

What Roman Catholics will find when they read their Bibles (part three)

By Jay Wegter

The Biblical Gospel explains the character of God and the character of the sinner.

The true Gospel contains the following essentials: Who has the sinner offended? How has the sinner offended God? What are the consequences of offending God? What are sinners to be saved from? What has God done about the sinner's dilemma? How are sinners to be saved from ruin?

WHO has the sinner offended?

The Gospel has at its core the glory and majesty and exaltation of God; He is the offended power.

Without the knowledge of God whom he has offended; the sinner will not see himself in *opposition to God* (Joseph Lo Sardo, *Errors in Modern Evangelism*, www.sermonaudio.com, 5/7/06).

The Gospel is about God whom the sinner has offended; about His moral majesty and righteous justice. God cannot be made to fit the sinner's instincts, radical miscalculations, and carnal ideas of deity. All conviction of sin and remorse for sin begins with the character of God as He is revealed in Scripture. God as Creator has an absolute claim upon His creatures. *He is the designer, fashioner, and sustainer of all creation.* "Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* His people and the sheep of His pasture. (Ps 100:3; Acts 17:24-31). "The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers" (Ps 24:1-2). "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov 1:7).

He is holy; He made the universe in order to demonstrate His holiness. God is unchanging in His moral majesty, purity, and holiness. "And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory'" (Is 6:3). He alone sets the standard for right and wrong -- every commandment he has given is the manifestation of His holy character. "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY" (1 Pet 1:16).

God is a personal Being: He is self-aware, personal, holy, knowable, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient (Ps 139; Rom 11:36). **God is love:** He created us in His image (Gen 1:27) in order to have a love relationship with us (1 Jn 3:1; 4:7-10). We were made for communion with Him. He created us for His glory to take delight in worshipping, honoring, and reflecting Him (1 Cor 10:31; Is 43:7, 21). **God is worthy to be loved.** His character is perfect, wonderful and excellent. We were created to be satisfied in Him and all that He is for us. It is the creature's duty to live for His glory—that duty flows from our being made in His image (Matt 22:37).

HOW has the sinner offended God?

Man must experience a degree of devastation about personal sin. There must be an awakening in the individual as to the fact that all sin is against God; against His holy character. "Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge" (Ps 51:4). There is no repentance until the sinner says the same thing about his sin that God does: **sin makes you an enemy of God** (Rom 3:23; 5:10). You cannot please God. "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life

and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:5-8).

Jesus took the rich young ruler back to the Law of God (Lu 18:18-23). The sinner must be shown how he has specifically offended God. You can’t make the cross *personal* without making the sinner’s depravity *personal* (that is, the transgressor must be shown that *who he is* and *what he has done* in his person has offended God). The preaching of the law is the tool for identifying sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20) (Ibid.).

Without a correct diagnosis of the sinner’s condition in God’s sight; men will resent and resist the Gospel. Apart from the Holy Spirit using the Law; men tend to hide from the exposure and judgment of their sin. No man welcomes the *cure* provided by the cross until he sees that his *sin disease* is eternally fatal (EX. Joseph Lister and antiseptics).

Can a man understand the Gospel if he has no understanding of the divine economy of Law? “No!” The Law is the means of showing the sinner that God is ‘Moral Governor’ of the universe. The Law now has both a precept role (commandments) and an evangelical role (conviction of sin). Its evangelical role is to make sin exceedingly sinful (Rom 7:13). We are to therefore preach the law “killingly” to the end that the sinner loses all hope of contributing to his own salvation. The Law in the hands of the Spirit removes the sinner’s false hope in good works to save him.

The law is God’s holiness in transcript—an unchanging expression of the holy majesty of God’s Person. As such, the moral law is a direct reflection of God’s unchanging moral character. It is impossible to love God without submitting to and valuing His commands as the expression of His righteousness (Deut 30:19-20). The Leviticus formula is: “I am the Lord, therefore . . .” God’s standard never evolves because the Lawgiver never changes. His moral law for man reflects the immutable character of His righteousness and holiness. It is a standard that is eternally binding upon all civilizations (Douglas W. Phillips, Esq., “Do Laws and Standards Evolve?” *Impact* #303, *Institute for Creation Research*, 1998).

