maybe God could use me to change things in the Catholic Church. I even had prayer sessions with people who felt the same way. We prayed that God would change the Roman Catholic Church so that we could remain Catholics. But to remain Catholic, I now see, is to be living a compromised life.

Conviction by the Holy Spirit

I finally realized, after much conviction of the Holy Spirit, that not giving myself totally to Him, one hundred percent, was grieving my Lord, as I was sinning a sin of compromise. I also came to realize that the Roman Catholic Church could not change. If it did change, there would be no pope, rosary, purgatory, priests, mass, and etcetera. After 17 years of brainwashing, I got my brain washed and cleansed by the Holy Spirit. In a word, what was happening to me over this period is explained in Romans 12:1-2. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:1-2).

Research in India

By this time I had met another priest who has since left the Church of Rome. He was preaching the same kind of thing, spending half of the year in India and half in the United States. Victor Affonso was also a Jesuit, and I told him I thought it would be wonderful to go to India and to do some missionary work there. We could research the dogma and doctrines of the Catholic Church.

I went to India in 1986 and spent six months there doing missionary work. We were also able to spend a month with a group of people researching Catholic dogma in the light of the Scriptures. We were determined to follow what the Bible said; if Catholic doctrines contradicted that, we would reject them.

We saw that Jesus said, *“Come unto Me,”* and that in the Gospels we are told to pray to our Father in Jesus’ name, never to a saint or to Mary. The disciples did not pray to Stephen, who died very early in the Acts of the Apostles, or to James, who was killed very early. Why would they do that when they had the resurrected Jesus with them? He said, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20) They prayed to Jesus; they prayed to the Father; they had the guidance of the Holy Spirit and obeyed the commandments of God.

In India we discovered that the Catholic catechism had changed the Ten Commandments from the way they were in the Bible. In the Roman Catholic catechism, the first commandment is as it is in Scripture. The second commandment in the catechism is, *“You shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”* This is a complete change from the Bible. The third commandment of the Bible has been moved up to the second. The original second commandment as is found in Scripture has been dropped. Virtually all of the catechisms drop the second commandment of the Bible. For example, the New Baltimore Catechism, Question 195, answers, *“The commandments of God are these ten: (1) I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before; (2) Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,”* etc. In the Bible, the second commandment declares, *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandment”* (Exodus 20:4-6). God forbids us to bow down before these or to serve them, yet there are pictures of the pope bowing down and kissing the statues.

We were bothered that this commandment had been dropped out of the catechism. So now we might well ask, *“How do we get ten commandments? What the catechisms do is divide the last commandment (formerly the tenth, now split into the ninth and tenth). “Do not covet thy neighbor’s wife” is listed as a separate commandment from that of not coveting his goods. This is quite a distortion of the Bible. I was discovering dogmas and doctrines that directly contradicted the Scriptures.*

Mary and the Mass

We also investigated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This is defined as *“the doctrine that Mary was conceived without sin; at the first moment of conception there was no sin there.”* This contradicts Romans 3:23 which says, *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of*

God.” Here we had a doctrine, a tradition that is passed down and solemnly defined as infallibly true, and it contradicts what is in the Bible.

Then we came to one of the biggest areas of conflict. It had to do with the sacrifice of the Mass. The official Catholic position on the sacrifice of the Mass is that it is a continuation of the sacrifice of Calvary. The Council of Trent actually defined it this way: “*And since in this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who on the altar of the cross ‘once offered Himself’ in a bloody manner (Hebrews 9:27), the holy Synod teaches that this is truly propitiatory... For it is one and the same victim, the same one now offering by the ministry of the priests as He who then offered Himself on the Cross, the manner of offering alone being different...*” (Denzinger 940).

Some people might say the Council of Trent is not valid any more and that things have changed. But Cardinal Ratzinger [now Pope Benedict XVI], head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (which is the old Holy Office), in a book called The Ratzinger Report, said, “It is likewise impossible to decide in favor of Trent and Vatican I, but against Vatican II. Whoever denies Vatican II denies the authority that upholds the other two councils and thereby detaches them from their foundation.” Catechisms say the same thing, that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross. For example, the New Baltimore Catechism says, “The Mass is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross because in the Mass the victim is the same, and the principal priest is the same, Jesus Christ.” Yet in Hebrews 10:18 it says that, “*Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*” So Scripture makes it very clear. In fact, eight times in four chapters, beginning in chapter seven of the letter to the Hebrews, it says “*once for all*” and there was one offering for sin, once for all!!!

