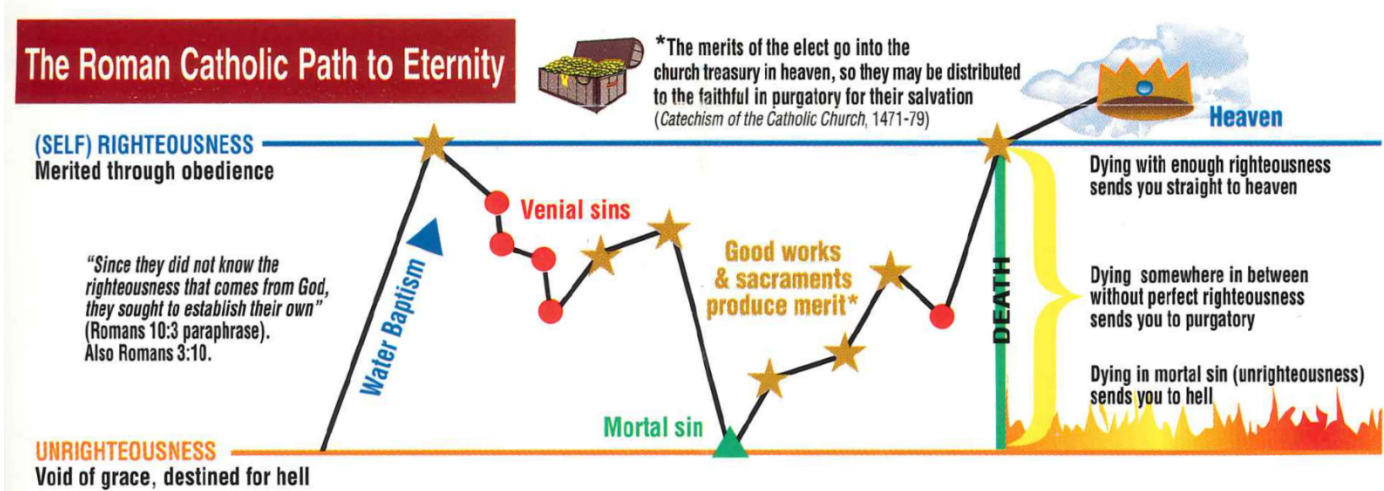


What Divides Catholics and Protestants?

The Gospel and Roman Catholics

I. What is the Gospel According to Roman Catholics? How Does It Compare to the Bible?

A. Roman Catholic Path to Salvation¹



“For Catholics, justification is “not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.”² Salvation, then, combines forgiveness, regeneration, progress in holiness, and the loving performance of good deeds—it is a lifelong process. Because most Catholics will fall short of the purity they should have achieved in this earthly life, when they die, their soul goes to purgatory.”³

1. **Water baptism** regenerates us – the water is a means of grace to remove our original sin.
2. **Venial Sins** merit a temporal punishment in purgatory. Good works can remove those punishments.
3. **Mortal Sins** are grave violations of the law of God with full knowledge and deliberate choice. They merit hell, unless a person engages in sacraments and good works.
4. **Sacraments** are the ways Jesus’ work and the holiness of God are infused into our life – i.e., how His work gets into us so that we can do what God commands and merit heaven.
5. **Good works** “Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life . . .” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2027)
6. **“Purgatory”** is a place that is for purging, through suffering, of remaining sins “so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1030-31).
7. **Indulgences** and the **treasury of merit**. The treasury of merits contains things like the prayers and good works of Mary and the saints. They are applied to people via purchasing/earning indulgences.

¹ From Mike Gendron’s tract “Roman Catholicism: Scripture vs. Tradition.”

² Council of Trent, Session 6, Decree on Justification, January 13, 1547, chap. 7. See also Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1989.

³ Gregg R. Allison, 40 Questions about Roman Catholicism, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021), 79.

B. Biblical Path to Salvation



1. Ephesians 2:8-9
 - **Status:** "have been saved" (see also Rom. 8:1)
 - **How? By what means?** "By grace [the cause] through [the instrument] faith."
 - **Contrast** "and . . . not . . ." What is ruled out?
 - **Result** – "so that" no one can boast (see Eph. 1, Rom. 3:27-28).
2. What is the role of good works? See Eph. 2:8-10, Titus 3:5, Rom. 4:1-5, James 2:14-26.⁴

II. Sharing the Gospel with Roman Catholics

- A. The Necessity of Sharing the Gospel with Catholics (Rom. 10:1-4, 1:16-17).
- B. Approaches to Sharing the Gospel
 1. A one-to-one or group Bible study in a Gospel.
 2. Use a tract from Mike Gendron that shows the differences between RC and Biblical Christianity.
- C. Clarify the Gospel
 1. It isn't Jesus + _____
 2. Ask, "Are you sure you are going to heaven when you die? Have you ceased relying on your own efforts to earn God's love and forgiveness to trust in Jesus alone?"

III. What Divides Catholicism and Protestants?

- A. Roman Catholicism is The Religion of "Plus"
 1. God's Word + Tradition
 2. Christ's work + the need for human priests, the merits of Mary and the saints, the mass, etc.
 3. Faith + good works to merit final justification
 4. Grace + sacraments and good works
 5. Glory of God + veneration of saints and Mary
- B. Biblical Christianity Affirms
 1. Scripture is the ultimate and final authoritative Word from God
 2. Christ alone is the sufficient Savior by his once for all redeeming work
 3. Jesus' work is applied to us by faith alone
 4. This is all a gift of grace alone – grace is not what allows us to do good works and merit salvation
 5. All this is for the glory of God alone

⁴ Cf. Rom. 4 with James 2. Note the different questions Paul and James are addressing and the different points in Abraham's life they mention.