

Drowning in the Tiber (Part 6)
Responding to Francis Beckwith's 2009 Book:
Return to Rome: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic
-The Papacy-
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Transcript of a Sermon Preached at Christ Church of Clarkson
by
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If you would, open your Bibles, Galatians, chapter six. We've been reading through the book of Galatians in conjunction with our series. So this is *part six*; we're reading Galatians, *chapter six*. Part 7? I'm not sure what I'm going to do, maybe I'll write Galatians, chapter seven!

And if you would, stand. Galatians, chapter six, the apostle Paul writing:

Brethren, if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself, lest you, too, be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus, fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one shall bear his own load. And let the one who is taught the word, share all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh, shall from the flesh, reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit, shall, from his spirit, reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So, then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. See with what large letters I'm writing to you with my own hand? Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one cause trouble for me, because I bear on my body the brand marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.¹

[Opening Prayer]

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are taken from the New American Standard Bible (The Lockman Foundation, 1971).

We continue this morning as we pass the halfway point in our series entitled "Drowning in the Tiber, A Response to Francis Beckwith's 2009 book *Return to Rome: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic*." Again it was in 2007 that Dr. Beckwith announced that he was returning to the Roman Catholic Church of his youth. And some of you might say, "Well, so, is that anything unusual?" And yes, it is when you're the sitting president of the Evangelical Theological Society, the largest fellowship of evangelical scholars and theologians that exists today! Then it's huge news and it plays right into the rather recent phenomenon of professed evangelicals crossing the Tiber to Rome. As one who was redeemed out of the false religion of Roman Catholicism and as a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, myself, I read the book and said, "Someone needs to respond to this." There have been responses on the internet and the blogosphere and whatnot, but so far nothing that I know of from a pulpit and no book response as of yet. So, I said, "Lord, here I am, certainly not the best nor the brightest, but I'll step up to the plate," and through your patience, prayers and encouragement, we've done that here.

This morning I want to look at what is the lynchpin of the entire Roman Catholic system. Think about that [word]: *lynchpin*. Where does that come from? What was a lynchpin? If you're going to hang or lynch someone, back in the old western days for example, you would build a scaffold of wood, you would blindfold your victim, tie his hands behind him, shove a cigar in his mouth, and then, you'd make that person stand over a trapdoor—that trapdoor, which would be held fast by a pin. That pin was attached to a rope or some other mechanism, and the hangman at the appointed time would pull the rope or activate the mechanism, which would pull the pin allowing gravity to have its desired effect. Over time that phrase came to be used of any single issue that causes something to come tumbling down. For our common faith, a lynchpin would be the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you could pull the resurrection of Jesus Christ out from under Christianity, all that we believe would come tumbling down, would it not? Our faith, as the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 hinges on the truth of the resurrection. In the same way, the entire Roman Catholic system hangs on the doctrine of apostolic succession, the Papacy. Without that absolute authority, an authority that transcends the voice of Scripture, the entire system of Roman Catholicism comes tumbling down to a death that it rightly deserves.

You see, the Papacy makes the system work. The Papacy is the basis for the Roman Catholic Church's claim to infallibility. The Papacy is foundational to her contention that she is the one true apostolic church, outside of which there is no salvation. The Papacy has fueled wars, manipulated earthly kings and kingdoms. The Papacy has resulted in the slaughter of millions during the Crusades and the Inquisitions. Thousands of genuine Christians killed during the Inquisition (we'll look at that later). The Papacy that used the false doctrine of Purgatory to line the church's coffers with riches at the expense of the ignorant and fearful.

What is the Papacy? What are we talking about here? The Roman Catholic catechism under the heading of "The Episcopal College and its Head, the Pope" says this. I'm going to be reading sections 880, 881 and 882:

880 When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them." Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another."

881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head." This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."

Later, paragraph 937 says:

The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls."

We can quote Vatican I, chapter 4 on the infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff. That section reads:

1. That apostolic primacy which the Roman pontiff possesses as successor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, includes also the supreme power of teaching. This holy see has always maintained this, the constant custom of the church demonstrates it, and the ecumenical councils, particularly those in which East & West met in the union of faith & charity, have declared it.

We could go on to the fifteenth century Council of Florence. Also quoting:

Also, the souls of those who have incurred no stain of sin whatsoever after baptism, as well as souls who after incurring the stain of sin have been cleansed whether in their bodies or outside their bodies, as was stated above, are straightaway received into heaven and clearly behold the triune God as he is, yet one person more perfectly than another according to the difference of their merits. But the souls of those who depart this life in actual mortal sin, or in original sin alone, go down straightaway to hell to be punished, but with unequal pains. We also define that the holy apostolic see and the Roman pontiff holds the primacy over the whole world and the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter prince of the apostles, and that he is the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church and the father and teacher

of all Christians, and to him was committed in blessed Peter the full power of tending, ruling and governing the whole church, as is contained also in the acts of ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons.

It's all about the power. It's about politics. Politics is a dirty game, and when Christianity became politicized, it got very, very, dirty.

