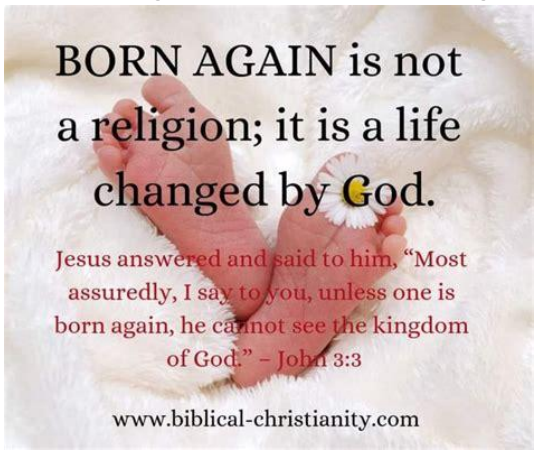
My Testimony – My New Birth



"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

Introduction

If a person has not experienced true salvation (by way of the "second birth" or "new birth" mentioned in the Bible in John chapter 3), then they can't really understand how it works. God granted me His glorious salvation many years ago, in the 1980s, and a radical spiritual change came over me that everyone around me – in my family and circle of friends could clearly see.

God started to get my attention

God had been getting my attention in various ways, including by the suicide of a cousin of mine, who lived in another state and who I really didn't know very well – but whose death really got me thinking about my own life and death. As a Catholic at that time, I had not been praying to Mary or to any saints, and of course most of the prayers I prayed, when I did pray were the memorized ones: the Hail Mary and the Our Father. I had not been going to confession and at most, I would go to mass on Easter or Christmas since those were to two major holidays that Catholics are required to attend church – more or less as a vaccination against hell. Other than that I had pretty much stopped attending the Catholic church on a weekly basis, or any church of any kind for that matter, unless there was a wedding or funeral that I was expected to attend. On the few times per year that I did attend mass, it always surprised me to see 3 classes of people there: One group that left right after communion, another group that left right before the mass ended, and the rest who left once the priest had finished his closing "benediction".

My mother was still a very devout Catholic and a member of the local rosary society, yet she had no problem divorcing my father, who never treated her badly in the 24 years they had been married. My mother had some serious issues going back to her childhood, and the little counseling she and my father had with a local Catholic priest was about as helpful as you would expect from a clergyman who had never been married. I mention this situation with my parents, because several years before they divorced, we stopped going to

church together as a family on a regular basis. I was in my mid-teens at that time. I most likely would have gone to mass regularly (at least until I moved out to live on my own when I was 23) if my parent's marriage had not started to fall apart when it did. But that does not mean I would have been getting much out of the heavily ritualistic nature of the Catholic mass, which seemed like such a repetitive ceremony week after week, and nothing like Protestant and non-denominational churches that have a reasonably long educational message from Scripture every week, and have very inspirational hymns, and often (in the more biblical churches) have ways of interacting during the week, like fellowship meals after each service, home bible studies and prayer meetings during the week and various ministry opportunities in the local church and to the local community.

In spite of not attending mass regularly, I was under the hearing of Bible preaching on TV – back when there were a whole lot less "kooks" on the air preaching their false gospels, begging for money and scratching people's itching ears. One of those TV preachers actually preached about HELL and pointed out the very unbiblical teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. I had always thought that hell was for non-Catholics, especially really bad people, people far worse than me. Because the Catholic Church taught me that I could get to Heaven by way of Purgatory and that I didn't have to worry about Hell, unless I did something really bad before I died without repenting or confessing to a Catholic priest. But hearing the truth about Heaven and Hell really had me concerned, concerned enough to cause me to cry out to God to save my soul. I learned that EVERYONE is headed for HELL until and unless Jesus SAVES THEM *FROM* Hell. I learned that from the perspective of an infinitely holy God, we are all hell-deserving sinners, as God tells us in the Bible:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:23)

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15)

I was not storing up good deeds for some future time in Heaven where I would redeem those good deeds for my salvation. God supernaturally changed me, in much the same way (but not nearly as dramatically) that is described of the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus who had been rounding up Christians to put in jail and put to death before God converted him. And please note, Paul did not convert himself into being a true follower of Christ. GOD DID IT. It was that kind of a change for me, as I believe it was for Paul, where overnight, my thinking started changing and I started thinking about God, the God of the Bible, a whole lot more than I ever had in my entire life. The change in me affected my relationships to everyone around me. It opened up doors to new relationships with other Christians who had experienced from God what I had just experienced. But it also closed doors to some relationships that I had had for a long time, relationships with people who did not want to know this God

who had saved my soul. Those people wanted the “old me” to come back, including a woman I had been dating for several years. But that “old me” was gone for good. He was never coming back because God had taken him away. This “new me” had and has new priorities and new interests that the “old me” never had and never would have acquired without the supernatural intervention of God in my life, plain and simple.

The salvation that I experienced is a salvation I could not see or understand – until I had been supernaturally regenerated (made spiritually alive) by the Holy Spirit. It was a salvation that I didn’t work for, didn’t earn, didn’t deserve, and that my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ had PAID FOR IN FULL with His precious blood, when He sacrificed His perfect sinless life on the cross at Calvary, outside the city of Jerusalem.

As the Holy Spirit continued to enlighten me and as I read the Bible, I also learned that Heaven is a place of absolute holiness, not some place to indulge in whatever selfish things we indulged in here on earth. Heaven is a place of fellowship with a God who passionately hates sin as much as He loves righteousness.

