

CHAPTER 10

Popes and Ropes

ROPES are often used to tie things up. If someone were to grab you and put ROPES all around you and tie you up, you would be unable to move very well. You would be greatly hindered and crippled and unable to get around freely. You would be all bound up by the ropes. Things would be very difficult for you in this condition. You would need someone to come along and SET YOU FREE by untying the ropes or by cutting them off from you.

Ever since about 500 A.D. different men called POPES have been the leaders of the church in the area which was once the western part of the Roman Empire. The church that is "ruled" by the popes is known as THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. For centuries and centuries the POPES have been tying up the church with ROPES, and these ROPES can be seen even to this day. The church has been bound and hindered and crippled and tied down in error because of the POPES and because of the ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS SYSTEM. Only the LORD can set a person free from these ROPES which bind and strangle: "If the _____ therefore shall make you _____, ye shall be _____ indeed" (John 8:36).

Do you have any Roman Catholic friends? What do you know about the Roman Catholic Church? What are some of the teachings of Catholicism? How would these teachings differ from what you believe? Where do Catholics get their teachings from? From the Bible? From some other source?

In Chapter 1 of these notes we studied one Catholic teaching: *The Roman Catholic church believes that Peter is the ROCK upon which the Church is built* (see **Chapter 1**). Do you believe the Church is built upon Peter? Why or why not?

Catholics today are taught that Peter was the first Pope and that the other Popes are the lawful successors of Saint Peter. These men claim to be the representative of Christ on the earth, as we learned in Chapter 1.

Where Did the Popes Come From?

Where in the Bible do we find the word "POPE"? (you may use a CONCORDANCE to find the answer) _____ Therefore, what does the Bible teach us about the POPE?

The New Testament Church knew nothing about POPES. There was no such creature in existence. Peter was an E_____ (1 Peter 5:1) and he was also a Shepherd or a Pastor (John 21:15-17), but he is never called POPE. The word POPE means "father" (from the Latin word "PAPA"). What did the Lord Jesus say about calling men by this title (Matthew 23:9)?
 _____ No man on earth should be called "father" except your earthly father. Who is the only true FATHER or POPE, according to Matthew 23:9? _____ He alone deserves this title and no one else.

In the days of the early church there was no POPE at all. Today we have a POPE in the city of Rome who is one of the most powerful religious leaders on earth. How did this come about? It came about gradually (by steps), and here is how it happened:

Step One

In New Testament times the leaders of the churches were called B_____ and D_____ (Philippians 1:1). Notice that both of these words are plural (they end with the letter "S"). The church in Philippi did not have just one bishop; it had more than one. A BISHOPS are those who WATCH OVER the believers in the local assembly, even as a SHEPHERDS watches over their sheep. In New Testament times BISHOPS were also called ELDERS (see Titus 1:5,7).

What about your local church? Does your church have BISHOPS (ELDERS) and DEACONS?

Note: In the New Testament, when "elders" of a local church are referred to, the term is always found in the plural. Compare Acts 15:2,4,6 (the church in Jerusalem) and Acts 20:17 (the church in Ephesus).

Step Two

Early in the history of the church an important change took place. The churches went from the plural (BISHOPS) to the singular (ONE BISHOP). At one time each church had several men serving as bishops, but later this changed and each church had only one bishop. Each church had ONE BISHOP who was the most important person in the church. He was the leader of the Church. He was the number one man in the church. Instead of having several leaders, the church now had one. He was THE ONE AND ONLY BISHOP!

Step Three

Bishops of big city churches came to be looked upon as being of higher rank than bishops of smaller churches. The great cities of the Roman Empire were looked upon as being very important, and thus the bishops of the churches in these cities became very important and were considered very special. These "special men" were called Metropolitan (city) bishops.