The Apostle Paul states that the human condition is made known by God’s Law. Man is responsible to God for his conduct and is held to a standard of conduct and indicted and judged for not upholding that standard, even if he has never read or heard of the Bible. According to Paul, man has an innate knowledge of God’s attributes (Rom 1:20), an innate knowledge of God’s person (Rom 1:21), an innate knowledge of God’s law (Rom 1:32; 2:14-15), and an innate knowledge of God’s judgment (Rom 1:32) (Richard C. Barcellos, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 19.). *You must believe the above if you are to be a bold witness who has unshakable confidence that the Gospel is the power of God* (Rom 1:16-17).

The QUARREL: The carnal mind spins off arguments and attacks against God. The unregenerate mind is the place of *battles against God*—it is a place of great hostility against the knowledge of God (Col 1:21). The wall of antagonism is hard and immovable, so make it a habit of going around it. Learn to speak directly to the conscience (Ibid.).

The conscience is the only part of human nature that isn’t an enemy of God. The conscience is God’s ally. It speaks for the law of God. It bears witness (Rom 2:15). It testifies for God. It is the witness who points out the guilty party in the courtroom. If we want to win our case we must bring out our star witness and put it on the stand to give it a voice. We want to stop the mouth of the criminal and that’s what the lawful use of the Law does (Rom 3:19; 1 Tim 1:7-11). It condemns the guilty and drives him to give up his defense, so that he will be forced to look solely to the Judge for mercy” (Ray Comfort, *Conversions True and False*, audio message). The Gospel offends because it exposes and lays bare one’s life before God (Jn 3:19-21). It confronts personal idolatry in all of its forms. It calls and commands us to

say the same thing about our ruined condition as God does. It demands that we discard our faulty “scales” of reasoning in exchange for the absolute authority of God’s Word.

The Gospel offends because it demands we make the greatest “U-turn” conceivable. The repenting man acknowledges that his chosen path has been one of self-destruction and one of rebellion against God. The Gospel offends because at its center is the cross. The cross states that man is horribly wrong and God alone is right. The cross of Christ is a monument to the fact that the human race deserves to die, and that nothing less than the death of the only begotten Son of God can avail to remedy our ruin (1 Pet 3:18) (Gardner Spring, *The Attraction of the Cross*, pp. 205-207).

The Gospel offends because man is NOT in charge of its eternal benefits. The sinner’s only hope is the sovereign mercy and pity of God in Christ. If one is to be saved, it hangs completely upon unobligated divine compassion. The Gospel offends because the sinner is rescued solely by Christ’s might, love, and infinite grace. The redeemed sinner is consequently obligated forever to the lordship and Kingship of Christ. The believer is under obligation to live as a loyal subject of Christ the King of kings.

Preaching the Law of God and preaching repentance toward God is necessarily joined to the Holy Spirit’s preparation of the sinner. Only the man prepared by God’s Spirit goes to war against his own sin and his own sin nature. The sinner prepared by the Holy Spirit takes God’s side against himself. As Luther said, “Penance remains while self-hate remains.” In other words, no one comes to Christ without being overwhelmed with self-contempt over personal sin. In order to be brought to true repentance, a man must be taken beyond the fear of punishment—to hatred of sin and love of Christ. Repentance begins with sobering thoughts of eternity; then proceeds to conscience-crushing contemplation of personal sin—note the desperation factor in truly seeing one’s sin (MacArthur, *Exposition of Luke 3:1-18*).

The sinner will come willingly if the Spirit of God has prepared him by crushing his conscience over sin and by bringing him to the end of self. Unbelievers stop short of saving faith and repentance when they place their trust in their efforts of personal reformation (legal repentance). Therefore it is the Spirit’s convicting role to bring the sinner to utter bankruptcy of soul and despairing of all self-help.

