

An Ex-Catholic Explains

TO THE EDITOR:

This is written to those of you who are interested in knowing why I left the Catholic Church. I would much rather tell each of you personally, but I felt led of the Lord to share it this way. And if you have any questions, you can then ask me when we meet.

I've always questioned the Catholic Church, even from a small child. Mainly because of their non-assurance of salvation.

When I was younger, I heard how Jesus died for our sins to open the gates of heaven and that really made me happy because I wanted to go to heaven. So for a while I was a pretty happy kid, and I tried to be good like Jesus which is what we were taught to do, and I'm glad they did.

But one day someone asked me why I was happy and I said because I was going to heaven; but he laughed and told me that no one could know for sure if they were going to heaven or not because you could never know if you had been good enough or not.

Needless to say I became a very depressed little boy, and though I still had fun and good times, the enjoyment and satisfaction just weren't there; nothing could replace the joy I once had.

As I thought about what the guy told me, it didn't make sense to me, because I knew no matter how hard I tried, there were still times when I was bad. And that's why I thought Jesus died for us. He took our place because he loved us and didn't want to send us to hell.

But later on in life, I joined the navy and after my first year I was stationed on board a ship and had to work every other Sunday. So I decided to stop going to church hoping the Lord would show me the truth.

A little over two years later, I decided my life wasn't going the way I wanted it to. So for various reasons I decided I would read the Bible to see what it said. So I read in I John 3:8: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

I knew I was a sinner before I decided to read the Bible but after reading the book of I John three nights in a row, hoping it didn't mean what it said, I realized for the first time in my life that I deserved to go to hell.

Now some of you may not think you've done anything bad enough to deserve to go to hell, so I will try to explain.

and we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away"

So there is nothing we ourselves can do to keep from going to hell or to bring ourselves into a right standing with God.

Romans 3:20-24: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3:22: "But the scriptures hath concluded all under sin, that the promise, by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

The believers in Christ have assurance of salvation through God's word, the Holy Spirit and their love for their brothers in Christ.

I John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Romans 8:16 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

I John 4:13: "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and he in us, because He hath given us of his Spirit."

Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise."

I John 3:14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"

Here is just one reason why I do not believe in purgatory. Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Once our sins are forgiven God forgets them.

I Corinthians 1:18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." The power of God is in the cross upon which Christ shed his blood for our sins.

The beauty of the cross is so

As a Catholic we know that we are not good enough to go to heaven but the Catholic teachings about purgatory and mortal and venial sins have led us to believe that we are not quite bad enough to go to hell either. And this is just one of the areas where we are blinded to the simple good news about Christ.

I'm sure most of you think it's only fair that you get a full day's wage for a full day's work and sometimes even when you get a bonus or a gift above your earned wage, you will because of your pride try to reason out why you deserved it. I know I have.

Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that he will not hear."

Our sins have separated us from God, and God tells us in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death." So our just earned wage for our sin is separation from God and eternal death.

James 2:10 says: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." God is no respecter of persons, in His eyes we are all equally lost in sin and deserving of hell. No mortal and venial sins.

Maybe you've tried to make up for your past sins by making things right or doing charitable acts, maybe settling down and raising a family and going to church. But none of these things will satisfy the pureness of a Holy God.

Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousness are as filthy rags,

simple. Even though we had all sinned and turned from God, He still loved us, and sent Jesus to be punished in our place; then Christ rose from the dead triumphing over sin and death, giving the victory to all those who believe in Him.

So come and join the family of God. Look to Jesus, and humble yourselves by confessing and repenting of your sin. Trust and receive Christ by faith, turning your life over to Him, to obey and follow where He leads.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Receive God's gift, don't try and reason why you deserve it. Simply trust in Christ.

The verses that opened my eyes to the truth were 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."

Gary Westgerdes
Coldwater, Ohio