

FROM THE PREACHER

By: Blake Hudson

Roman Catholicism: Unity

Rounding out this series on Roman Catholicism (at least for the time-being) I would like to consider Rome's claim to unity. A frequent apologetic argument used by Roman Catholics centers around the idea that the Roman Catholic Church represents unity and stability, while Protestantism represents division and instability. "After all," the argument goes, "there is one Roman Catholic Church and hundreds of Protestant denominations!" But is the Roman Church really as unified and stable as its defenders claim? In reality, the Roman Church's history is marked by all kinds of divisions and schisms, both external and internal.

We'll begin at the year 1054 since by this time there is clearly an entity we would recognize as the Roman Catholic Church (just in an earlier form). It is in 1054 that the Roman Catholic Church becomes a distinct, independent organization due to what is called The Great Schism. At the Great Schism of 1054, the western Roman Catholic and eastern Orthodox churches mutually excommunicated each other over a variety of issues, including papal authority. From that point forward, Rome separated from everyone else and recognized only itself as the "true church."

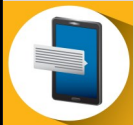
Between the Great Schism and the Protestant Reformation there were a number of divisions within the Roman Church. There were reform movements that led to schism, notable examples of which include John Wycliffe (14th century) and his followers in Britain and John Hus (15th century) and his followers in the Czech lands. There were also internal divisions, such as The Great Western Schism of 1378–1417. During these years there was first two, and then *three* different popes all claiming authority at the same time. The popes reigned from three different cities: Rome, Avignon, and Pisa. Eventually a council was convened which essentially wiped the slate clean and elected a new pope.

In the 16th century there was another major schism within the Roman Church: The Protestant Reformation. The original intention of Luther and others was not to separate from Rome, but to *reform* Rome, bringing it back toward Scriptural teachings. Unfortunately, Rome rejected reform and brought about yet another largescale division.

Finally, as mentioned in a previous article, Rome had another schism in 1870 after the council of Vatican I. After the council defined papal infallibility, there was a large minority of Roman Catholics who split from Rome and formed what is today called the Old Catholics.

So, is Rome the paradigm of unity and stability claimed by its apologists? No, Rome too is marked by division and schism, and the examples above are not exhaustive.

Having said all of this, are Roman apologists onto something when they point at divisions within Protestantism and say, "that's a problem!" Yes, they absolutely are. The problem of division and sectarianism is very real, and is precisely the problem that the Restoration Movement hoped to remedy. Jesus desires unity within His Church (John 17), and therefore we all should. Rome has its share of disunity – don't let anyone fool you otherwise – but at the end of the day we also have to look at ourselves. Do we strive for the unity of truth that Jesus desires? Is our prayer for unity within our local congregation and for Christian unity throughout the world? May it be so.



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Youth UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 8th - Sweetheart Banquet
Feb. 15th - Jeen Devotional

Adult Bible Study

Sunday morning's Adult Bible class will be covering... **Acts 21: 1-17**

To my Church Family,

I would like to thank you all for the kindness, prayers, and words of comfort during my family's time of grief. The loss of my dad, James Davis, has been eased by your love and concern. Thank you to the G.A.L.S. ladies and the consumer goods they put together for us.

In Brotherly Love,
Joe Davis

I DID IT!!

I would like to thank you for the prayers, love and support given me during my cancer journey. I rang the bell Friday and I could never have made it without all of your prayers, love and support. My gratitude is so heartfelt and I appreciate you. I am just so happy to be a part of this congregation.

Your Sister in Christ,
Pattie Cooper

SYMPATHY

We want to express our love and sympathy to the family of Arnold Williams, who passed away last week.

2/14 - Work Day

2/15 - VBS Planning Meeting

2/21 - Ladies Bible Study



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Please Pray

Carl Barrow has been diagnosed with bladder cancer and is scheduled for a biopsy Thursday, Feb. 5th...David Johnson is home with shingles...JoAnne Maywald is scheduled for a bronchoscopy with biopsy Wednesday, Feb. 4th...John Blaha, friend of Taylor Rieck, has seen improvement in numbers after his first chemo treatment...Beth Casey is home and recovering after hip replacement and knee work...Robert Spears, husband of Cynthia Spears, was admitted to the VA Hospital...Johnny Toone, Karen Lowe's son, is in the hospital and received news that his cancer has progressed

PLEASE REMEMBER:

Len Boling, Dorothy Booth, Shirley Brown, Deena Damron, Tomitria Dixon, Robert Gautney, Jeanie Granger, Mona Higgins, Erin West Janik, Dorothy King, Marie Leblanc, Charm Moser, Wayne Satchell, John Shaw, Steven Shriver, Karen Smith, Paul Stallberg, Andy Tilley, Charles and Elizabeth Street, Maggie Walker, John Ward