“Follow peace with all men, and **holiness**, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14)

No one ever born wants to be in a place as holy and sinless as Heaven. We would not fit in. We would even hate being there. That is why, in order to be ready for Heaven, we must be changed, by God. We must be “born again”:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

When I became supernaturally “born again” I started noticing changes in my thinking. The Holy Spirit was now guiding and influencing my thoughts. I started to have new desires that I never had before. For instance, I had a spiritual hunger that I never had before, as talked about here:

“Blessed are they which do **hunger** and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)

I was hungry for fellowship with other “born again” Christians. I was hungry for bible study. I wanted to learn more about this God whom I would be spending eternity with. I was now concerned about pleasing God, in the ways that the Bible says we should please God – by serving Him and obeying His commands. I was suddenly, out of nowhere, concerned about the eternal destiny of my friends and relatives, who I now realized were headed for Hell, just as I would have been without the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I had a desire to tell others about **this wonderful Savior who bled and died a horrible death so that I could be forgiven of my sins**, because that is the awful price of salvation for sinners – the death of God’s only begotten sinless Son – and that is the ONLY payment for sin that God will accept. A lifetime of

your own good deeds cannot erase a single sin. No amount of penance can erase a single sin. No amount of time spent in an imaginary place called Purgatory can erase a single sin or even make you ready for Heaven through any kind of after-death suffering. This is how our good deeds look, compared to the perfect sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as **filthy rags**;" (Isaiah 64:6)

The spiritual change that came over me caused be to look at the world so much differently than I had looked at it before. I started to appreciate God's creation so much more and in doing that, I noticed His handiwork in His creation – in nature – His magnificent design in the world around me. I then started to see how foolish the theory of evolution is, and how it has absolutely no reasonable scientific explanation for the vast amount of intricate design found in all living things including DNA, molecular machines, symbiotic systems, photosynthesis, the human immune system and so much more. I also felt much more grieved inside when I sinned against this God and Savior. I now felt grieved when people around me took my Savior's name in vain, using His name as a curse word. I now knew that Heaven would be my home someday and that my sins had been paid in FULL by the Lamb of God, who loved me and died for me and who I would be spending eternity with – in HIS eternal kingdom – with all those other children of His who love Him and who are living for Him and longing to be with Him in Heaven some day.

So the life changing spiritual transformation that occurred in me had nothing to do with the Catholic religion I was brought up in or with anything I DID or DID NOT DO to try to earn God's favor or to try to undo my bad deeds. It was all an act of the grace and mercy of God towards me, a completely undeserving, ungodly sinner. As a Catholic I had figured that I would get to heaven one day, probably by way of Purgatory (which doesn't even exist), but I had never worried about going to Hell. It wasn't until I heard some preaching about Hell that I realized I was in FAR more trouble with God than I had been told by the Catholic Church. And as I learned later on, it is a GOOD thing to fear God, if that fear causes you to seek the Lord and seek His deliverance from judgment:

"the FEAR of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the HOLY is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10).

Being born-again enabled me to see just how HOLY God is and just how much God HATES sin. God's extreme holiness is pointed out in a verse in the book of James that most people are not aware of, especially Catholics who usually just quote James to try to justify Catholicism's man-made works-based salvation plan:

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in ONE point, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL." James 2:10.

Something else that God made me aware of when He saved me was HIS WRATH, which most people nowadays know nothing about because so many people don't like that side of God and don't want to know about it, as if ignoring danger could ever prevent it from happening. We can get a vivid picture of God's wrath in this quote from the book of Revelation:

*"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, **and all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8*

Notice how that verse includes "all liars". Have you ever lied? Even just once? Remember what is said in James 2:10… "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in ONE point, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL." THAT is how HOLY God is and THAT is how sinful you and I are in the eyes of that Holy God. And we sure can't make "unpleasant" truths go away by saying we don't believe that or by saying "I don't believe in that kind of a god". It doesn't matter what you or I believe about God. He is not a chameleon changing His colors or His standards based upon what we choose to believe about Him.

If you have not already done so, I urge you to seek the Lord while He may be found and to call upon Him while He is near. The best way to seek Him is by READING THE BIBLE, which I began to do when God started to get my attention many years ago. The best time to call upon Him is NOW, because you may not live to see another day or even another hour, my friend. May God richly bless you as He has blessed me through His Divine Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners like you and me. He is our ONLY hope to escape the just punishment in Hell that we all deserve for violating the commandments of a Holy God, every day of our lives, usually without us even realizing it, because of how desensitized to sin we all are.

Summary

If you heard the same Catholic teachings over and over so many times from the Catholic Church as you were growing up, and if so many friends and relatives believed like you do, do you realize *that might be why you believe things that are actually **not true***? I was a Catholic for 30 years and in all those years I never questioned what I was taught. I never thought that what I was taught could have been false. But the more I studied the Bible, especially the New Testament, the more I could see that the Catholic Church did not really resemble the true Church of the first century described in the Bible. God had to show me these things. One of the ways He did that was to put people in my path who most Catholics would label as anti-Catholic. Instead of getting angry or upset with those "anti-Catholics", I decided that I better learn more about what they had to say and why they said the things they said. If you are a Catholic, I highly recommend that YOU do the same, if you have not already done so. — *RM Kane*