Was it right to exalt these "city bishops" to such a high rank? Suppose that today there were a pastor of a Bible Church in New York City who preaches to 1500 people every Sunday morning. Suppose that there were also a pastor in a small town in Vermont who preaches to only about 50 people each Sunday morning. Does this mean that the "city" pastor is serving the Lord more faithfully because he is speaking to so many more people and because he is working in such a large and important city? Is it possible that the pastor from the small Vermont town could be a more faithful servant of Christ than the New York pastor? How could this be so? What is God more concerned with--QUANTITY or QUALITY? _____ Does God look for FAME or for FAITHFULNESS (1 Cor. 4:1-2)? _____

Step Four

There were five cities that became especially important in the Roman Empire. These "extra special" cities were Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome. The Bishops in these cities were looked upon as "extra special" men and called "PATRIARCHS"



Why were these five cities so important? Here are some of the reasons:

1) JERUSALEM – It was in this city that the Church first began (on the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2). Also Christians remember Jerusalem as the place where Christ was crucified and where He rose again. Even today many people consider Jerusalem to be the "holy city" located in the middle of the "holy land."

2) ANTIOCH – Antioch was a very large city and it was the third most important city in the Roman empire. In New Testament times there was a powerful church located in this city. It was here in Antioch that "the disciples were (first) called _____" (Acts 11:26). It was from this strong church that Paul and others went forth on their important missionary journeys (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28; 15:36-41).

3) ALEXANDRIA – This was the second most important city in the Roman empire. It was the seat of learning and culture and contained the largest library in the world.

4) CONSTANTINOPLE – This city was founded by Constantine when he moved the seat of his empire from Rome to Constantinople. (See **chapter 6** in this study.) Since then it has been a very important city and three of the church councils were held in it (see **chapter 9** in this study).

5) ROME – Rome was the most important city in the empire, the place where the great emperors once ruled. "All roads lead to Rome," and in a very true sense Rome was the central and most important city in the empire.

Step Five

Look again at the previous map (Cities of the Five Patriarchs). Of these five important cities there is only one city that is located in the western part of the empire. The other four are all located in the east. What is this one city that is located in the West? _____

It was not long before the BISHOP of Rome became the most prominent and most important and "most special" bishop of all. In the Roman empire there was no city that could compare with the city of Rome. It was the city of the Caesars. Rome was the acknowledged mistress of the ancient world. The enormous and unequalled prestige of the city of Rome gave the BISHOP of the church there a luster such as no other bishop had.

Soon all of the other bishops in the West recognized the bishop of Rome as superior. The belief grew that the church of Rome had been founded by the Apostle Peter and the idea grew that the bishops of Rome were the successors of Peter. Even today the throne of the Pope is often referred to by the Roman Catholic Church as "the chair of St. Peter." Rome was also the city where Peter and Paul were put to death as martyrs.

In 185 A.D. a man named Irenaeus wrote a book entitled **Against Heresies**. In this book he said that every church must agree with the church in Rome. Why is this a dangerous teaching? According to Isaiah 8:20, what should we always be very careful to agree with?

_____ We should agree with the church of Rome only if the church of Rome agrees with the Bible. We do not want to follow churches; we want to follow the Word of God.

Today there are people who are more loyal to their church than they are to the Word of God. They never want to "change their religion" or leave their church, even if their church teaches things contrary to the Bible. They trust their church more than they trust God's Word. Why is this dangerous? Can a church be wrong? Can a church teach error? Can the Bible be wrong or teach error?

Step Six

The BISHOP in Rome became more and more important and eventually he was called POPE ("father" from the Latin word **papa**). The churches over which the Pope ruled came to be known as Roman Catholic churches. By the year 461 A.D. the papacy (rule of the Pope) had become fully established. From this time on the POPES would begin using their ROPES to strangle the church. These ROPES are in use even in our world today!