Some of you might wonder, "What are all the references to Peter about?" And, simply put, the Roman Catholic Church believes that there exists an unbroken line of apostles, and that line starts with Peter, the first pope, the first apostle. Every pope is as much an apostle as was Peter. Pope John Paul II, who died in 2005, Pope Benedict, who succeeded him are, according to Rome, apostles in the same vein as Peter, Paul or John.

Now think about this. Speaking of the Apostle John, the Roman Catholic Church claims that once Peter died, his successor as lead apostle, Bishop of Rome, was, whom? Now Peter died around AD 67. So the question is, who followed him? Who was pope next? John? We know John lived into the 90s, 90 AD, so he was around. But it wasn't John, *it was Linus* (and not Linus of the Peanuts characters, the little boy with the blanket). No, Linus the patriarch. Linus was pope according to the church of Rome from 67-76, followed by Cletus, 76-88, and then Clement I, 88-97. All the while the beloved disciple, the author of the Gospel of John and three epistles was alive and well, though according to the Roman Catholic Church, three men named Linus, Cletus, and Clement (this sounds like a law firm) were in authority over John, the apostle, the writer of the Gospel of John and three epistles. That makes absolutely no sense, historically or biblically.

Where does it all begin? If we start pulling the thread, what do we find at the end of it? We can look at that in two different ways.

Where does the Roman Catholic Church turn in the Bible to say that Peter was the first pope, and build their whole succession of apostles from Peter on, ruling from Rome?

What about the record of history? Does history support Rome's claims?

We're going to look at those two questions this morning. The first thing (we're going to spend most of our time here): the Papacy and the Bible. There are three passages in the New Testament that the Roman Catholic Church points out to support their view of papal apostolic succession. I want to just read them for you. I'm not going to make any comment at this time, but I just want you to be a good listener and as I read, ask yourself, "Does this sound like it's teaching the Roman Catholic Papacy?" Is the papacy reading something into Scripture, which is called *eisegesis*, or is it something that is the clear teaching of Scripture, which we would call *exegesis*? So which is it? Just listen, Matthew, chapter sixteen, verses 13-20:

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say

John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

That was Matthew 16:13-20. Secondly, I want to read John, chapter twenty one, verses 15-17:

15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. "Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Next Luke, chapter twenty two, verses 31-34, where Jesus tells Peter:

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. " 33 And he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"

Of course it was after that, that Jesus said:

34 . . . "I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

Now, no doubt, in reading those three passages, you saw apostolic succession and the papacy all over the place, right? Rome, a succession, one after the other, two hundred and some leading to today, the Vicar of Christ clear as a bell. No, you didn't see that. A good rule to interpret the Bible by is if it's not in the text, it's not there. That's no secret, right? But I want to go back, in all fairness, and look at that main passage, and the central passage is Matthew, chapter sixteen, the first one that I read. So if you would take your Bibles, and open them to Matthew, chapter sixteen, we'll begin in verse 13. This is the key passage, the central passage for the papacy.

Now enough ink has been penned on this passage and what it means to fill Lake Ontario. I don't want to add any more to that, so we're not going to go into great depth here, but I want you to get

a feel for it and, in the process, we'll be faithful to the text. Matthew, chapter sixteen, beginning in verse 13.

Jesus and the disciples come into the district of Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was a small town about twenty five miles north of Galilee at the base of Mt. Hermon. Mt. Hermon, I'm told, could be seen on a clear day from as far away as Nazareth. It was quite a sight, something, no doubt, Jesus had seen many times. The mountain was frequently snow-capped and even at the base of it, the location gave Jesus and the disciples a refreshing, cooler place to gather by getting away from the hotter lowlands, not to mention the threats from the Jewish leaders and Herod Antipas. So Jesus asks His disciples a question, simply put, *Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*

Matthew, in his Gospel, is the only one to record the phrase "Son of Man." The others omit that. This is Jesus' favorite designation for Himself. He used it some eighty times, clearly a Messianic title, something the Jews were familiar with because of the title's use in the book of Daniel. In chapter seven of that Old Testament book, verses 13 and 14 (Daniel's vision) he says:

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

So when Jesus said, *Who do men say the Son of Man is?*—and as Matthew records this—it's clearly alluding to a Messianic title, something the people would have been familiar with.

John Calvin, the great reformer, puts it this way:

He calls himself, according to custom, *the Son of man*, as much as to say, Now that clothed in flesh I inhabit the earth like other men, what is the opinion entertained respecting me? The design of Christ was, to confirm his disciples fully in the true faith, that they might not be tossed about amidst various reports, as we shall presently see.²

The fact of the matter is, I think this was a rhetorical question. Jesus, as God, knew the whims of popular opinion, but here was an opportunity to get the disciples thinking. And they gave the top four list. Unfortunately, none of the top four were correct.

So they said, "Well, some say You are John the Baptist." That goes back to chapter fourteen, in verses 1 and 2 (and the explanation of that in verses 3-12).

²John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: 22 Volume Set* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003 reprint), 16:287.

In that passage, Matthew fourteen:

Herod the Tetrarch heard the news about Jesus and he said to his servants, This is John the Baptist, he's risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.