Finished Sacrifice

Anyone who has attended Mass in the Catholic Church will remember the prayer said by the priest, “Pray brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.” This is a very serious prayer. The people respond saying the same thing, asking that the sacrifice may be acceptable to God. But this is contrary to the Word of God because the sacrifice has already been accepted. When Jesus was on the cross, He said “*It is finished*” (John 19:30) and we know that it was completed because Jesus was accepted by the Father and rose from the dead and is now at the right hand of the Father. The Good News that we preach is that Jesus has risen from the dead, that His sacrifice is completed, and that He has paid for all sin. When by God’s grace we accept it as the finished sacrifice for our sins, we are saved and have everlasting life.

A memorial is a remembrance of something that someone has done for us. Jesus said, “... *this do in remembrance of me*” (Luke 22:19). So, anyone who is reading this, or any priest who is saying Mass, must seriously consider the error of the prayer “Let us pray, my brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable...”. The sacrifice has been accepted and it is done. What we are supposed to do when we have the communion service is to do it in memory of what Jesus has done. We see that the sacrifice that Jesus offered on the cross was sufficient and final. It cannot be added to or re-enacted.

Can the Mass Atone for Sin?

The Catholic Church says that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice effective to take away the sins of those [alive] on earth and those who have died. That is why, to this very day, even though some people will say that the Church in some places does not believe in purgatory, still virtually every Mass that is said is for someone who has died. It is believed that the Mass will shorten their time in purgatory. That is why it is said for dead people. When a person dies, judgment will follow, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). If they are saved, they go directly to heaven; if they remain in their sins, they go to hell. There is nothing to change one from hell to heaven. Yet the Catholic Church believes that the Mass, being a propitiatory sacrifice, will decrease the time in purgatory. But all the suffering and all the atonement that was ever made for sins was accomplished by Jesus on the cross, and we need to accept this truth. We need to receive everlasting life and to be born again while we are still alive. There is no biblical evidence to support the idea that after death we can experience any kind of change.

To be Right before God

We then began to study what the Catholic Church teaches on salvation. It is a doctrine of the Catholic Church that we can be saved by being baptized as infants. Present day canon law says, *“Baptism, the gate to the sacraments, necessary for salvation, in fact, or at least in intention, by which men and women are freed from their sins, reborn as children of God, configured to Christ...”* (Canon 849) What that means is that the Catholic Church says that when a little baby is baptized, it is saved and has everlasting life by virtue of baptism. But that is not true. Jesus never said anything like that, neither is there a word in the Bible about anything like that happening. There is no limbo! Jesus said, *“Suffer the little children to come unto me...”*. The Bible always says we are saved when we accept that Christ Jesus totally paid the price of our sin so that His right standing with God becomes ours. *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”* (II Corinthians 5:21).

Christ Work or Works?

The Catholic Church then goes on to say that in order to be saved you must keep its laws, rules, and regulations. And if these laws are violated (for example, birth control or fasting or attendance at Mass every Sunday), then you have committed a sin. The Catholic Church says in canon law of the present day that if you commit a serious sin, that sin must be forgiven by confessing that sin to a priest; *“Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary way by which the faithful person who is aware of serious sin can be reconciled with God, and with the Church...”* (Canon 9609) The Catholic Church says that this is the way sins are forgiven, the ordinary way that sins are forgiven. The Bible says that if we repent in our heart and believe on His finished sacrifice that we are saved. We are saved by grace, not by our works. The Catholic Church adds works, in that you have to do these specific things in order to be saved, whereas the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9 that it is by grace that we are saved, not by works. The Bible makes it very clear that we are saved by grace. It is a free gift given by God, not because of any works we do. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

“And if by grace then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6).

I Leave India and More ...

We examined these and many other doctrines while we were in India, and as I left, I knew that I could not represent the Catholic Church any longer. I began to see that Roman Catholic dogmas, which contradict Scripture, are so rooted that they cannot be changed.

The Catholic charismatic movement today has gone back to these fundamental dogmas and doctrines of Rome. It maintains and holds onto these, and so that whole movement has been totally undermined. The Catholic charismatic movement is not a fresh breath of air blowing through the church, changing everything by moving it back to the Bible. Everything cannot get back to the Bible because the Catholic Church will not let it go back that far. The Catholic Church is not going to let go of the Mass and let it be a memorial as Jesus said. It will always insist that the Mass is an ongoing continuation of the sacrifice of Jesus. The Catholic Church will not let go of the dogma that little babies are reborn and receive eternal life at baptism, even though infant baptism was not practiced in the early church. It did not begin until the third century, and it was not universally practiced until the fifth century. The Catholic Church is not going to let go of or of all the other requirements that are put upon their people.

Now, I sincerely do love Catholics and want to help them. God Himself wants to loose them. I want to help them find the freedom of salvation and the life and blessing that comes from following the Scriptures. And I have nothing against any Catholic or any priest; it is the dogmas and doctrines that keep them bound. In chapter seven of Mark, Jesus said, *“For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men...”*. That is the problem we are facing right here. These traditions destroy the very Word of God because they contradict its truths.