God's Ropes

Ropes are not always bad. Some ropes are very good. God has ropes that are for man's good. God has strong cords that bind us to Himself and to His Word and to His will. The problem is that man does not want to be bound to God and tied to His will. Man wants to be free to DO HIS OWN THING and live without God and apart from God. Here is what the ungodly say to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

"Let us _____ their bands
asunder, and _____ away their

CORDS from us" (PSALM 2:3)

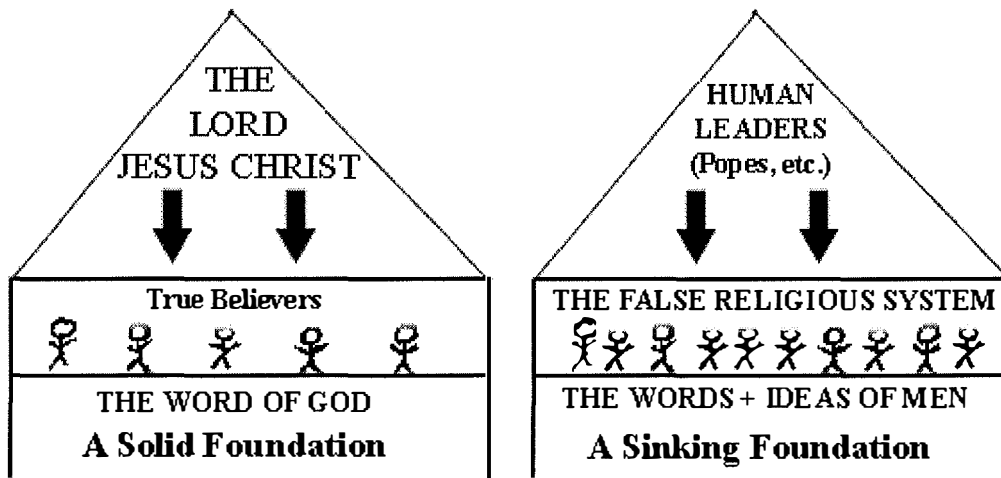
They want nothing to do with God's ropes and God's cords! They want to be set loose from God so that they can live as they please. Is this same attitude common in our world today?

God does not bind men to hurt them; He binds men to help them. It is those who CAST AWAY God's ropes that find themselves in real trouble. In Genesis 32:24-32 we learn about the time when God tied up Jacob and crippled him. He did not tie him up with ROPES but instead He hindered him by actually crippling him physically. All of this was for a good purpose and Jacob learned much through this experience.

When God uses ROPES it is for our good. In this chapter, however, we are learning about ROPES that the devil uses, and these ROPES are only for our harm. Satan uses men and he uses RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS to bind up people and to keep them from the truth of God's Word. For centuries and centuries Satan masterfully used the Roman Catholic religious system to bind men to error and to keep men from Christ.

The ROPES Kept Men from the Word of God

Any church that is not resting on the rock-solid foundation of the Word of God is in great trouble. The devil has cleverly used his ROPES to pull the church away from the Bible. Tradition has pulled the church away from truth. Human ideas and opinions have pulled the church away from the Word of God. This is illustrated by the following:



The Bible became less and less important and the ideas of men became more and more important. Many people were getting tied up into error.

Also, the devil's religious system taught that only "special people" could understand the Bible. The average, common man could never understand God's Holy Book. The Scriptures are far above the understanding of the common man. Thus people were brainwashed into thinking that they could not understand the Bible and they began reading it less and less. When people went to church the Bible was preached less and less. As the centuries rolled by fewer and fewer people

possessed their own copy of the Scriptures. Also the Latin Bible was the "official" or standard Bible. Those people who did not speak or understand Latin had a real problem. The leaders of the church (Roman Catholic religious system) did not see a need to translate the Bible into the common language of the people. The Bible was fast becoming the GREAT NEGLECTED BOOK. The people were tied up and bound in IGNORANCE.

