

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

A Weekly Publication of the Christians Meeting at
Westlake church of Christ, 2291 Highway Z, Wentzville, Missouri 63385

Website: westlakechurchofchrist.org

Sunday: AM Bible Study – 9:30 a.m., AM Worship – 10:30 a.m., PM Worship – 5:00 p.m.; Wednesday: PM Bible Study 7:30 p.m.

Dedicated to the Proclamation of the Truth in the Spirit of Love (Ephesians 4:15)

Volume 14, Issue 11

Evangelist and Editor:

Dempsey Collins

Mar. 17, 2013

Listen to PROVE ALL THINGS on 730 AM WKRE, Sunday mornings from 8:15 to 8:30

Sola Scriptura or Sola Papa?

by Chuck Durham

Pope Benedict XVI released a Vatican document on July 10, 2007 that reasserted the primacy of the Roman Catholic Church as providing the only true path to salvation. The document claims that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church on earth having “the fullness of the means of salvation.” All other churches (excepting the Greek Orthodox Church) “cannot be called ‘churches’ in the proper sense” because they do not have apostolic succession – the ability to trace their bishops back to Christ’s original apostles (*Bryan-College Station Eagle*, July 11, 2007).

It is the age-old question that so many people have asked: “Which church of all the churches is the right one? They all claim to follow the Bible, so how do we know which is right?” Good question. And it deserves a forthright answer. But it all depends upon the foundation on which we build.

The Bible is that foundation – *the only foundation*. The Bible claims to be the sole authoritative means by which we can rightly hear the One, True Authority – God. The Roman Catholic Church claims that both 1) the Bible and 2) the apostolic succession of the Roman Pope (who alone may rightly interpret the Bible and speak law for the faithful on earth today) are authoritative. It is a battle as old as the Reformation.

The early Protestants called it “**Sola Scriptura**” – only Scripture. Martin Luther told secular and Church officials at the Diet of Worms: “Unless I am convinced by scripture and plain reason – I cannot accept the authority of popes and councils because they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the word of God.”

Luther was right about popes and councils contradicting each other. They did – often – as history records. Not only did they contradict their teaching, accepting at times what had been condemned as heresy at others – they had, on occasions, as many as three men claiming to be

the Pope at the same time. Who rightfully had “apostolic succession”? Who determined it? The answer comes: the Roman Catholic Church. Does this sound like circular reasoning? Carefully study the history of the Roman Catholic Church and its claim to “apostolic succession” and it is as appalling as it is ludicrous. Time and again it was based upon political expediency, avarice, power hunger and every base manipulation to which man is capable of descending.

What the Roman Catholic Church really wants is to be the sole interpreter of Scripture. The Pope alone can tell us what it means (and add to it when he wants). If their basis for being the “one, true church” lies in their ability to trace their lineage back to the apostles, don’t bet the farm on it! Why? Because the Scriptures never – ever – command, necessarily infer, or by apostolic example illustrate a “succession” to the original apostles.

Open the New Testament and read it from cover to cover. Where does any verse of Scripture claim apostolic succession? What the Scriptures claim is that the Scriptures alone hold the “fullness of the means of salvation” because they teach the truth regarding Jesus (Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 3:16-17; II Peter 1:19-21; 3:15-16). Popes and councils over the centuries have originated doctrines foreign to the pages of the New Testament. And the early Protestants saw it. They could read. They could understand the Scriptures – and they didn’t need Popes and councils to tell them so. They threw out vestments; sacraments; instrumental music; they gave both elements of the Lord’s Supper to the people; priests married and monasticism was scrapped; fast days and masses for the dead were abandoned; relics and images were smashed. Some read further and discovered that only adult believers were baptized and so they ceased baptizing infants. Others saw only congregations as being the organization of the church.

Sola Scriptura. If you can’t find it in the Bible, then it’s not from God and must be discarded as a man-made invention. And if we accept this as our guiding authority in service to God – the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church will find themselves on the wrong side of the debate.

Do your homework. There are more than 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament; thousands more translations in early tongues; a text that is nearly 100% certain in light of all variant readings (Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 365). I’ll bank everything on **Sola Scriptura**. It never mentions a “pope”. It despises the very idea that “one man” would set himself up over the Lord’s church.

I believe there is “only one true church” on earth (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). And that church’s distinguishing features can only be determined by matching its practices with the New Testament. That’s the only way to know which church is the true church today.

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16