And then, verses 3-12 give the background about how Herod had John the Baptist beheaded. So that was something that was going around, superstitious, Jesus is a resurrected John the Baptist.

Another one was, "Others were saying Elijah." This was the choice of the Jewish orthodox who knew their biblical theology. The last words of the last of the Hebrew prophets, Malachi, chapter four, verses 5-6 has this promise:

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."

So Elijah was to come before the promised Messiah. This was something that John the Baptist did (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:12). But even today, in modern Jewish Passover celebrations, an empty chair is left at the table for Elijah in the hope that he will come and announce the Messiah.

The third view is, they said, "Still others say Jeremiah." That is, Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet. The Jews had a tradition preserved in the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees that during the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem, Jeremiah had hidden the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar of Incense and the tradition was that Jeremiah was going to return to inaugurate the Messianic Age and he was going to bring those things with him, the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar of Incense .

And then you always have [those who are] undecided, right? They said, "Well, one of the prophets; we don't know who, what or when, but we think He's one of the prophets." The big question then comes—you see, this was just setting everything up—Jesus building up to this in verse 15 said, "But who do you say that I am? I've heard the popular opinion, now I want to know what you think. *Who do you say that I am?*"

It's the most important question that anyone can be confronted with; who do you believe Jesus Christ is? "Jesus," from the Greek word *Iēsous*, the Hebrew *Yeshua* (YHWH is salvation). The implication: there's a God. His covenant name is YHWH, the name that surrounds His glory. He's eternally self-existent. He's the Holy One, and He's the One, the only One who can save men from their sin. And then "Christ," the Greek word, *Christos*; the Hebrew *Mashiach* (Anointed One, the Messiah). This One, the Son of Man, the One who emptied Himself and came into the world to rescue a people for His own possession.

Who do you believe that Jesus Christ is? "Who do you say that I am?"

Now, we go back to the first century, we know who's going to be the first answerer, don't we? It's got to be Peter. Peter was that kid you couldn't stand in elementary school. He was the first to speak up when the teacher asked a question. He was the first in line at lunchtime. He hogged the ball during phys ed. Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

As James Montgomery Boice points out:

In the Greek text this is as forceful as any confession could be. It is only 10 words, but in it the Greek definite article occurs four times, like this: "You are the Christ, the Son of the God, the living One." This was so true and so important a confession that Jesus pointed out that it was not in the same category as other things Peter was in the habit of blurting out, most of which were wrong.³

What does Jesus say in response to this great confession?

"Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

You got the answer right, but you didn't get the answer correct, because you were smarter than anyone else. You got it correct, because God chose to reveal that truth to you.

Peter, by the way, is speaking as spokesman for the rest. This isn't just Peter, like nobody else knew what was going on.

The truth is, salvation is all of God. Jesus put it this way in John, chapter six:

. . . . "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."

John, chapter seventeen, verse 6, Jesus, in His high-priestly prayer, said:

"I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word."

And so Jim Boice adds:

So also today. The first and most important thing any person needs to understand about Jesus is that he is the Son of God, "very God of very God," as one of the ancient creeds puts it. That is because the value of his work, dying for sin, depends on who he is. If he is not God,

³James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew: The King and His Kingdom (Matthew 1-17)*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 305.

his death would have no more value than any other person's death. But because he is God his death has infinite value and is able to take away sins.⁴

"Amazing Love, How Can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me!"

Well, so far this has been the easy part. Here comes the controversy; verse 18, Jesus speaking:

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

What in the world do we do with that? Go back to verse 18:

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church . . . "

There are three main interpretations of this verse that follow from history to the present day.

The first one sees *Peter as the rock*. So when Jesus says, "You are Peter and upon this rock (you, Peter) I will build My church." That's interpretation number one. This, of course, is the Roman Catholic view and the basis for their doctrine of apostolic succession. Peter is given the keys to the kingdom. You see that in the next verse. The church is built upon him as the foundation. He's the bishop of Rome for 25 years or so. Upon his death he hands the keys to Linus who hands them to Cletus who hands them to Clement and on and on it goes; a succession of popes from Rome in the first century to today, some 264 of them, terminating so far in Benedict the XVI.

That's reading way, way too much into the text that's not even there. In fact, you can hold to this first interpretation—this might surprise some of you—you can hold to the interpretation that sees Peter as the rock, and many evangelicals do. . . . D. A Carson holds to that view. William Hendrickson, another one. So you can hold to that view without going all the way to Rome.