Is there an ignorance of the Word of God today? Are the ROPES of the devil still holding people in ignorance today? Most people have a Bible somewhere in their house, but the Bible is rarely read. (*Remember, seven days without opening the Bible makes one WEAK!*) Is it the great neglected Book today? Have you been neglecting it? Is the Bible your AUTHORITY for what you believe and how you should live, or have you let something else be your authority? Think of the oft heard excuse, "Why can't I do that? Everyone else does it?" What everyone else does--has this become my authority for deciding what is right and wrong?

The Ropes Kept Men from the True Gospel

The devil does not want people to B_____ and be S_____ (Luke 8:12). He will do all that he can to tie up people and keep them away from the true Gospel so that they will remain unsaved.

How can a person be saved? How can a person be right with God for all eternity? How can a person go to heaven and escape the judgment and damnation of an eternal hell?

For centuries the RELIGIOUS SYSTEM has thrown out ROPES and STRANGLED the true message of salvation. Instead of the true teaching, they taught that salvation was **by works**. They said that man must EARN his salvation by DOING SOMETHING – by observing the sacraments, by baptism, by going to the mass, by keeping the law, by saying certain prayers, by going through a religious ritual, by trying to live a good life, etc. They taught that by their **works** they could somehow earn God's favor and blessing and He would then let them enter His heaven.

What does the Bible teach about this? See Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5; Romans 3:26-28 and Acts 16:30-31.

The RELIGIOUS SYSTEM taught that the work of Christ on the cross was NOT ENOUGH! Man's good works must be added to the work of Christ on the cross.

At times there would be people who would challenge the RELIGIOUS SYSTEM. These true believers would begin telling others about GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION. Often when this happened the religious system would pull the ROPES even tighter and PERSECUTE those who proclaimed the true gospel. One very sad but very true fact of history is that THOUSANDS of true believers were put to death and even burned at the stake by the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (consider "The Spanish Inquisition"). Who ever thought that the so-called "CHURCH" would be the great PERSECUTOR of those who believed the Bible?.

What about today? Are the ROPES of Satan still tying up people and keeping them from the true gospel? See 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Are there people today who are still trying to earn their salvation by their good works? Are there people today who are trying to add their own works to the finished work of Christ on the cross? How many churches today really preach the TRUE

GOSPEL? What do the other churches preach?

The Ropes Kept Men from Coming to God Directly

The devil does everything in his power to keep people from coming to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (compare John 14:6). For centuries the RELIGIOUS SYSTEM had taught that only a select group of special people (called "priests") could have direct access to God. The common ordinary believer could not go directly to God; he had to go through a priest. He could not confess his sins to God directly, but instead he had to go to a priest and make "confession." He could not understand the Bible alone; he had to depend upon a priest for the correct interpretation. The great truth expressed in 1 Timothy 2:5 was being strangled by the devil's ROPES!

The Reformation

The Reformation was a major event in Church History which took place in the early 16th century A. D. To understand what happened in a very simple way, just think of these ROPES which we have been studying. The reformers, including Martin Luther and others, were able to CAST OFF and CUT OFF some of these ROPES. There were actually three great ropes that were cut and as a result three great truths sounded forth:

1) The Supreme Authority of the Bible!

The Church had been strangled by tradition and the thoughts and opinions of men. The reformers came along and chopped off the great ROPE which had been keeping the Bible closed. The Reformation was basically a BACK TO THE BIBLE movement. Martin Luther and the other reformers believed that the answers to all of life's important questions are found in the Bible, God's Word. They refused to make sinful and fallible men their authority. The only question that concerned these men was this: "WHAT SAITH THE _____" (Romans 4:3). Note: The word "fallible" means "capable of being wrong and mistaken."

2) Justification (Salvation) By Faith!

For centuries the religious world had been strangled by a false idea of salvation based on human works. Martin Luther and the other reformers realized that salvation is not by works, but it is by FAITH and FAITH ALONE. "Therefore, being justified by _____ (Romans 5:1) See also Titus 3:5 – "not by _____ of righteousness which _____ have done." A person is justified and saved because he puts his faith in a PERSON, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only One who can save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 7:25). As this ROPE was cut, more and more men began preaching the true Gospel and many were saved.

