

Victorious Living

For New Christians

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CHAPTER 1

What Has Really Happened to Me!

You have been born into an abundant life! It is a life that is exciting, fresh, and truly alive. Everything about it glistens like raindrops that fall while the sun is shining. The first gentle breezes of your experience carry the fleeting fragrance of roses. It is indeed a great life and experience, but let us pause for a moment and examine what has really happened to you.

The modern thinking of our generation is that it makes little difference what people believe or which church they attend. But Scripture plainly declares that there is only one gospel that brings salvation to humanity. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Our Lord Himself taught this fact. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The apostle Paul strongly affirmed that there is but one church and one faith. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4-5). Jesus spoke distinctly on the subject: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). We should note that in all of these

scriptural references, there is never a mention made to two churches, or three gospels, or four truths, or five ways; but always the terms are singular: one church, one plan, one gospel, one way, one truth.

Conviction of Sins

Truth that we have never heard about does us very little good. For the work of proclaiming truth, God chose the ministry. A preacher's duty is to declare the truth to lost humanity. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21).

It is most evident from these verses of Scripture the importance that God places on the preacher. Hope for salvation begins when a God-called minister plants the truth of the Scriptures in the heart and mind of a hearer. You are privileged and fortunate to have had a preacher declare to you the truth. This exciting new life that you have just begun actually had its beginning at the moment when the truth captured your heart.

The preaching of the Scriptures and the declaration of the holiness of God produce conviction in the heart of the sinner. Sinful and proud flesh cannot stand unbowed and unbroken in the presence of a holy God. His holiness reveals our sinfulness and filthiness. This produces strong condemnation in one's life and drives him to his knees if he is really hungry for God.

Conviction is what moved you to take your first steps toward God.

Repentance of Sins

The first thing a sinner must do in order to find God is to repent. Repentance is a confessing and forsaking of sins along with a sincere cry for mercy and forgiveness. It is a

turning around. It is resetting one's direction in life. Jesus taught us the absolute necessity of repentance. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). In Acts 2 the apostle Peter's first response to those who inquired concerning salvation was, "Repent."

Repentance was your first substantial step toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Water Baptism for the Remission of Sins

Once a person has thoroughly repented, he is ready to be baptized. Baptism is necessary to salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter in Acts 10 commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptized although they had already received the Holy Ghost. If baptism were not necessary, he would never have commanded them to receive it. Acts 10:48 records, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

It has already been stressed to you by apostolic preaching and guidance that it is extremely important how you are baptized. Jesus gave explicit instruction in Luke 24:47 that repentance and remission of sins (water baptism) should be preached in His name. The apostles adhered to the instructions of our Lord without exception. In every place that records what was said over converts in baptism in the New Testament church, the apostles always used the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that you were baptized in that name. In Acts 22:16, the apostle Paul recounted his conversion and the instructions of Ananias. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Through baptism, sins are washed away! You have been baptized in Jesus' name, and now your sins are gone. When you were baptized, the Lord washed them away, never to be remembered against you. What a thrilling experience!