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I HAVE BECOME SECURE IN CHRIST, NOT IN RELIGION.

I was a Christian for over a year before I realized I was a true child of God. At the age of 34, God graciously gave me eternal life according to His promises in the Holy Bible. I had always thought I was a Christian and that I would go to heaven when I died because of my Roman Catholic heritage. I now realize, that despite all my church attendance, sacraments, and commandment keeping, I would have gone straight to hell because I was trusting in my own merits to earn salvation rather than depending on Jesus to save me.

It seems that everyone strives for two things in life – security and significance. If a person would honestly analyze their motives, I believe that they would see that all their activities in life fall into these two categories. The need to feel accepted by others (security) and the need to feel important (significance) are our two main driving factors.

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Although my parents were not practicing Catholics, I was sent to Catholic schools and received the sacraments as I grew in age – Infant Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, etc. I turned to God early in life because I could not find love anywhere, neither in the home, nor in the Brooklyn, New York neighborhood where I was raised. Violence and rejection were everywhere, so my attention was focused on trying to please the Lord to receive the positive reinforcement that I desperately needed. My efforts were directed through the only way I knew – the Catholic Institution. “Mother Church” became my source of security, and my devout adherence to its teachings became my source of significance.

There was still an emptiness inside me ... I always felt I was missing the mark

I attended daily mass and communion for almost 25 years. If I missed mass during the week, I would try to make up for it by going to extra masses on the weekend. Many a time, as a teenager, I would sit through four or five Masses on Saturday morning and then say an entire rosary at each Station of the Cross. I would give up eating meat for the entire season of Lent. I say this not to boast of my piety, but to show the utter futility of it all (see Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5).

However, with all this religious activity, there was still emptiness inside me that I could not explain. I thought I wasn't doing enough for God, so I would make additional and countless sacrifices to make the Lord accept me. But still there was a void within me that I could not seem to fill. I did not try to find happiness by the sinful pleasures of the world and I continually strived to please God, but deep down inside I always felt I was missing the mark.

After serving with the “Green Berets” ... I seriously considered the priesthood

While in college, I took Army ROTC and the challenge of military training intrigued me. After graduate school, I entered the Army and volunteered for Airborne, Ranger and Special Forces training. After serving with the “Green Berets” as a company commander with the 10th Special Forces Group, I volunteered for Vietnam and departed overseas. At the age of 27, while still living a celibate lifestyle, I seriously considered the priesthood. However, when I returned to the states from Vietnam, I became involved with numerous Catholic activities, and was elected Parish Council President.

In the mean time, some sincere Catholic friends were telling me of a new life in the Spirit through the “charismatic experience”. After two years of being “witnessed to”, I received the “gift of tongues” during a Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference. The fact that this occurred on All Saints Day was a tremendous boost for my “Spiritual ego”. Through this experience, I became a better Catholic, the Mass became more meaningful, the words of the priest became more profound and his sermons were a blessing. I purchased a Catholic Bible and started attending Catholic Charismatic Bible studies and prayer meetings. There had always been a “missing link” in my search for the Lord and now I thought I had found it.

With the ecumenical flavor of the charismatic influence, it did not seem too great a sin to associate with Protestants, so, I started dating a Baptist. After we were engaged, she decided to become Catholic. She took instructions in the Catholic faith and we were married by a priest in a Catholic Church.

When I returned ... from Vietnam, I ... was elected Parish Council President.

After awhile, I joined the Baptist Church to get a better understanding of her background. About a year later we left the Baptist church and joined a Pentecostal fellowship where we remained for three years. Although I was a very active member of these various churches, the gospel of salvation was never really explained to me.

All of this time I still wanted to return to the Catholic Church. All of my formal education, with the exception of seven years of post-graduate studies, was in Catholic schools, so my devotion to Catholicism, which I defended vehemently. Frankly speaking, what I saw in Protestants made me want to return to the Catholic Church all the more. I didn’t realize at the time, that many Protestants are without Christ and need to be “born again” also, just like Catholics need biblical salvation.

Some time later, my life really started to change. I had always found it difficult to study the Bible, but now I could not put it down. I suddenly had a deep hunger for TRUTH and I felt the Lord leading me to understand the basic doctrines of Biblical Christianity. As I grew spiritually, I finally realized why my life was changing. A year and a half prior to this, I was reading a book on Basic Christianity where it was explained to me that I HAD A SINFUL NATURE

I received the “gift of tongues” during a Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference

While I was reading this book, I realized that I was a condemned sinner and that I could never save myself by good works, but that Jesus Christ had to save me. At this point, I threw myself

on the Lord's mercy and cried out that I wanted to be "born again". I did not become aware that this act of faith is what makes one a Christian until later when I fully understood the meaning of salvation.