3) Every Believer Is A Priest!

For centuries the church had been strangled by a false doctrine which said that people can only come to God through certain special men ("priests" etc.). Martin Luther and the other reformers

realized that according to the Bible **every** believer is a priest (see 2 Peter 2:9 and Rev. 1:6) and therefore every believer can go directly to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 2:5).

What a wonderful truth! Every believer can go directly to God in prayer. Every believer can confess his sins directly to God because God is the One that every person has sinned against (1 John 1:9)! Every believer can read and study the Bible for himself, trusting God to be his Teacher and his Interpreter. Are **you** a priest? Are you taking advantage of this?

Many Ropes Were Not Cut

While we can thank God for the big ROPES that the Reformers cut, we are also saddened to realize that there were many other ropes that they did not cut at all. The devil had many ropes which he was using to strangle those who were caught in the religious system and keep people away from the truth. The reformers cut some of these ropes but there were many others that they did not cut. There were many areas where they were still bound. For example, most of the reformers still baptized babies, even though the Bible does not teach this. This is one rope that was never cut. Other reformers had wrong ideas about COMMUNION, because they were still strongly influenced by the catholic idea of the MASS. These and many other ropes were still left UNCUT! THE REFORMERS HAD BROKEN LOOSE SOMEWHAT, BUT IN MANY AREAS THEY WERE STILL BOUND. The sad result is that many of the protestant churches that came out of the Reformation were still bound up in many areas.

Although the Protestant churches broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, the devil still had them tied up with many of his ropes. In recent years something very sad and tragic has been taking place. The devil has been pulling in his ropes and these Protestant churches (and other religious groups) are being slowly drawn back to Rome. This is called THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT. More and more churches are saying things like this...

"It doesn't really matter what the Bible says, just as long as all the churches join together."

"Salvation is not really very important. Let's just try to make this a better world to live in."

"The RELIGIOUS SYSTEM is not really as bad as some people think. Let's join together with it."

"It doesn't really matter what you believe just as long as you LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

The devil is pulling his ropes tighter and tighter!

True believers need to be awake and alert! How many harmful ropes are around your life? Are you all bound up and crippled? There is only one thing that can really set you free:

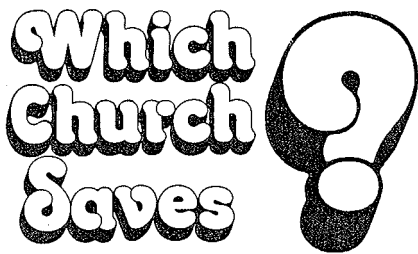
**IF YE CONTINUE IN MY _____, THEN
ARE YE MY DISCIPLES INDEED; AND YE SHALL
KNOW THE _____ AND THE _____
SHALL MAKE YOU FREE!**

(JOHN 8:31-32)

Only THE TRUTH can break away the CORDS and ROPES of the devil. Remember this:
"THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT _____" (2 Timothy 2:9)

No one, not even the devil himself, can keep a person from the truth of God's Word if that person has a hungry and seeking heart. Those who truly seek will truly find! What are you doing with the Bible that belongs to you? May your life be all bound up and wrapped up in the Word of God. It will set you free from everything else!

Note: For more information on the erroneous teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, see **Chapter 8 in our study entitled Personal Evangelism.**



"Must I become a Protestant?"

"Not at all. I wouldn't waste my time trying to convert you to Protestantism in order to be saved."

"Well then, since I'm a Roman Catholic and my friend here is a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, you must believe that one of these religions could save us."

"I'm afraid not."

"But you're a Protestant—I don't understand. You don't believe that Protestantism can save either?"

"Not at all! Protestantism has no more ability to save than Catholicism."

"I'm amazed to hear you say that. How then can we be saved?"