You might wonder about that. *How could Peter be the rock?* The Bible's filled with mixed metaphors. Carson gives several examples in his commentary. He says:

Here Jesus builds his church; in 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul is "an expert builder." In 1 Corinthians 3:11, Jesus is the church's foundation; in Ephesians 2:19-20, the apostles and prophets are the foundation (cf. also Rev 21:14), and Jesus is the "cornerstone." Here Peter has the keys; in Revelation 1:18; 3:7, Jesus has the keys. In John 9:5, Jesus is "the light of the world;" in Matthew 5:14, his disciples are. None of these pairs threatens Jesus'

⁴Ibid., 304.

uniqueness. They simply show how metaphors must be interpreted primarily with reference to their immediate contexts.⁵

So in other words, Carson's contending—and I don't have a problem with this—that you could rightly interpret this passage to say that Peter is the rock and not have that mean that he is the one and only foundational rock. It's simply within the context of Matthew, chapter sixteen. We know that there are other passages that talk about the fact that Christ alone is the Cornerstone; that He is the Rock. So there's some overlap there. But, again, note, even if you take that interpretation, and Protestants have (one writer says that the reason more don't is probably fear of playing into Roman Catholic hands). But even if you take that interpretation, the passage says nothing about Peter being head over the other apostles. It says nothing about infallibility, that he can speak *ex cathedra* and be without error; nothing about papal succession. It doesn't speak of geography, that he's going to rule from Rome, one after the other. So, even if this were the correct interpretation—I'm not sure that it is—but even if it was, it does not support the claims of the Roman Catholic Church that Peter was the first pope. There's nothing here or anywhere in Scripture that supports that. It's completely read into the Bible, not out of it.

The second view is *Peter's confession is the rock*. And this is probably, for those of you that have tried to work this through, this is probably where most of you have landed. It would go this way:

"you are Peter, and upon this rock ('that is, your confession that I am the Christ') I will build My church."

It just says, "I'm going to build My church upon that great confession that I am Lord." This is the majority view among Protestants and a reference is usually made to a word play where Jesus says, "You are *petras* (the Greek word for 'stone') and on this *petra* (the Greek word for 'rock') I will build My church. So I'm going to build it on your confession." Well, that's possible.

There are some problems with that interpretation. First thing, from what we know, Jesus was speaking Aramaic and not Greek. But even in Greek, these two words don't necessarily carry the distinct meanings of "stone" and "rock." *Petras*, *petra*, they're very closely related, and if that's what Matthew was trying to convey, a better choice for "stone," "small stone," would be *lithos*, but

⁵D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew 13-28* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 368.

then, that would ruin the pun!⁶ (Peter would have to be *Lithos* instead of ΠΕΤΡΟΣ, so it wouldn't work.)

Then a third view is that *Christ is the Rock* and it would go this way:

"you are Peter, and upon this rock ('that is, Me'), I will build My church."

That's a minority view among Evangelicals. The strength of it is that Jesus is called the Rock throughout the Scriptures, something we saw in our study of 1 Peter, chapter two, verses 7 and 8.

. . . for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense . . ."

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says, that God's household is:

"... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone."⁷

And you see the same thing in the Old Testament where God is referred to as "a Rock," or "the Rock of Israel."

Back in Matthew sixteen, verse 19, Jesus goes on to say:

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

One of the disadvantages of English is that there is really no way to distinguish between a second person singular and a second person plural. There's no way to distinguish between a second person singular—"you, Greg"—versus a second person plural—"you, all of you." In the Greek there is. And

⁶Calvin writes: "Hitherto I have given a plain exposition of the native meaning of the words, so that nothing farther could have been desired, had it not been that the Roman Antichrist, wishing to cloak his tyranny, has wickedly and dishonestly dared to pervert the whole of this passage. . . . First, he alleges that Peter is declared to be the foundation of the Church. But who does not see that what he applies to the person of a man is said in reference to Peter's faith in Christ? There is no difference in meaning, I acknowledge, between the two Greek words ΠΕΤΡΟΣ (*Peter*) and ΠΕΤΡΑ, (*petra*, a stone or rock,) except that the former belongs to the Attic, and the latter to the ordinary dialect. But we are not to suppose that Matthew had not a good reason for employing this diversity of expression. On the contrary, the gender of the noun was intentionally changed, to show that he was now speaking of something different." [John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: 22 Volume Set*, 16:294-95.]

⁷Ephesians 2:20.

in the Greek, Jesus is speaking to Peter. He's using second person singular pronouns and verbs. So, yes, He is addressing Peter. "I will give you, Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you, Peter, bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose shall be loosed." But we see something quite similar a little later in Matthew, chapter 18. You might turn there very quickly, Matthew, chapter 18, the church discipline passage where Jesus is instructing the disciples. He says:

"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; ..."

I think you're familiar with this. It's a responsibility we have as believers in Jesus Christ. If we have a problem with somebody else—even if we know somebody has a problem with us—we're to go to that person.

"... if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the *ekklēsia* [tell it to the church]; if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."

Now, note verse 18. Sound familiar?

"Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Same phrase. Looks the same in English. If you look at it in Greek, there the "you's" are plural, *whatever you*, plural; *whatever you*, plural; *whatever you*, plural. So, there's overlap. Certainly, Peter is being addressed in Matthew 16. Here we see it widens to the disciples, it widens even further to the entire church. The church has the authority to bind and loose, specifically, bind and loose men from their sins.

"What do you mean by that?"

The Heidelberg Catechism contains a classic statement regarding that. This is Question 84 (and the Answer):

Question: "How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the gospel?"
Answer: "By proclaiming and openly witnessing, according to the command of Christ, to believers, one and all, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, by proclaiming and witnessing to all unbelievers and such as do not sincerely repent that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation abide on them so long as they are not converted."