True turning from sin has a desperate-ness about it. The prepared sinner longs for forgiveness and deliverance from sin. The cost of discipleship lived out under the absolute lordship of Christ appeals ONLY to the person who is desperate to be delivered from sin. The prepared person is willing to pay any cost and part with anything in order to have Christ and deliverance. The man who is genuinely converted never outgrows his amazement at divine forgiveness. His mind and affections are now a servant and instrument of God’s Word and grace. He continues to glorify God by viewing God’s grace from the vantage point of his own ill desert (Eph 2:1-16). This is why we preach the Law, for it is the beginning of understanding our ill desert and it is the beginning of preparing the sinner to appeal to the throne of grace for mercy.

God’s law is the divinely appointed means of “X-raying” the human heart.

1. **The First Commandment: Have no other gods before Me.**

We haven’t loved God supremely—we haven’t treasured Him and valued Him; and pressed on to know Him. We have chosen things in place of God and disregarded Him—despising His ownership of us. We have regarded His loving rule over us to be an intrusion. We have made *other gods* out of our own will, our own way, and our own cravings.

2. **The Second Commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol.**

We have set our affections on the world—we have worshipped and served the creature and creation instead of God. We have made idols of our lusts and desires. We have refused to love God by a life of continual thanksgiving to Him.

3. **The Third Commandment: Do not take the Name of the Lord God in vain.**

We have not sanctified and set apart the Name of the Lord—we have used God's Name casually and irreverently. We have dragged His Name into our conversations without reverence and fear; with no thought of His holiness. We have had no passion and sentiment for His honor and glory. We have been too cowardly to defend His character when others have dishonored His Name in our presence.

4. **The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.**

Though not a N.T. ordinance; the principle of setting aside time to draw near to God is timeless. We have failed in this by not leaving our pursuits and pastimes to actively seek God. We have not made it a priority to worship God; to serve Him; and make Him known to our fellow creatures. We have not come away from our schedules to give Him the best of our thoughts and conversation. We are by nature *Sabbath-breakers*.

5. **The Fifth Commandment: Honor your father and mother.**

We have disobeyed by dishonoring our parents countless times. We have deemed them unworthy of our obedience and respect. We have talked back to them and undermined their authority. We have promised obedience and withheld it. We have been ungrateful and have disregarded their God-appointed authority in our lives.

6. **The Sixth Commandment: You shall not murder.**

In 1 John 3:15 we are told that to hate your brother is murder because it is a spirit of murder. Have you despised and resented those who have mistreated you? Have you held a grudge and wished for their downfall, misfortune; failure; and destruction? Have you entertained violent thoughts against those who have offended you? Have you lashed out in angry words? (Matt 5:22). Do you harbor unforgiveness and resentment? Have you sought your own vengeance by backbiting; gossip; and slander?

7. **The Seventh Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.**

This encompasses all sexual sin. We have allowed lusts to rule us. We have looked upon others as sexual objects of desire in our minds. Jesus said that to do that can be adultery in the heart (Matt 5:28). We have entertained discontent with our marriage partner and allowed imaginary lovers to enter the mind. We have loved our lusts above God's honor. We have not cared to reflect God's purity in our thinking; desiring; and looking.

8. **The Eighth Commandment: You shall not steal.**

We have many times taken what is not ours. We have robbed employers of a full day's work. We have cheated on tests and homework. We have robbed God by using our resources for our pleasures without a thought of giving to His Kingdom and the spread of the Gospel. We have stolen the reputation of others by gossiping. We have borrowed from others and not returned; and we have cheated others out of fairness by our greed.

9. **The Ninth Commandment: Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

We have lied and covered our sin. We have altered the truth to protect ourselves. We have exaggerated, embellished, and distorted the truth to make ourselves look more favorable. We have

misrepresented the character of others. We have not sought the truth in the inward man; but have lied to ourselves about God's faithfulness. We have allowed dishonesty to enter our speech.