"My friends, you cannot be saved by membership in any religion or denomination, whether Catholic or Protestant, but only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son."

"But are you sure of this, Sir?"

"Let's read what God's Word the Bible says: 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,' Acts 4:12. And again: 'thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins,' Matthew 1:21."

"What then must I do?"

"'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' for 'as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God,' Acts 16:31 and John 1:12."

"But will Jesus receive me?"

"Jesus said, 'him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out,' John 6:37. He loves you. Yes, He even died for you. He bore your sins on the Cross of Calvary. Accept Him; trust completely His atoning death. Take Him now as your Savior. He will have mercy and forgive all your sins."

"That I will do gladly."

"And do you also accept Him as your Savior?"

"Yes I now do. I do indeed!"

"Praise God! 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast,' Ephesians 2:8,9."

—Oswald J. Smith



POPE PIUS X.

Was Peter the first Pope?

TWELVE EVIDENCES AGAINST PETER'S "POPERY"

1. PETER CALLS HIMSELF AN "APOSTLE" (1 PETER 1:1) AND AN "ELDER" (1 PETER 5:1-3) BUT NOT A "POPE".
2. PETER IS NOT MENTIONED ANYWHERE IN SCRIPTURE WITH ANY SPECIAL TITLE OF HONOR OR OFFICE SUCH AS "VICAR OF CHRIST" OR "POPE" BY EITHER CHRIST OR THE APOSTLES.
3. PAUL TAUGHT THAT ANYONE WHO ATTACHES OR IDENTIFIES THEMSELVES TO CEPHAS (PETER) OR ANY OTHER APOSTLE OR PERSONS, AS A DISTINCT GROUP, WERE GUILTY OF SCHISM, BECAUSE ONLY CHRIST IS THE HEAD. 1 COR. 1:12-17
4. PAUL DIDN'T MENTION THE "PAPACY" WHEN HE LISTED THE OFFICES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH. 1 COR. 12:28; EPH, 4:11
5. PAUL (NOT PETER) WAS "BEHIND THE VERY CHIEFEST APOSTLES IN NOTHING" 2 COR. 12:11,12 PAUL CLAIMS THAT HE IS THE CHIEF APOSTLE.
6. PAUL SAID THAT WHATEVER PETER WAS TO THE CIRCUMCISION (JEWS) HE, PAUL, WAS TO THE GENTILES. GAL. 2:7,8 THE IDEA OF SUPREME AUTHORITY OR LORDSHIP IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH SCRIPTURE.
7. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY DIDN'T GIVE PAUL (OR PETER) THE RIGHT TO "HAVE DOMINION OVER" THEIR FAITH. 2 COR. 1:24 THE CORINTHIANS WERE TO STAND BY THEIR OWN FAITH, NOT BY SOMEONE ELSE'S DOMINION OR CONTROL.
8. PAUL REBUKES PETER "TO THE FACE BECAUSE HE (PETER) WAS TO BE BLAMED" WITHOUT ANY MENTION OF PETER'S SUPPOSED SUPREMACY. GAL. 2:11-14
9. PAUL WAS THE MAJORITY WRITER OF SCRIPTURE, NOT PETER. PAUL WROTE 13 EPISTLES CONTAINING 2,023 VERSES COMPARED WITH PETER'S 2 EPISTLES OF ONLY 166 VERSES.
10. JESUS REBUKES PETER FOR DRAWING THE SWORD. JOHN 18:10
11. ONLY PETER IS ON RECORD AS HAVING DENIED CHRIST PUBLICLY ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS. MATTHEW 26:69-74
12. JESUS SHARPLY REBUKES PETER FOR ALIGNING HIMSELF WITH SATAN'S PLAN TO DETER HIM FROM ACCOMPLISHING HIS MISSION ON EARTH (TO DIE ON THE CROSS FOR MAN'S SIN) MATTHEW 16:21-23