This is what Peter did on the day of Pentecost. He preached the Gospel. Men were convicted of their sin, and asked, "What are we to do?" And his response:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for [or "because of"⁸] the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

This is what Paul and Silas did on behalf of the Philippian jailer in Acts, chapter 16, when he was convicted, and he said:

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

And what did they say?

"Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household."

This is the beauty of the Gospel. We can tell men, "Believe in Jesus Christ. Cast yourself on His mercy, believing that He died for you and you will be saved." This is how the church binds and looses men from their sins, not on the church's authority, but on the authority of Scripture, the authority of the Gospel. This is what the true church of Jesus Christ has been doing throughout its history in evangelizing the world, something we're all commanded to do.

Matthew, chapter 28:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ..."

It's what you are to be about today; what I'm to be about today. I think of my dear uncle who died a terrible death as a Roman Catholic, cancer eating away at his body. My uncle who died in terror because all he knew was this: *No one can know if they will go to heaven when they die.* That's not good news. That's terrible news! That's not binding and loosing; that's just plain confusing!

We can tell men, as John Declares:

"These things I've written that you may know that you have eternal life"

So there's no basis for the papacy and apostolic succession in Scripture. It's read into it. Yet, we read this in the Roman Catholic Catechism, Paragraph 100:

The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.

⁸The preposition may be translated as a Genitive of Cause.

And the official interpretation—(they're saying, "We have the authority to interpret Scripture. It's our thing, not yours. And we can give the authentic, infallible interpretation, an official interpretation")—and the official infallible interpretation of the church is that Peter was the first pope, and that he was able to pass his apostolic authority down throughout history to each successive bishop of Rome. That's the infallible, official interpretation of Matthew, chapter sixteen, verses 13-19.

Now lest you think that's totally arbitrary, the Roman Catholic Church does claim this safety net for their exegesis. It's called "Patristic Consensus" or "The Unanimous Consent of the Fathers." The sixteenth century Council of Trent, Session IV, April 8, 1546, *Decree Concerning the Edition and the Use of the Sacred Books*:

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers . . .

So you want to hold a key doctrine, an interpretation of Scripture? You cannot hold it contrary to the unanimous consent of the Early Church Fathers.

Vatican, Council I, Session III, April 24, 1870, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith* reads:

"And as the things which, in order to curb rebellious spirits, the holy Synod of Trent decreed for the good of souls concerning the interpretation of Divine Scripture have been wrongly explained by some, We, renewing the said decree, declare this to be its meaning: that, in matters of faith and morals, appertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture which our holy Mother Church hath held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; and, therefore, that it is permitted to no one to interpret the Sacred Scripture contrary to this sense or likewise contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."

You can't disagree with us. You cannot disagree with the unanimous interpretation of the Early Church Fathers.

So when the Roman Catholic Church says that Peter is the first pope and that this can be demonstrated by the exegesis of Matthew sixteen, then that must have been taught, without exception in the second to fifth centuries, right? That would be the unanimous consent of the Fathers.

So I want to turn now to the papacy in history as we address that question. I want to introduce you to a man by the name of Peter De Rosa. In 1988, Peter De Rosa, a Roman Catholic scholar, a former Jesuit, came out with an earth-shattering book entitled, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy*. I would encourage you, if you have any interest in this area to get that book and read it. It

is fascinating and fair. De Rosa writes, not as a Protestant, but he believes as a faithful Roman Catholic. And as a Roman Catholic, he refuses to be less than faithful to the truths of history. He really wants to call the Church out to reform.

Listen to what he says about Matthew sixteen, and Peter as "the rock" and first pope of the universal church:

There have been times when no one knew who was the rightful pope of several claimants. Moreover, it was only in the year 1073 that Pope Gregory VI forbade Catholics to call anyone pope except the Bishop of Rome. Before then, many bishops were fondly addressed as "pope" or "papa."⁹

Many other matters, too, are far from clear. For example, how long did Peter live in Rome? There was a late fourth-century report that he was there for twenty-five years, but there is no historical basis for this. What is known is that, about the year 58, Paul the Apostle wrote another of his letters, this time to the Romans. In it, he greeted entire households and mentioned twenty-nine individuals by name. But he did not salute Peter. That is surely an astonishing omission if Peter was residing there and was Bishop of Rome. Further, Eusebius of Caesarea, acknowledged to be the Father of Church History, writing about the year 300, said: "Peter is reported to have preached to the Jews throughout Pontius, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia and, about the end of his days, tarrying at Rome, was crucified." Today, historians suggest that Peter lived in Rome for three or four years at most. There is no record that he took charge of the community there. It cannot have been automatic. He had not even been bishop in Jerusalem after Jesus' death. James, the Lord's brother, was. Then there is this startling fact: in the earliest lists of bishops of Rome, Peter's name never appeared. For example, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons from 178-200, was the disciple of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was himself a disciple of John the Apostle. He [that is, Irenaeus] enumerated all the Roman bishops up to the twelfth, Eleutherius. According to Irenaeus, the first bishop of Rome was not Peter or Paul but Linus. The Apostolic Constitution in the year 270 also named Linus as first bishop of Rome, appointed by St Paul. After Linus came Clement, chosen by Peter. The mystery deepens [De Rosa writes]. In all his writings, Eusebius never once spoke of Peter as Bishop of Rome. . . . The Catholic Church has made it a point of faith that popes are successors of St. Peter as Bishop of Rome. But Peter never had that title; he was only invested with it centuries after he died.¹⁰

⁹Peter De Rosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1988), 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

As far as Matthew sixteen is concerned, De Rosa writes:

There is, however, another interpretation of this text with a better pedigree than most Catholics realize. It may jolt them to hear that the great Fathers of the church saw no connection between it and the pope.