10. The Tenth Commandment: *You shall not covet.*

We have desired what is not ours but another's. We have believed it should be ours and not our neighbor's. We have envied; been jealous of what others have. We have been secretly happy at the misfortune of those around us. We have been secretly saddened by the promotions and prosperity of those around us. We have complained and grumbled—indulging in self-pity and discontentment. We have felt elevated by the moral downfall of others. We have compared ourselves to others instead of living in gratitude to God for grace.

WHAT are the consequences of offending God?

The law stops every mouth that all may become guilty before God. “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:19-21)

Man's ‘uneducated conscience’ cannot be trusted to assess the seriousness of sin and its verdict of death and separation from God. Only by proclaiming the character of God and the immutability of His law will sinners conclude that they are *lawbreakers* in God's sight who deserve *eternal condemnation* “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 Jn 3:4).

The law is the *identifier of sin*—without the law; how does a person know what to repent of? God's law gives weight to the Gospel essentials of *sin, hell, conviction, and repentance*. God has born witness to man's moral and spiritual condition. God is just and fair to shut impenitent sinners out of the enjoyment of His glory forever (Mt 10:28). Sinners who reject God's authority; who do not fear God or believe God are liable to death and judgment (Mt 12:36). They will experience God's verdict; the separation of their souls from God forever in eternal punishment. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23). Sinners engage in self-deception when they make a ‘wager’ or ‘bet’ that God will not judge them eternally for their sins. “Why has the wicked spurned God? He has said to himself, “You will not require it” (Ps 10:13).

WHAT are sinners to be saved from?

Sinners must be told that they need to be saved not only from the *consequences of sin (death and separation from God in hell)*, but also from *sin itself*. Salvation is inseparable from being saved from sin as a *master*. This is absolutely vital; it is a truth inherent in true repentance. “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lu 13:5; 24:47). **The fact that God will *lay bare every heart is stated in a Gospel context*.** “In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (Rom 2:16). Jesus felt a love for the rich young ruler; then told him what he must be *saved from*—covetousness (Lu 18:22ff.).

Sinners must be told that they must be saved from the *wrath of God* which will justly come upon all who do not believe the Gospel and repent of sin. “Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice

such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation” (Rom 2:1-10).

WHAT has God done about the sinner’s dilemma?

Without knowledge of God whom the sinner has offended; and without a knowledge of God’s law which the sinner has trampled—there will be no grasp of what God has done to save. Grace only makes sense to those who see themselves as condemned lawbreakers. The good news of the Gospel is that there is an almighty living God who is Creator. He has taken on flesh and dwelled with mankind.

Christ the *God-man* died for our sins according to the Scriptures. By His substitutionary death, He fulfilled the long-awaited promise of a perfect redemption. He established the new covenant in His blood (Matt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25).

The atonement Christ has made exalts divine justice. Because of the cross, God is glorified in extending forgiveness full and free to believing sinners. By His resurrection from the dead Jesus conquered sin, Satan, and death. His resurrection is proof that the Father has accepted the Son’s sacrifice on behalf of all who will believe. God is ready to receive even the worst sinner who believes and repents—because Christ has provided the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. “Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law*” (Rom 3:24-28).

HOW are sinners to be saved from ruin?

The promise of eternal life is offered to all who believe and repent. “Turn from your sins and follow Christ—take hold of eternal life—you can be a part of it!” God is focusing His mighty power in the Gospel—in saving sinners” (Rom 1:16-17).

The good news of the Gospel is that man may have certainty about forgiveness of personal sin; and man may have eternal life through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Jn 3:36; 5:24, 25; Jn 10:27-29). God desires you to be saved. He even commands you to come to Him and be forgiven; to be reconciled to Him on the basis of what He has done in Christ Jesus. You need not remain an enemy estranged from Him—He has promised to receive all those who come to Him by faith in His only begotten Son (Jn 1:12-13). “God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

Christ is calling sinners to repentance and faith. These are twin graces that will be present in the regenerate person; they enable the sinner to flee to Christ and take hold of Him as Savior. “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil 1:29).