Further Bible study revealed some shocking differences with what I had been taught as a Catholic. I could not find anything about monks, nuns, novenas, sacraments, indulgences, etc. Some would insist that these are part of "Catholic Tradition" which is "Sacred", and would even refer to 2 Thessalonians 3:6 that there is nothing wrong with tradition. I would agree, except when "Sacred Tradition contradicts Sacred Scripture", then it becomes a serious issue, as warned by Jesus Himself in Matthew 15:6.

The Mass became more meaningful ... and the priest's sermons were a blessing

I discovered that the Catholic doctrine of salvation contradicts Romans 4:5, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Titus 3:5; purgatory contradicts I John 1:7; confession contradicts I John 2:1; holy days of obligation contradicts Colossians 2:16; the office of Pope contradicts 1 Peter 5:13; mandatory celibacy for priests contradicts 1 Timothy 4:3; the title for priests contradicts Matthew 23:9; praying to saints contradicts 1 Timothy 2:5; the Mass contradicts Hebrews 10:10-18; etc.

It disturbed me that there were many Roman Catholic priests speaking in tongues, yet hearing confessions; they were performing miracles, yet they were still teaching about purgatory. What was their source of power for the miraculous, I wondered? It could not be the Holy Spirit if they were still preaching a false way to heaven!

I have forsaken any hope of achieving heaven by my own good works

I also noticed a familiar preaching style among Pentecostals. While I was in the Army with the Special Forces, I was extensively trained in sabotage and subversion. I noticed that the same mind control techniques that I was taught to incite riots and rebellion were the same preaching techniques that Pentecostals were using in their sermons to manipulate their congregations (see 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

In addition, as I grew to understand the basic doctrines of sin and salvation, I found other Charismatics in direct disagreement with the basic essential doctrines of Biblical Christianity. They believed that it was possible to lose one's salvation, which contradicts John 10:28-28; they also believed that one can rise above sin, which contradicts I John 1:8.

Finally, I realized that if Charismatics, who claim to be "filled with the Holy Spirit", could be in such Scriptural error, then what they had must be another spirit, and that the "full gospel" was "another gospel" (see 2 Corinthians 11:4). It then became obvious to me that the Charismatic Movement is a clever Satanic move to get people to bypass Calvary and get them to the Upper Room where they can perform the "signs of an apostle" without being truly converted (see Matthew 7:22-23 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12).

I came to believe that Jesus Christ did all the penance for my sins

The method by which the Devil used to bring sin into the world was to entice Eve to become more spiritual; and he still uses the same tactics today.

I thank God every day for my deliverance from Romanism and Pentecostalism. I now fellowship and worship in an independent, fundamental, Christ-honoring assembly where the Word of God is our sole authority. It is only through the true power of the Holy Spirit that I could have been freed from the bondage of all the heresies and unsound teachings to which I had been exposed.

The Lord Jesus promised, “you shall know the TRUTH and the TRUTH shall make you free” (John 8:32). I had sought the Lord since I was a child and God honored my search. “And you will see Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all of your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Many Roman Catholics may probably think that I have “abandoned my faith”, but in reality, I have forsaken any hope of achieving heaven by my own good works and have put my trust in the complete and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I came to believe that Jesus Christ did all the penance for my sins.

I have become secure in Christ, not in religion ... and knowing Him personally has given me significance

And the only thing left to do to go to heaven is to have faith in the crucifixion of Christ as complete atonement for my sins.

In my life without Christ, I had no real peace or joy in my heart. I was a loner, and felt very uncomfortable around strange people. I was extremely insecure and had many fears inside of me that I tried to overcome by being boisterous and aggressive. Due to the hostile environment of my youth, I was a very angry person and became easily upset with trivial things.

Now, by the abundant grace of God, I find myself being able to build relationships with all types of people. I have become secure in Christ, not in any religion or church. Having the assurance of eternal life and knowing Christ personally as a friend, has given me significance. It is my prayer that all who read this may find their security and significance in the Christ of the Bible, as well as eternal life with Him throughout all eternity. AMEN