What did the council say?

... it is permitted to no one to interpret the Sacred Scripture contrary to this sense or likewise contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers?

De Rosa says:

Not one of them applies "Thou art Peter" to anyone but Peter. One after another they analyze it: Cyprian, Origen, Cyril, Hilary, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine. They are not exactly Protestants. Not one of them calls the Bishop of Rome a Rock or applies to him specifically the promise of the keys. This is as staggering to Catholics as if they were to find no mention in the Fathers of the Holy Spirit or the resurrection of the dead. The great pun, the play on words, was applied exclusively to Peter. ...

In other words, it doesn't go beyond him.

... The surprises do not stop there. For the Fathers, it is Peter's faith—or the Lord in whom Peter has faith—which is called the Rock, not Peter. All the Councils of the Church from Nicaea in the fourth century to Constance in the fifteenth agree that Christ himself is the only foundation of the church, that is, "the Rock" on which the church rests. Perhaps this is why not one of the Fathers speaks of a transference of power from Peter to those who succeed him; not one speaks, as church documents do today, of an "inheritance." There is no hint of an abiding Petrine office. In so far as the Fathers speak of an office, the reference is to the episcopate in general. All bishops are successors to all the apostles.¹¹

So much for unanimous consent; it does not exist. In fact, the whole idea of Patristic Consensus, in general, is a myth. The Early Church Fathers were all over the map on lots of different issues. But when the Fathers don't support your lynchpin doctrine, my friends, the trap door opens and you are hanged.

And there are so many other questions we could ask if the teaching of the Scriptures is that Peter was the first pope.

Why do both Mark, in Mark, chapter eight, and Luke, in Luke, chapter nine, record the same account that we see in Matthew sixteen, but they exclude Jesus' words of commendation on Peter? So the

¹¹Ibid., 24.

account is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but only Matthew has, "And you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." The other two don't. That would be a strange omission if Peter and his successors were to be the head over all Christendom.

Why, secondly, does the New Testament record more of Peter's errors after this great confession at Caesarea Philippi than any of the other apostles? It's after this that Jesus calls him "Satan," ("get behind Me Satan").

You have Peter's refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet, John thirteen, his sleepiness while Jesus prays in Gethsemane, Matthew twenty six, his pre-occupation with the use of the sword, same chapter, his self-sufficient protest that he would never deny Christ followed by his three-fold denial.

And what about Paul's rebuke of him recorded in Galatians two for his hypocrisy? And why, in the same letter, does Paul list Peter as only one of the pillars in Jerusalem, and he lists him second *after* James?

And how about that? How about the workings of that very first church council in Acts, chapter fifteen. Here you have a matter directly pertaining to the Gospel. Men were perverting the Gospel of Grace by adding works to it, the same thing that the Roman Catholic Church has done throughout its history. And who presides over the council? Who would you expect? The first great church council dealing with the Gospel; who's there? Who's going to preside? Peter, the first pope? No, James! And even then, if you read the account, this was a corporate effort of the apostles, the elders, and the entire church. If Peter held absolute authority, why didn't he preside, or make the doctrinal call *ex-cathedra* all by himself?

It's all about power. It's all about power. Early on, once Christianity was deemed legal by the Roman Empire—which was not good for the church; the church thrived under persecution—once it was deemed legal, that was the *Edict of Diocletian*, you had the stage set for a church-state relationship.

Early on, you had three key centers of Christianity. You had Alexandria, you had Antioch, and Rome. And the bishops of these cities were considered equals. It wasn't that Rome was ruling the rest. In fact, as Jerome points out, bishops and presbyters, or elders, were synonymous terms and remain so until what? *Until more power was needed.* In the seventh century, Alexandria and Antioch fell to the Muslim invasion, leaving one city without rival, Rome. Then, for Rome, it was all about maintaining unified power throughout the empire. Rome, a political-religious machine.

And when the union was threatened, what appears in 842 AD? What's called *The False Decretals of Isidore*, a collection of supposed decrees from popes going back in history, claiming that, yes, we have absolute papal authority. In these decretals appeared, "Oh, here we can see Pope So-and-so say it, Pope So-and-so, all the way back in history." And what happens, it was discovered they were a forgery.

It's all about power.

