

Intro

This is an issue of The Gospel, of salvation, of eternity, of heaven and hell – Galatians 1:6-9

We need to be sober about this: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” – Hebrews 10:31

Prayer

Pray, pray, pray. Depend on God. Have faith. (Then be obedient in being a witness and a light.)

Diligent Study

If you're serious about witnessing to Catholics, pray, and consider looking over these notes and things referenced, including resources. Be diligent. Get familiar with the issues and pertinent Scripture. Consider the resources mentioned, always seeking to know The Lord through Scripture for yourself, testing all things by The Word of God.

Acknowledgement to Christ for members of His body that helped with this class – Ron Rhodes, James White, Richard Bennett, Mike Gendron, and more.

A Major Issue in Proclaiming The Gospel to Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Members – They Need to Hear The Gospel!

Realize that they are a mission field – that the vast majority are **lost** (if any are saved it's in spite of the RC Church, and because they don't truly believe official RC doctrine).

There is an **“undoing” of the Protestant Reformation these days which undermines the critical differences between the true Gospel and the Roman Catholic one.** There is an **ecumenical movement** that has been an enemy of The Gospel, discouraging the evangelization of Catholics, and promoting the idea that they, in general, are brethren. **Catholics are a mission field of around 1 billion souls and need to have The Gospel preached to them clearly!!**

There is a compartmentalized, but ever increasing type of universalism where the straight gate and narrow way seem ever wider and increasingly easier.

The Ultimate Goal in All This – to Preach The Gospel

1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Mark 16:15-16, Romans 1:16

Seek to understand them as appropriate, but don't be distracted from the main goal of the gospel. They need to know the **holiness of God**, the **greatness of their sin**, the **greatness of God's wrath against sin**, and the **person and work of Jesus Christ, The Son of God – the significance of His work on the cross and His victorious resurrection.** The need to understand the need to **repent toward God and to trust in Jesus as their savior apart from any righteousness that they think they can offer God for their salvation – “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Acts 20:20-21**

Whatever you do, don't be sidetracked where you only discuss a particular point without the gospel being the goal and focus of the conversation.

People Reject The Gospel Because of a **Failure to Love of The Truth**

Realize that **even if you've made the perfect witness, they still may reject**. The ultimate goal is to preach the gospel clearly and without compromise, being all things to all. Scripture shows that even when truth is demonstrated with the supernatural, many people still reject it. Seek to be the best possible witness and pray. The unbeliever needs the grace of God to repent and to receive The Truth to be saved.

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” – 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

“For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” – Luke 16:28-31

“Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.” – Acts 4:16-17

John 3:19-21 (loving darkness rather than light, hating the light), **Romans 1:18-28** (suppress the truth, although they knew God, changed the glory of God, changed the truth of God for a lie), **2 Peter 3:5-6** (willfully forget)

The Authority is Scripture – God's Word

2 Timothy 3:15-16, 4:1-2, John 17:17, John 8:31-32, Matthew 4:4, Psalm 119:105

Don't Add or Subtract from God's Word: Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6

General Things to Understand About Catholicism

Realize That There Are Different Types of Catholics

Not everyone professing Catholicism believes, professes, or practices the same thing. Ron Rhodes reported in his book, Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics, that Ken Samples concluded that there are 6 primary categories. I believe that there can be some overlap between the categories, which maybe shouldn't be seen as completely rigid.

- Ultra-traditionalist – Rigid “old school” Catholics who even oppose changes of Vatican II of the 1960's
- Traditionalist – Still “old school”, but accepting of Vatican II
- Liberal – They are led more by their own understanding, and may reject not only a lot of Scripture, but also a lot of uniquely Catholic doctrine/tradition as well (like the RC teaching on divorce and remarriage, the supposed infallibility of the Pope, and the prohibition against RC priests marrying).
- Charismatic-supposedly “evangelical” – More prone to at least acknowledge the Bible (though they May not truly understand it), and emphasize The Holy Spirit, Spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, and

other things associated with The Holy Spirit. **Don't be fooled, assuming that they are saved, as they may outwardly seem and speak like evangelical Christians. See what they believe regarding The Gospel!** This goes back to what was said above about not overlooking this mission field. You may discover that such still pray to Mary, and don't truly hold to Scripture.

- Cultural - They may have a strong Catholic identity, maybe saying, "I was born a Catholic and I'll die a Catholic", while really not caring much else about Catholicism or spirituality in general. There may be a good deal of overlap between this and the "liberal Catholic".
- Popular Folk – This may be primarily in Central and South America and can be a mixture of Medieval Catholicism and elements of more overt paganism (I say "more overt", because traditional Catholicism has many elements of paganism in it). "The Virgin of Guadalupe" may be an example of such syncretism.

Realize the misleading subtlety of error and deception regarding both Catholics and the Orthodox

Many things Catholics and Orthodox say may make them seem like they may be saved — their profession in the deity of Christ, His death for sin, His resurrection, that salvation is by grace through faith (added to this are human merits).

The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches may seem, on many occasions, to affirm the gospel but they elsewhere deny it. For example, the Catholic Church affirms salvation by grace but then on page 46 of Trent it says, (Canon 30) "If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema."

