



# Can Protestants Be United With Catholics?

**Gary Hargrave**

God has been speaking to us for some time about ending division in the Body of Christ, and that means ending division between all the members of the Body of Christ. That means ending division even between Protestants and Catholics. Yet an attitude has crept into Protestant circles to regard the Catholic Church as Babylon or to see the Catholic Church as the Antichrist. This presents a real barrier to unity.



## Everyone Has Fallen Short

Of course, there are reasons to have issues with Catholics over their doctrines and past actions. And there is no question that the Catholic Church has gone through many troubles during its long history. However, do their problems mean that Catholics are not Christians? Do their problems mean that Catholics, according to the Scriptures, are disqualified from the Body of Christ? No. They are a part of the Body of Christ. I recently joined with a group of Protestants who supported the Pope's desire to see outpourings of the Holy Spirit. But by standing with the Pope, we were not denying or trying to absolve every problem, every wrong, or every troubling historic event that has taken place in the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, such problems are not limited to Catholics. If you really want to be fair, you need to study the history of Protestants as well. Their history is just as troubling. If you are a Protestant, have you looked closely at the history of your own denomination? You might find things that you would not necessarily want to be associated with. Many situations that do not reflect Christ show that the necessary spiritual growth has not taken place. People do things that are wrong. Probably every church has had leaders who did not genuinely reflect the scriptural pattern in their own lives and in their relationships with others. The result is that people focus on a negative picture painted by the fleshly actions of those individuals, instead

of seeing a true picture of what God is doing within all the members of His Body. Pastors and those responsible for churches have a real challenge. They must be forceful to remove that which is not following the Word of God. At the same time, they must have faith for people. They have to let people repent and grow and become what they are to be in the Lord.

We are all children in the gospel, and we all need to grow out of our problems. What parent does not have stories about things their children did that they are not proud of? But when those children grow up and become men and women of God, the parents can look back and say, “Those actions weren’t really them. It was just something they went through. We’re not proud of those actions, but we are proud of them. They grew up and became an expression of the will of God.” That is how we should relate to the Body of Christ. If we determine that we are going to evaluate one another by virtue of Church history, then no one can be justified. Everyone has fallen short. But there is a heart that God is bringing forth in this day, a heart to walk with God, to know the Lord, to be filled with His Spirit, and to do His will (Jeremiah 31:33–34). As we believe that and embrace it, we can change everything. We can become something different.



## Through Love Serve One Another

**I**n the fifth chapter of Galatians is a passage we need to absorb because it defines how we are to walk and how we are to live as the Body of Christ.

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out

the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (Galatians 5:13–17)

Throughout the history of the Church, the flesh has always surfaced and created problems. People have sinned, stumbled, and failed. As any of us begin to follow the Lord, the flesh can become overwhelming. The flesh is the greatest negative force that we face; it is something that we constantly wrestle with. We know that in Christ we are born into freedom. However, many times that freedom has become a problem because of the flesh. We also know that serving the flesh is not what God wants or what Christ has called us to be. What He wants is that through love we serve one another.

Without question there were horrible injustices done by the Catholic Church, but we have seen many horrible violations done by Protestant churches as well. Today we have the same sins and failings going on in the Protestant movement. Some of the greatest iniquity in Christian churches, including misappropriating people's money, mishandling designated funds, and committing sexual improprieties is taking place among Protestants. Rather than pointing to the problems in the Catholic Church, or any other denomination, we need to get rid of the real source of the problem, which is Satan who reigns in the earth in religion in all its forms. Someone has to end that reign, and we cannot do that by throwing rocks at one another. If we continue to throw stones, we will kill each other. Yeshua (Jesus) said, "He who is without sin should throw the first stone" (see John 8:7). If we make sin the basis, then we all deserve to die. Instead, the Scriptures give us a different way: "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF'" (Galatians 5:14).



## Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Catholics are much more than our neighbors. They are our brothers and our sisters; they are part of the Body of Christ. But even if they were only neighbors, the whole Law is fulfilled

in loving your neighbor as yourself. As much as I am believing for my church to be men and women of God and to be those who bring the Kingdom of God into this earth, I must believe for my neighbor to have the same fulfillment. I want nothing more than to see people become an expression of the Lordship of Christ in the earth. His Lordship must reign over my heart and over your heart. If I believe that for you, how can I not believe the same for our Catholic brothers and sisters? I cannot honestly believe in Christ's Lordship becoming a reality for you and me if I do not believe, with the same intensity of spirit, for it to become a reality for my neighbor. One of the greatest things I could ever picture is the Lordship of Yeshua our Messiah ruling and reigning in the Catholic Church. What an amazing manifestation that would be.

Are you concerned about the sins of the Catholic Church? What about your sin? You want Yeshua to forgive that, don't you? How does the Lord's Prayer go? "Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive those who trespass against me" (see Matthew 6:12). If we are going to hold onto sin or hold onto wrong, then we would have to hold onto all of it, including our own. Yeshua did not come to provide selective salvation. His blood is good for all, for every violation, for every sin—including that within the Church.