There are the Crusades and the Inquisitions in the Middle Ages. The Crusades, a series of religion-driven military campaigns waged by much of Latin Christian Europe; and the specific goal was to regain control of the Holy Land. The Crusades were fought over a period of nearly two hundred years between 1095 and 1291, and again, the goal was to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims, and in the end, thousands of Muslims, Jews, and Christians were murdered. The Inquisition was even worse. It lasted over six hundred years; the target was heretics. Anyone who disagreed with "Mother Church" was deemed a heretic. And in many, if not most cases, it was genuine believers in Jesus Christ disagreeing with doctrines, such as transubstantiation. They were mercilessly tortured and killed under papal authority.

De Rosa, again:

To the medieval Inquisition, everything was permitted. The Dominican Inquisitors, being the pope's appointees, were subject to no one but God and his Holiness. They were outside the jurisdiction of bishops and of civil law. In the Papal States they were a law unto themselves, acting as prosecutors and judges. Their guiding principle was: "Better for a hundred innocent people to die than for one heretic to go free."

They operated arbitrarily and in total secrecy. Anyone present at the interrogation—victim, scribe, executioner—who broke his silence incurred a censure that only the pope could lift. The inquisitors, like the pope, could make no mistake and do no wrong. By papal command, they were forbidden to have mercy on their victims. Pity was un-Christian where heresy was concerned. . . .

When applying torture, medieval inquisitors were forbidden to mutilate or kill. Naturally, accidents happened. Arms and legs were often broken, fingers and toes wrenched off. One victim lost two fingers; this was not sufficient grounds for interrupting the investigation.¹²

Burning at the stake; devices known as *The Skull Crusher*, a giant screw device that was used to crush a person's skull until their teeth shattered and their eyes were squeezed from their sockets. *The Iron Maiden*, a sarcophagus device made of iron with spikes inside. People were skinned alive and "the Church" learned that they could tear the skin off the body to the waist before their victim died. Thumb and finger screws, chairs and beds of nails, a pear-shaped device made of metal with a thumb screw that was inserted in the mouth and then the screw turned until it expanded, shattering the jaw and teeth.

¹²Ibid., 163-64.

And any man, woman, or child could be subject to these horrendous means of torture. Historians estimate up to fifty million were murdered—fifty million, under the authority of several "apostles of Jesus Christ," "vicars of Christ," popes.¹³ *Are you kidding me?*

We could talk about the reign of Bloody Mary in England in 1553-1558. This was seven years after Luther's death. Mary comes to England; she restores the pope's authority there. Immediately, all Bibles were removed from the churches; all Bible printing ceased and was forbidden. Printing a Bible was a capital offense. Eight hundred English ministers fled to Geneva. Three hundred Protestants were burned at the stake.

I wish I had more time to go into Vatican I, 1870. It was at this council that papal infallibility was defined and received as being true, that, amidst much opposition by the bishops. I found a book that dates to 1871. There are no copies available for sale that I could find on the internet; I did find one poor scan of the book, which I've been reading through and cleaning up on my word processor. Fascinating read, and it talks about the political goings-on behind Vatican I. How it was all about power, the desire to silence what they viewed as a liberal wing in the Catholic Church, giving more power to the pope to be infallible. There was a man, Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis, United States of America, and he stood for the vast majority of bishops against the doctrine of infallibility, but where many of them were not brave enough to confront the Church, Kenrick was. He has a long plea that has been recorded and in that plea, he says there is no biblical basis for papal infallibility. And he cites all three of those passages that we read earlier: Matthew 16, the passage out of Luke, the passage out of John. He says it's fanciful [exegesis]; it's not there. He points out that popes have been heretics and condemned as such, and specifically he refers to Pope Honorius who was condemned and anathematized as a heretic by the Sixth General Council of the Roman Catholic Church. All of this led the contemporary English Roman Catholic Historian Lord Acton to come up with this statement in his opposition to Vatican I and papal infallibility, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

I'm sure you've all heard that phrase. Probably few of you knew that it was in reference to Vatican I. Lord Acton also observed that:

The popes were not only murderers in the great style, but they also made murder a legal basis of the Christian Church and a condition of salvation.¹⁴

One last quote from De Rosa. He writes during the tenure of John Paul II:

In his travels, John Paul presents the papacy as the champion of truth and the rights of man. He takes it for granted that popes have never contradicted one another on essentials or

¹³H. Grattan Guinness. *The Approaching End of the Age* (5th edition). 212.
Cf. <https://bereanbeacon.org/a-brief-and-sad-hstory-of-roman-catholicism/>

¹⁴Cited in De Rosa, 137.

deviated from Gospel truth. This part on truth aims to show by numerous illustrations that these assumptions are false. Apart from the fact that the tenth-and-fifteenth century papacy was *the* heresy, *the* denial of everything Jesus stood for many popes have made astonishing errors. They have repeatedly contradicted one another and the Gospel. Far from championing the dignity of man, they have times without number withheld from Catholics and non-Catholics the most elementary rights. . . . History explodes the myth of a papacy lilywhite in the matter of truth. In an age of barbarism, the popes led the pack; in an age of enlightenment, they trailed the field. And their record was worst when, contrary to the Gospel, they tried to impose the truth by force.¹⁵

This is the absolute authority that Dr. Francis Beckwith willingly places himself under. Authority was a defining issue for him. And he says in his book on page 79:

The other issues that most Protestants find to be stumbling blocks—the Marian doctrines and Purgatory—were not a big deal to me. That was because I reasoned that if the Catholic views on Church authority, justification, the communion of the saints, and the sacraments were defensible, then these other so-called 'stumbling blocks' withered away, since the Catholic Church would in fact be God's authoritative instrument in the development of Christian doctrine.¹⁶

At least he's consistent there. It's all about authority.

