

The Testimony of a Roman Catholic Converted to Christ

By Tom Craggs, Jr.

THE SPIRITUAL DARKNESS OF MY LIFE –

From my infant baptism to my first communion, I grew up amid the Catholic teachings and traditions. My family was reasonably religious, and my mother took us to mass every Sunday.

At the age of seven, I entered a Catholic school where I received all of my religious training. During those early years, I prayed, read my catechism, made my first communion and was confirmed.

Through my adolescent and teen years I went to confession, prayed the rosary to Mary and participated in all the other religious activities in the Roman Catholic Church. My mother saw to it that we took an active part in the Catholic holidays and celebrations.

However, with all my prayers and religious living, I still had a deep feeling of emptiness. In spite of all my religious practices I longed for something, but didn't know what was missing. I tried to lead a Christian life, but I never seemed to be able to do enough. It was like being incomplete; a personal feeling of not doing enough to "please" God.

Moreover, as I grew older I began to feel Catholic traditions to be empty and without meaning, and found it increasingly difficult to have much interest in a mysterious, nebulous God about whom I knew virtually nothing.

I continued in the Roman Catholic Church because Catholicism appeared to be a viable means of earning my salvation. I maintained a number of Catholic traditions (confession, observing the holy days, etc.) but performed them strictly out of habit. I still had a strong sense of Catholic identity but felt my growing skepticism had little to do with my denomination. I was miserable and unhappy, and knew I needed something more to satisfy my life ... spiritually.

THE SPIRITUAL DAWN OF MY LIFE –

During the early 1970s, I came in contact with a dear Christian man who showed a genuine concern for my personal salvation. With his nonstop smile, the love of God was written all over his face. The concern and warmth that radiated from within him was overwhelming.

One day while I was at work, this man visited me to discuss spiritual matters. I listened attentively as the Gospel was being presented to me for the first time in my life. He began to share with me how I could be saved and have full assurance of salvation.

He asked me some very stirring questions regarding my spiritual condition. First, he asked about my personal salvation – if I had ever been saved, born again. I didn't quite understand what he meant. I responded by saying I had always felt a strong God consciousness and that I was basically a good person. I added that I was a Catholic, received the sacraments and hoped this was enough to earn salvation and merit the favor of God. He then asked, by what authority did I base my beliefs? Was it from the Bible or perhaps from what a denomination possibly taught? The only way I could honestly respond was with what I had been taught, as a Catholic. This was the first time in my life I felt that my Church, my denomination, was being challenged.

He then took the Bible and turned to Romans, chapter 3 and read aloud versus 10 and 23 to show me from the scriptures that all people, whether they be Catholic and non-Catholic, are sinners by nature and need a Saviour. Notice:

“As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

He then proceeded to share with me from the scriptures that good deeds, church membership and receiving the sacraments were not going to earn me salvation. Only a conscious acceptance and receiving of Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, apart from anything else I could do, would save me. He read from Ephesians 2:8-9:

“For by grace (God's unmerited favor toward man) are ye SAVED through FAITH (in Jesus Christ); and that not of yourselves, it (salvation) is the gift of God — Not of WORKS (good deeds, church membership, etc.) lest any man should boast.”

He read many other salvation verses throughout the New Testament that revealed Biblical salvation was in Christ and Him alone, but the three verses which penetrated my heart the most were John 3:16 and 18, and 1 John 5:11-12. Notice:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Before he left that day, he asked me to earnestly pray to God about the things he shared from the Bible regarding personal salvation. He said if I would only look to Him and say in all earnestness, “Reveal your plan of salvation, show me the truth,” that God would lift the veil and remove the blinders from my spiritual eyes.

At the time, I must admit, I was shocked as I listened to the Scriptures he read to me regarding personal salvation. They were totally opposite of what Catholicism taught concerning salvation. For the first time in my life, I realized Biblical salvation was definitely different than Catholic salvation.

To be sure, the most important truth I learned from our conversation was that all the good deeds a person may do during a lifetime are not what makes it possible for that person to go to Heaven. As it is shown in Isaiah 64:6, “All our righteousness are as filthy rags;” and again in Ephesians 2:8-9, “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.” Therefore, what saves a person from going to Hell is not good works, but faith in Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior.

As a Catholic, I always believed in Christ and that He died for my sins, but I had never put my full and complete trust in His sacrifice alone by receiving Him as Savior for my personal salvation. I had always been taught that receiving and trusting was not enough, but to this had to be added sacraments and good works. By denying salvation by faith alone in Christ I had, in reality, been denying that Jesus’ sacrifice for my sins was perfect, complete and finished. Instead of receiving God’s free gift, I was trying to earn salvation and merit the favor of God.

THE LIGHT DAWNS –

My life was never to be the same after my conversation with this dear man. God, through the Holy Spirit, did exactly what this man said He would do — reveal and enlighten.