When satan was cast down, he began to invade the Church and has relentlessly continued this assault (Revelation 12:12–13). What can we say to that? Let me tell you what to say: "Go, Satan!" (Matthew 4:10). Let us get rid of him in every place where the Ecclesia of Christ exists. The Scripture is clear: "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:15). If we look at the Catholics and assume that because they have problems we are justified in biting and devouring them, then we are taking on the mantle of satan the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). It is time for the Body of Christ to take off this mantle of accusation. It is time that we stop biting and devouring one another in the Body of Christ. In every area we must stop this because the result is that we will be consumed by one another. I contend that the power of the Church has evaporated because we ourselves have devoured it. We have devoured it by devouring one another.





## Walk by the Spirit

As Paul reminds us, “I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). This is the only answer we have. This drive for love, for being led by the Spirit, and walking by the Spirit has been the basis of our connection with our Catholic brothers and sisters. We are believing to see a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church; and we are not even the ones who started this burden of intercession. I wish we had been that aware. Instead, some Catholic brothers came to us and said, “Can you help us? We are believing to see new outpourings, new releases of the Spirit.”

How do we end our problems? How do we end the destructive pattern in the Church that is born out of problems of the flesh living and breeding in our organizations? We end it by walking in the Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill, we will not promote, and we will not continue the desires of the flesh.

Hopefully, by getting involved in this vision together with the Catholic Church, we will all be filled anew. May God grant us a double portion of His Spirit. “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (Galatians 5:17). That is a good description of the history of the Church. We have never been able to do what we really wanted to do because of this battle between flesh and Spirit. The deeds of the flesh have been seen in every aspect of Church history up to this current day. The answer for that is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:18–21)



## Walking Together by the Spirit

All the deeds of the flesh have been evidenced in the Church. There have been acts of immorality and impurity. There have been enmities, strife, jealousy, dissensions, factions, and envying. We cannot hide from it. We realize that this has been our history and that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. That is why we have had such difficulty doing what the Lord said when He taught us to pray, which is to bring God's heavenly Kingdom into this realm of the earth (Matthew 6:9-13).

Yet as we continue reading from Galatians 5, we see that there is a way:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

That is what we are doing as we make connections within the Catholic Church. We are walking by the Spirit. But what about all that history? There is one answer: the blood of Jesus Christ. What about tomorrow? Walk by the Spirit. We are believing for the whole Body of Christ to walk by the Spirit. Rather than looking for problems to criticize, let us look at the heart. Two popes in succession (Benedict and Francis) have had a heart to walk with God and bring to birth a walk in the Spirit for people. They did this with full faith that they were being led by the Spirit. Therefore, I believe the result will be a greater level of infilling of the Holy Spirit into the Catholic Church. We bless that to happen.



## A New Day of the Spirit

The apostle Paul chose Timothy to follow after him. Since recent popes have had a similar heart, I believe that the leaders they appoint will have this same determination for the Catholic Church to be led by the Spirit. When that happens, it will be a new beginning of the history of the Catholic Church in which a deep humility will emerge.

We read in Isaiah 51:1, “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug.” Our failures humble us to appropriate the Spirit. All these terrible problems can have a very positive result in humbling the leadership of the Church. I pray that these problems humble all of us as part of the Body of Christ. And we bless the current Pope, and all the popes that follow, to accomplish this drive from the Lord to see a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church.

Lord, let there be a new leadership of those who will walk by the Spirit, those who will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh but will lead the Catholic Church out of yesterday and into a new day. A new day does not mean modernization or liberalization, but rather a day of the Spirit. Let there be the leading and the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the billions of people who are part of the Catholic Church can have a true walk in the Spirit. We believe for it; we create it together with them. Once again, our emphasis is to say: “Satan, be gone! You no longer have any place in the Catholic Church, in the Protestant denominations, or anywhere in Christianity. We cast you out, in the name of the Lord.” Father, pour out your Spirit upon the Catholic Church and upon all the Protestant churches. Let there be a double portion of Your Spirit that rests upon us. Let this be a beginning of seeing the Body of Christ released to come forth into a new day, in the name of the Lord.

*All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible 1995 (NASB1995).*



# ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel in the land of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God* and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

Gary and his family reside in Hawaii.

**For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: [www.HargraveMinistries.org](http://www.HargraveMinistries.org).**

## ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power, and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish foundations of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes our ability to:

- **Feed the poor and break the cycle of poverty in Israel**
- **Support the orphans and widows of fallen Israeli soldiers**
- Provide physical and emotional care to **child victims of terrorism**
- **Build bridges between Christians and Jews with biblical study and research**
- Support archaeology and preservation of the **biblical City of David**
- Provide 24/7 **care for Holocaust survivors**
- **Help persecuted Jews around the world return to Israel and start new lives**
- Plant trees to **reforest Israel** and help create **"The Gospel Trail"** between Nazareth and Capernaum

Hargrave Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported through the generous contributions of ministry friends and partners. To learn more about the work of Hargrave Ministries or to partner in its outreach to Israel, please visit: [www.HargraveMinistries.org](http://www.HargraveMinistries.org)

