

**Celso Muniz**

*The Professor's Methods Did Not Work*

**Search for Truth**



From childhood on, I looked restlessly for reality and certainty. In my youthful opinion, it was through the priesthood that I could best experience truth and salvation for the soul. A schoolteacher once said to me, “It is more difficult for a priest to be lost than for a stone to float on water.”

I entered seminary for a twelve-year period of study. There I gave myself completely to a life in accordance with the regulations of the Roman Catholic Church. I did all the ascetic exercises, and I also taught asceticism when I was Professor of Ascetic and Mystic Theology and principal of the Metropolitan Seminary at Oviedo in Spain. (Asceticism is the art of mastering “self” and bringing under control all passions, desires, and lusts by severe self-discipline and abstinence, or by inflicting punishments on the body.)

Yet, for myself, I could never find the self-control, peace, and certainty, which I taught other people to acquire. My inner restlessness, added to the many disappointments I experienced from the Roman Catholic Church—when comparing her teaching with the Bible, brought about an increasing struggle within me. While in this spiritual turmoil, my attention was caught by Protestant radio broadcasts from abroad. These made me hunger for the true message of God, and so the Bible became light and food for my soul.

## **The Bible – the Source of Truth**

My desire to understand precisely what Jesus had taught led me to seek contact with a church I had heard of, one where the Bible was the only source of guidance for their faith. As I studied the Bible and spoke with these Christians, I saw Jesus Christ in a completely new way—as a perfect Savior who must be approached directly and personally by faith alone.

As I continued to search the Bible, I recognized more and more clearly the errors of Roman Catholicism, and I wanted to experience the kind of conversion of which the Bible spoke. On the other hand, because I was very tied to my church, I wanted to have this experience without leaving Catholicism.

However, I gradually became convinced that the Roman Catholic Church had pushed Christ aside with her wrong teaching and her highly complex church organization. For me, this was a most painful conclusion to reach.

## **Jesus is the Truth and the Way**

I can never forget the actual night of my conversion. Another day of severe inward conflict had ended when I sought refuge in the Lord and in His Word, the Bible. I could not sleep.

It was not so much that I tried to pray, but prayer suddenly welled up in my heart and I could not hold it back. More than ever before, I felt the burden and weight of the sins of my past life. I thought to myself, “I am completely sinful.” I felt hopelessly forlorn and wondered how I could ever come out of this state.

I thought, “I cannot deliver myself; I am useless and good for nothing in the sight of God.” Never before had I felt so incapable of doing any good. I thought of how many times in the Bible the Lord Jesus Christ had invited those who felt utterly lost to come to Him.

I felt strongly drawn towards Him, for He offered free and undeserved forgiveness. Indeed, Christ had been ready to come to suffer the punishment of men’s sin in their place.

At last, without any further desire to do anything myself, I threw myself into the arms of God my Father, Who had given Jesus Christ for my salvation. I prayed, “Come to me, Lord Jesus, I give myself to You as my only, personal, and all-sufficient Savior.” The hours flew by as minutes. I felt as never before—completely at one with the Lord my God. Deep down within myself I thought, “Thou are mine, O Lord, and I am Thine; Thy possession for all eternity.” I do not know how it happened, but it is a fact that all my wavering, doubting, and vacillation disappeared, and my happiness became complete.

My decision was now made (standing before the choice of Jesus Christ or the Roman Catholic Church); I chose to follow the Lord Jesus Christ whatever the consequences might be. I discovered that Christ took over my life and made me one with Him, simply because I trusted my soul to Him. The Lord is not merely some good man who shows us the way, but He is the Way. The Lord is not just a teacher of truths, but He is Himself the Truth. The Lord is not a hero who gave His life for a human cause, but He is the only Savior who is Life for all who turn to Him.

## Saved by Grace Not by works

As a professor of Ascetic Theology, I studied the mastery of self and the controlling of all human passions. As part of my studies, I investigated the methods employed by other religions, such as the Buddhist monks. In short, I was an expert in all the methods invented by man to produce holiness of life. It is, therefore, of very great significance that I, as a scholar, should come to the commands of God; i.e., His truth. In speaking about my experience, I have often used this illustration:

When I realized the total depravity of my sinful human nature, I felt like a shipwrecked man who sees the glittering shore at a distance. If only he can reach the shore, he will be safe. The shore does not seem very far away, but that is only because things tend to look nearer when viewed across water. The man begins to swim, and at first does quite well, but as he reaches nearer to the shore, he suddenly feels a current which sweeps him back out to sea.

He struggles all over again, for he must get through the currents, and the breakers, or he will die. He tries again and again, but he cannot make it. At last the inescapable conclusion presses upon him – the laws of nature will not permit him to reach his goal. Desperate, and broken, he can only wait for the end. This is the experience of the man who discovers the inadequacy of his own human power to find or please God, the man who realizes that he can never save himself from the Day of Judgment.

On the eternal shore dwells a holy God, and that holy God maintains His holiness and His commandments. These are like the great waves and currents around the eternal coast, and man will never pass them by his own efforts because he is far too weak and sinful by nature.

To extend the picture, imagine that suddenly a helicopter is seen taking off from the shore. Will the pilot see the drowning man? It approaches the place where the lonely man is battling hopelessly against the waves. The helicopter then lifts him out of the water and carries him over the waves and the boiling surf to safety.

Here is a perfect picture of what Jesus Christ has done. He was seated in eternity at the right hand of the Father. Then He came to this world from the Father's side in order to save us. He entered into the boiling surf of God's wrath when He suffered the punishment of sin upon the cross at Calvary. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (II Corinthians 5:21). Countless times He has seen the sinner wrestling with the waves of God's law, and He has reached out with the hand of salvation. Every lost person who has completely trusted and believed His Word has been pulled out of the sea of condemnation and into a new life.

We can never find salvation while part of us trust in what Christ has done to take away the punishment of our sin, and another part of us still trust in sacraments, indulgences, and our own attempted good works. Real salvation comes only when we fully trust Jesus Christ, and Him alone. *"So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree ...'"* (Galatians 3:9-13).