



IS THE POPE INFALLIBLE

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

First of all, let's make sure everyone understands what the Catholic Church means when it says the Pope is infallible.

Many people think it means that the Pope cannot sin. That is not true. Not sinning is known as impeccability.

Infallibility, in Catholic doctrine, means that when the Pope – either individually or through a Church council - teaches as the head of the Church, to the entire Church, on a matter of faith and morals – he is prevented by the Holy Spirit from teaching error.

But, you might say, "No man is infallible. Only Jesus was infallible." Oh, really? Well, don't all Christians – at least those who believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, Word of God - agree that the writers of the various books of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, etc.) were infallible when writing their part of what we now call Sacred Scripture?

Or, you might object by saying, "Nowhere does the Bible say anything about the Pope, or the head of the Church, being infallible."

What Does the Bible Say?

NO, there is no passage in the Bible that directly says, "The Pope is infallible." However, there are a number of passages that do indeed support this concept of infallibility:

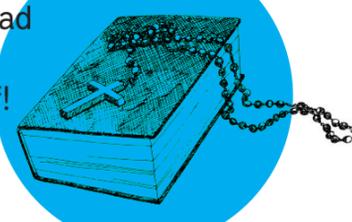
For example: In **Matthew 16:18**, and then again in **Matthew 18:18**, Jesus says first to Peter, and then to all of the Apostles along with Peter: "...whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This implies that the binding and loosing will be done infallibly on earth, as it is being guaranteed by God in heaven. God would not guarantee error.

Then, in **Acts 15:28**, the Fathers of the Council of Jerusalem – the very 1st Church council – wrote to the Gentiles saying: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things..." In other words, the council of Jerusalem, speaking with the Holy Spirit, was speaking infallibly.

In Luke 10 we see Jesus sending out the 72. And He sent them out with the authority to speak for Him. **Luke 10:16**, "Whoever hears you, hears Me. Whoever rejects you, rejects Me." Which means the disciples must have had the gift of infallibility since they were speaking for Jesus Himself!

Also, the church (not the Bible, by the way), is identified as the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). Well, in order to fulfill its role as the pillar and ground of the truth – the upholder and foundation of the truth - it cannot teach error in faith and morals. It has to be infallible in its teachings. If the Church teaches error, then it cannot be said to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

And, for the Church to be infallible in its teachings, it means someone within the Church has to have the charism, or the gift, of infallibility. That person, is the Pope.



What Does Common Sense Say?

Think about this: If you have two Christians, both devout in their faith, both love Jesus, both read and study the Word of God, both are prayerful persons; yet, they disagree on the interpretation of a passage of Scripture regarding salvation – did God leave them on their own, without any way to know for sure which of them is right and which of them is wrong? Is the best they can do is one person's fallible opinion vs. the other person's fallible opinion?

If they take their dispute to the Church – in accord with Matthew 15:15-18 – is there no

one in the Church who can make a definitive and authoritative decision in the matter? Is there no one in the Church who can give them an infallible answer?

In the Catholic Church, there is someone who can give a definitive and authoritative – and infallible – answer when there is a dispute as to doctrines and morals. That person is the Bishop of Rome. The successor of Peter. The Pope.