So, this teaches that one can be justified, yet temporal punishment for sin is still necessary before entrance into heaven is permitted.

Don't think that Vatican II changed much regarding Catholic doctrine.

Pg. 412 of Vatican II 1998 edition (see Resources of Catholicism below) affirms The Council of Trent which anathematized (cursed) true Christians who believe The Word of God.

Some Catholic Teaching

Baptism puts you on the road to heaven.

Venial Sin makes you lose some right-standing with God.

Mortal sin - You are back on the path to hell, devoid of grace. They need the sacrament of penance to be rejustified, which involves confession to a priest and doing something afterward.

There is a treasury that contains the merits of Christ, mixed with the merits of Mary and the saints. The church says it has authority to dispense those merits (indulgences). They can supposedly dispense them to those in Purgatory to get them out sooner. Mass cards are a part of this.

Grace is received at baptism enabling one to do good works, which merit favor.

They claim both Scripture and tradition as authorities; but in reality, the tradition nullifies the Scripture - Mark 7:1-13

Grace is given through what they see as sacraments.

Some Eastern Orthodox Teaching

Perhaps most important to know, they believe that salvation is by works. They say works by faith, but in essence it's not the imputed righteousness of God or Biblical justification by faith.

Similar to Catholic but no Pope, though they do believe in apostolic succession and a supreme "Patriarch", who said to be first among equals.

They don't believe in Purgatory, but pray for the dead
They also profess faith in both Scripture and tradition, where tradition nullifies Scripture.
Eastern Orthodox have icons instead of statues
Orthodox Priests can marry before ordination, but not Catholic Priests
They also believe in sacramental grace
They also believe in the Eucharist as a sacrifice
They place emphasis on church councils

General Points on Witnessing to Catholics and Eastern Orthodox

- Remember, proclaiming the true gospel to them is the main goal – 1 Cor. 2:1-5, Mark 16:15-16
- You want them to examine their **belief and the basis for it - 2 Corinthians 13:5**
- Let them know, the issue is Scripture – God's Word, and Jesus Christ, not so much your church or denomination.
- If you don't know the answer to something, you might want to say that you'll get back to them, and consult a knowledgeable believer/leader in the meantime.
- **If they're Catholic, know the type of Catholic** you are dealing with. Realize that maybe most Catholics don't know much about their own religion's teachings. Maybe don't always tell them what they believe, but ask first what they believe. Or **maybe ask**, "Do you believe...", regarding a specific Roman Catholic teaching/position. **If they differ** with official Catholic or Orthodox teaching, then they can be challenged to leave a church whose teaching they don't agree with. **If they agree** with official Catholic or Orthodox doctrine, then go to The Scriptures and show them any conflicts between their church's teaching and God's Word, Use wisdom (**pray for it**) based on what they say they believe.
- Show the hopelessness of trusting that you've kept The perfect Law of God.
- Romans 3:23, Galatians 2:21, 2:16
- 1 John 1:8-9 – The blood of Jesus cleanses from all, not just some, sin of true believers.
- Talk about imputed righteousness: Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:11,22-24, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21
- Assurance Scriptures: (Clarify, Though, the difference between true, saving faith and false faith): 1 John 5:13, John 5:24, Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:4-7

If one from the Orthodox (or Catholic) faith seems to be really saved, saying that they know it's only by Christ and His grace that they can be saved, confront them with specific doctrines of their denomination that conflict with and deny the sufficiency of Christ for salvation, and show them how they must choose between the two – the denomination or Christ and the gospel as revealed in The Scriptures. Pray much to be filled with The Holy Spirit and that this could be done with much grace and wisdom. Don't just throw knowledge at them without prayer, dependence on God, humility, and love, but also with boldness and confidence.

For the Eastern Orthodox

How is it that the Council of Constantinople of 754, which forbade icons, was reversed by the 2nd Council of Nicea of 787?

Miscellaneous Points

Isn't it interesting that those who believe a gospel that is not by human effort are the ones who are most zealous for good works, them not believing that those good works can earn them forgiveness with God? There are similar teachings between Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox with The Truth, but that can be a bad thing. The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are not sufficient to clarify The Gospel.

Closing Exhortation

What Catholic or Eastern Orthodox person is in your life that you maybe held back from witnessing to with conviction due to the idea that they might be saved when there really is doubt about this; or who have you just neglected to bring the only words of eternal life to? Repent, pray, and reach out to that person, firstly doing it in faithfulness to God and the gospel, and secondly, doing it out of love for that person.

Resources of Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy Realize, Even Resources of Christian Sources Are not Error Free and Must Be Used with Discernment

Catholic Sources (which are very erroneous and dangerous, but which document official Catholic teaching)

Catechism of the Catholic Church (It has been available online)

The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent

Vatican Council II Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents

Christian Ministries

bereanbeacon.org (has a tab for Eastern Orthodoxy)

pro-gospel.org (Catholic)

Alpha & Omega Ministries

Book: Reasoning from The Scriptures With Catholics

DVD: Catholicism: Crisis of Faith