

54. Robert Champagne - Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light

The Word of God describes Christ's sheep, before He finds them, as His bitter, obstinately rebellious enemies, without hope, without strength, dead in trespasses and sins, utterly lost, and ruined. The writer of this testimony is certainly no exception. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

Lost Sheep

This sheep, i.e., I, went my own way for a very long time. My blindness and rebellious wandering took me through the dark and treacherous paths of Romanism, psychology, eastern religions and new age philosophy. The Lord Jesus Christ does indeed teach: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). As I reflect on my past, it helps me to realize how utterly impossible it would have been for me to come to Jesus Christ on my own. The Good Shepherd found me and pulled me out of the depths and saved me from hell that I so deserved because of my sins. From the depths of the new heart He has given me, I can say to Christ what Mephibosheth said to David: "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" (2 Samuel 9:8).



The desire to become a priest began when I was five or six years old. After twelve years of seminary studies and training (six years here in Sherbrooke, Quebec, and six years at St. Mary's in Baltimore, Maryland), I was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in the diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, on May 17, 1969. My first parish was Blessed Sacrament in Manchester, my hometown.

During this time, on hundreds of occasions, I blasphemed God's Word in my zeal without knowledge, by offering the "unbloody sacrifice of the Mass." Now the Mass contradicts the Word of God, which plainly teaches that: "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). What folly to repeat the sacrifice of Christ when God says, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). And, "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18).

Often people have asked me if I had studied and read the Bible either as a seminarian or a priest, and if so why, had I not seen the truth? First of all, the unregenerated man cannot see "the light" (1 Corinthians 2:14). And secondly, in the Roman Catholic system, tradition is on an equal par with the Bible itself. This was affirmed at both the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council, which stated: "The Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truth from the Holy Scriptures alone" (Vatican II, Constitution on Divine Revelation - paragraph 9). But Jesus Christ said, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:9).

In spite of the fact that the Word of God clearly contradicts such practices and institutions as the Mass, the papacy, the priesthood, prayer to the saints, confession to a man, prayers for the dead, crucifixes, and images, etc., the Roman Catholic Church in order to keep its traditions has had to twist and change the Holy Scriptures, or simply omit them altogether. Let us take for example God's second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous

God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:3-6). It is evident that Roman Catholic crucifixes, images, and statues provoke God’s anger and manifest the idolatrous, rebellious hearts of men. Yet, many times, I myself had once bowed down to those objects so highly valued by religion just as millions of people are doing today. What does it matter what the majority of men think or esteem? Like the Lord Himself instructed us: “for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). In this manner, God’s second commandment has been nullified so as to keep the human tradition of idol worship. The Orthodox Jews think that Jesus Christ could never be the true Messiah because, in the world’s eyes, Roman Catholicism, with all its idolatry, represents true Christianity. Then how could the Jewish Messiah tolerate this gross rejection of the second commandment, which is so evident in the making of idols, crucifixes, statues, and images? Ignorant of these things, I was well set to continue as a Roman Catholic priest throughout my entire life, but our sovereign God intervened. “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

As I write this brief testimony, I want to make it very clear that I in no way wish to belittle the individuals who are still in the Roman Catholic system. On the contrary, my heart’s desire is that they too might be turned “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). The Bible says, “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). In 1970, my bishop sent me to Odyssey House in order to learn how to minister to drug addicts. This painful experience eventually led me out of the priesthood into a new, modern-day religion called “psychology,” which was for me another dead-end road. Rome changed my position from a priest to a layperson in 1974.

After seven years of working as a mental health therapist, I became interested once again in the spiritual. Only this time I explored the occult, out of which had grown the “science” of psychology as is evident from the biographies of Freud and Jung. I also thoroughly studied Eastern religions. After much disenchantment and deep discouragement, I heard about the need of being “born again.”

However, today’s evangelical scene is like a wartime minefield littered with deceptive, false gospels. I have tripped on many of them. I have seen churches that rightfully emphasize the need of rejecting Rome’s false doctrine, but they neglect the preaching of repentance and God’s call for Christians to live a holy life. Even some cults, like Jehovah’s Witnesses, strongly reject Rome. What is desperately needed today is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the whole counsel of God.

One church even taught me and several other former Roman Catholics that, in order to be saved, we must first diligently practice God’s law in order to see the wickedness of our own heart—and then come to Christ. That fit right in with my Roman Catholic background where anyone who believes that man is absolved and justified by faith alone is anathematized. “Do and do and do; contribute something to your salvation—do your part.” But salvation is of the Lord: “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

Now I praise the Shepherd of my soul for His mercy. He could have left me in my hell-deserving sins, wandering in our contemporary religious wasteland. Instead, He showed me I was dead in my sins; I could not even believe without His gift of saving faith. He called me through His Word, He gave me a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and He gave me the faith to believe (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yes, Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith,” washed me from my sins in His own blood. How wonderful to hear: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Is God Speaking to Your Heart?

What about you, dear Reader, where are you with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Where does your trust lie? Will you trust in Him, or in your religion? Perhaps you are discouraged because you have no hope in yourself or your abilities; if you are lost, with no hope in your “self,” just a dirty beggar, you are the kind that the Lord Jesus came to seek and save. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

Turn to Him and His Word, not to a priest, not to a minister, not to a religion. None of these can deliver your soul from the slavery, guilt, and condemnation of sin. The most important words of this testimony are not my own but those of Him who said: “If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” (John 12:47-48)

This testimony merely touches upon the great widespread apostasy and deceptions. Reader, flee from God’s coming wrath. Judgment is coming. Because of men’s sinful rebellion, the whole earth will be consumed in fire just as the Lord has warned, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved?” (2 Peter 3:10-12)

So, what if the majority of men do not take this truth seriously? Did the same unbelief in Noah’s day prevent the flood from happening? You must “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). Turn away from traditions that nullify God’s Word. Do not be fooled by false gospels and all the other modern inventions on the wide, religious road leading to hell. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). “Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

With all your heart, seek Christ in His written Word. Turn to Him alone for mercy. As the Lord’s Word so graciously tells us, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7). If you are a poor, helpless, hopeless, dirty, totally depraved sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly suited to meet the need of one such as you. He sees you, knows you, and He is full of wisdom, compassion, and power for poor, lost sinners. Call upon Him now; trust Him. He died as a ransom, a substitute, for the ungodly. As Priest, Prince, and Prophet, the Lord invites us to be saved, ruled, and taught by Him. We are to come and find rest in Him: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).