This man’s personal testimony of what Christ had done in his life, plus nagging theological questions and a hunger for more than what I already knew and had, led me to purchase a Bible to search the Scriptures for truth regarding personal salvation.

THE SPIRITUAL DAYLIGHT OF MY LIFE —

As I studied the Scriptures, the Spirit of God began dealing with my heart. At first, it was hard for me to imagine that salvation was a free gift from God for all those who would call upon the Lord

Jesus to save them. The more I thought these things over, the more the Spirit of God kept dealing with my heart. As I continued to search the Scriptures, God began to remove the blinders from my eyes.

As I went from one New Testament book to another, I realized they all proclaimed and pointed to Christ; not a church, not a denomination, but Christ Jesus. The fight in me gradually started to drain away as I was discovering there was much truth in what I was reading. In everyone's life there comes that moment of truth. I had discovered many revelations from God's Word that began to bring conviction to my heart of my lost spiritual condition.

I finally had to admit that I was not saved. I came to the realization that I couldn't earn or merit salvation by being a good moral person and a church member. I realized the only One who could fulfill my need of salvation and forgiveness of sin was the sinless One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENT IN MY LIFE —

In August of 1973, in the middle of the afternoon as I sat on the sofa in the recreation room at work, I bowed my head and confessed to God I was a lost sinner in need of a Saviour. I prayed the only prayer that God will accept from a lost sinner: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I am spiritually lost and in need of a Saviour. I now accept and receive Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and Lord."

Immediately after I prayed that prayer, the Lord saved me and gave me the assurance of salvation and made me a new creature in Christ. From that moment on, my whole perspective on life changed. The newly found peace, joy and love flooded my soul like a river! The happiness I experienced knowing my sins were forgiven! That was truly the most wonderful day of my life because Jesus Christ had become my all and all. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free...if the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" John 8:32, 36. For the first time in my life I felt free from the burden of sin and guilt. I had experienced what it means to be born again.

I discovered that no one is "born" a Christian. For you see, I had been brought up to believe that all Catholics were Christians. I did not know the difference at that time between a Catholic and a Christian. A person who is a Catholic is not a Christian until that person receives Christ as Saviour and follows in His footsteps. The Bible definition of a Christian is found in II Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." A Christian is one who has been made a new creature in Christ. I can never thank the Lord enough for showing me this wonderful truth. That mysterious, nebulous God who was so far away has now become my closest companion.

Dear Catholic friend, I trust my personal testimony has touched your heart and has helped you realize your need of salvation.

Will you with a sincere heart call upon the Lord Jesus to save you now? Will you put your full and complete trust in His sacrifice alone by receiving Him as Saviour? Will you trust Him, by faith alone, this very moment? What will your answer be?

WHAT YOU MUST REALIZE AND ACCEPT TO BE SAVED:

- **FIRST ... GOD LOVES YOU —**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

- **SECOND ... YOU MUST ADMIT YOUR NEED AND ACCEPT THAT YOU ARE A SINNER —**

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.” “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 23).

- **THIRD ... JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY REMEDY FOR SIN —**

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18a). “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).

- **FOURTH ... YOU MUST RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL LORD AND SAVIOUR —**

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:17, 36).

The word “believe” in the New Testament means more than intellectual assent to a fact. The word means, adherence to, committal to, faith in, reliance upon. It means to put your complete trust in Christ alone, to save you. It also means that you are willing to depend on Him for everlasting life.

After doing this, God promises you are not condemned but have everlasting life and that you shall never perish. “Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that

sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Jesus Christ calls this experience the “new birth.” He told Nicodemus: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3b). Jesus taught Nicodemus the necessity of having an inner transformation that comes only from God. This necessity of a new birth permeates the New Testament. (See II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:22-24; I Peter 1:3, 22-23; 2:2; I John 3:9; 4:7; 5:4). It is through receiving and believing in Him that one is born again. When Christ comes into a life, that life is transformed. Added to this, a new power enters the person’s life. This power enables the person to be and do what he or she could never be or do alone.

If you want to receive Jesus Christ, by faith, to be your Saviour, pray this simple but sincere prayer and mean it with all your heart:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner, I repent of my sins, I accept the fact that you died for me on the cross of Calvary. I now open my heart’s door and receive you as Saviour and Lord of my life. I will depend on you from this moment on for my salvation. Please take full control of my life and help me to live for you and be a faithful Christian... Amen.

If you prayed this prayer in all sincerity, you are now a child of God. This is the beginning of a wonderful new life with Christ! As a new Christian, begin to:

- **Read the Bible daily to get to know Christ better**
- **Talk to Christ in prayer daily**
- **Share Christ with others**
- **Be baptized by immersion**
- **Worship, fellowship and serve in a Bible believing church which makes Christ preeminent**

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AS MY LORD AND SAVIOUR

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