Listen, back some thirty years ago, in Guyana, if you absolutely believed that this man, Jim Jones, was God's spokesman and he had absolute authority, you were going to drink the Kool-Aid, were you not? And if you buy the lie that the Roman Catholic Church is the one true authority, my friends, you have to drink the Kool-Aid. You buy everything else, all the lies of history that get twisted and perverted, somehow. "Well the Church did these things, but it wasn't really the Church, it was the laity," because the Church has to remain unstained; and all this twisting and perversion that Roman Catholic apologists are about. You have to buy all of that. You have to buy transubstantiation, confession to a priest, contradictory statements, there's no salvation outside of the church, then there's universalism, everybody's saved including Muslims, and on and on it goes, prayer beads, purgatory, all of that. And then you have "the Vicar of Christ," "the Holy Father"—that's the pope's title, "Holy Father." What did Jesus say? "Call no one your Father." There's only one Holy Father! "Vicar of Christ," from the word *vicarious*, "in place of?" He stands *in the place of* Christ? You know the preposition *anti* can mean the same thing? "Vicar of Christ;" *Anti-Christ*. It wasn't a secret to the reformers. Based on his study of Scripture, Martin Luther finally declared, quote:

¹⁵Ibid., 151.

¹⁶Francis J. Beckwith, *Return To Rome: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 79.

We here are of the conviction that the Papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist. I owe the Pope no other obedience than that I owe to Antichrist.

And Spurgeon, the wonderful, Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century said:

It is the bound and duty of every Christian to pray against this Antichrist and as to what Antichrist is no sane man ought to raise a question. If it be not the popery in the church of Rome, there's nothing in the world that can be called by that name.

You think when these millions of people were being slaughtered—and they read their Bibles, Revelation 17:1-8, for example—do you think they were thinking of some sort of fanciful Tim LaHaye eschatology?

1 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality." 3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, 5 and upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.

Don't get me wrong. [I'm not mad] I'm impassioned. I'm not mad at Roman Catholics. I was saved out of Roman Catholicism, as my Mom and Dad were. I'm mad at the system, because the system is inspired by Satan and it is a design to drag as many to hell as it possibly can. That's what I'm mad about.

And so what are we supposed to do nowadays? We're going to put up a truce? I was listening to an interview the other day of a well-known Christian author from this country, a well-known apologist, and in this interview he's, "Oh, there are so many wonderful things about the Roman Catholic Church." He basically said it's just another denomination. "I couldn't join it [Rome] because [for the same reasons that] I couldn't be Presbyterian; it would be against my convictions." You know, you listen to that sort of stuff, you say, "Am I on a different wave-length or are they?" We're talking about issues of the Gospel; we're not talking about a different denomination. We're talking about a different religion, an entirely different way of being right with God, of salvation—a different gospel.

No, we cannot lay down our weapons of warfare, which are not of the flesh, but of Spirit, and call some sort of truce. As MacArthur said:

What is our response to this current issue, a truce with Rome? Are we going to betray the martyrs? Are we going to betray the history of our faith? Are we going to betray those who lived and died to get us the truth? Are we going to betray the Tyndales and the Luthers, Calvins and all the rest? Are we so senseless? Are we so blind? Are we so ignorant? Are we so faithless? Are we so cowardly that we will not fight?

If I could answer for all evangelicalism, I would say, Yes!

John concludes:

The doctrinal ignorance of the evangelical church is shocking, matched only by its cowardice.

I'm not naturally a brave man. But when it comes to the truth of that by which I am saved, the truth of Jesus Christ, I'm not going to go down as a coward. The truth of the Gospel is good news. It is liberating news and people need to hear it. All of the writings of the Roman Catholic Church and other religionists, code upon code, word upon word, law upon law, *you have to do this, you have to do that*; that's not good news! What *is* good news is that we're justified by faith, and therefore (Romans 5:1) have peace with God. You don't have to come through a church, an institution. You come by the power of the Holy Spirit as a broken sinner, you fall on your face before Jesus Christ, and that can happen in a Catholic Church, that can happen in a jungle somewhere. Anyplace where people have the truth of the Gospel they can fall on their face and say, "God, I'm a guilty sinner. There's nothing that can make me right with You, no works of righteousness, no church, no gesticulations, no ingesting of bread. I'm separated from You. I'm hell-bound. I need a perfect Savior." And that's provided in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And if you believe in Him and cast yourself on His mercy, and believe that He died to pay that penalty, which you would owe for all eternity, you have the gift of eternal life. And that, my friends, is *good* news. That, my friends, is *great* news. That's *fantastic* news!

[Closing Prayer]