When I left India and came home, I knew that I was facing the biggest change of my life. It was a time of great distress for me because I had really totally believed in the Roman Catholic Church and had served it for so much of my life. I knew when I came back I was going to have to leave the Church of Rome.

I am a free man because His truth has set me free. I no longer walk with one foot in the Bible and one in tradition. I walk based on the absolute authority of His written Word. I follow the Scripture as the sole source of authority for revealed truth. Jesus said, *“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

My Parents and Providence

At that time, I was experiencing a great deal of suffering. I came home to my parents, both of whom were over eighty, and one night we had a serious conversation. I told them what I was going to do; I told them that I was saved by God’s grace and I was going to leave the Catholic Church for doctrinal reasons. There was a big pause and my father said, speaking very slowly, “Bob, you know, both your mother and I have been thinking the same thing.” They went to one more Mass and came home and said, “Do you know that is an altar in front of the church? An altar is a place of sacrifice.” And he said, “I see clearly now there is no more sacrifice.” Both my mother and father began reading the Bible and following it. In 1989, my mother died while

reading the Word of God and with the peace and assurance that she had everlasting life and was going to go to be with the Lord forever.

On June 6, 1992, God gave me the greatest gift He can give a person besides salvation, my beautiful wife, Joan. My dad passed away in 1993 with a prayer on his lips for those he left behind. He had written his own testimony to the grace of God, and though quite old, he had witnessed to others, even in the retirement home.

The Bible - the Authority of Truth

In 1987, I formally left the Catholic Church by writing a letter of resignation and then corresponding back and forth with my former superiors, because I wanted to witness to all of them. I ended up writing to Rome before I left. I did it in that manner because I wanted to witness to all of them and give them reasons why I was leaving. I wanted to follow the Bible. The pope, who is held up as a leader in Christendom, holds onto things that contradict the Bible. It is very important to everyone to know that in the Code of Canon Law, Canon 333 says, "There is neither appeal or recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff." That means that the pope has absolute power and absolute authority. It is summarized in Canon 749, "The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such."

Unfortunately, the pope is standing for things that contradict the Bible and is now speaking very strongly against the Evangelicals of South America as if they were enemies of the Bible. He complains about them and he says they are undermining the church, but the reason he is opposed to them is that they are standing for the ultimate authority of the Scriptures and they do not want to be under his authority.

The whole position of the pope basically comes from a misunderstanding of Scripture itself in the book of Matthew. Jesus said, "*That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.*" We need to look carefully at this. What rock is He talking about? Just before that, Jesus had asked His disciples, "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*" And Peter spoke up and said, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" And Jesus said, "*Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.*" And then He said these words, "*...thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church*" (Matthew 6:13-18). The church of Jesus Christ is built upon the Rock Who is Jesus Christ. Peter had received that revelation from God, and every true believer who is born again receives a revelation of who Jesus Christ is. His shed blood on the cross took away our sins, and when we repent and trust in Him alone, we have everlasting life in Him and will live and reign with Jesus forever and ever: Christ is the foundation, the cornerstone, the Rock. The Rock is not Peter whom Jesus chose as His disciple, with all his failings and so forth, nor is it the pope of today. The Rock is Jesus Christ. As Peter himself said, "*...Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded*" (I Peter 2:6). By His grace God has revealed that to me, and I stand and build my whole faith on that rock, Jesus, that He died to take away my sin and to give me everlasting life.

Present Day

I am now an ordained minister, in fellowship with others of the biblical faith. Do not follow the crowd; rather, seek to enter by the narrow way. Do not be offended by the proclamation of the Gospel of God's grace. There is no other way to be saved. Without God's grace, each one of us is lost and without hope. Of ourselves, we have nothing to offer God. As one hymn says, "In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

Repent of trying to do anything to merit heaven. Trust on Christ's shed blood and that alone. Grace is God's favor that gives us what we do not deserve. As God justifies you with Christ's justification, praise Him, and do all things "*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*" (Ephesians 1:6).

The Good News

This is the Good News I want to share with every reader. When you repent and accept that Jesus personally died for your sins on the cross, His life is yours by faith. "*...to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*" (Romans 4:5). Before God, pray that you do not compromise. Ask the Lord to sanctify you in His truth. His biblical word is truth. Pray that you would stand boldly for His written Word and that alone; that you can proclaim as did the psalmist "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Psalms 119:105). In an age of compromise, pray like the Lord Jesus and the apostles prayed, that your final authority would be the written Word of God. Withstand all temptation to compromise, as did the Lord Himself, with these three powerful words: "***IT IS WRITTEN.***"