



A NEW BIRTH INTO A LIVING HOPE (1 Peter 1:3)

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What We Should Do According To The Scriptures

- * Believe
John 6:29
- * Confess
Matthew 10:32
- * Repent
Acts 3:19
- * Be Baptized
1 Peter 3:21
- * Walk In The Light
1 John 1:7
- * Remain Faithful
Revelation 2:10
- * Tell Others
Matthew 28:19

This is a translation of the testimony of Lázaro Reyes Cairo, Havana, Cuba

Until the year 1995 I lived a life filled with carnal pleasures. I had an auto, status, and relative power over hundreds of men. I spent a good part of my adult life in drinking sprees that often culminated in my being a very bad example for my family, neighbours, and friends. I committed fornication and adultery, and I blasphemed quite frequently.

I laughed at all the believers and treated them with disdain. I considered myself a "legitimate atheist". I argued with all the religious people, refuting at times with ire, all the foundations of faith. I was an active and combative atheist in opposing their faith.

The sins which I *did not* commit were the exception. I nearly completed the violation of all of the Ten Commandments. I considered myself powerful, infallible and untouchable. I considered my licentious and egoistic life then (in my judgement) a life-style I could afford.

I didn't take into account that my wife, confined to the house most of the time, was getting to be more like a slave than a spouse with whom I should be sharing good times and bad times. She was the safe harbour to which I returned after the tempests I created by my evil actions.

In an insensitive and shameless way, I came home to her proverbial patience, patience that I many times rewarded with offending and abusive words. And my example for my children was totally corrupting. I deceived myself and attempted to deceive everybody else, saying that "the spirit in essence is material". What I possessed materially, was the "source of my happiness".

In reality, I wasn't even remotely happy and of course my family even less. More often than not, I fell into profound states of spiritual depression. So, after consulting psychologists, studying Yoga, etc., I decided on different occasions to look for help in the Bible. I didn't find it, because I *couldn't* find it.

My thirst for peace took me to the source of peace, but my hardened and perverted heart blinded my spirit and reasoning. I didn't know then that we ought to approach the Word of God and God Himself in the manner recorded in Hebrews 10:22: ". . . with a sincere heart." That sincerity ought to be our conviction that we are sinners and transgressors of the will of God.

Only with repentance, among other things, can we be reconciled with that One who can truly give us abundant happiness and grace. In summary, I found myself in the sad "vanguard" of those who lived – and many who still live – in rebellion, without being reconciled with God. In the midst of this spiritual journey I had an automobile accident that left me in near death.

I was interned in the Intensive Care Unit of the Burn Clinic of the Miguel Enríquez Hospital in Luyanó. Then one night, suffering intense pain (the doctors had already given up hope for my survival), a Christian nurse, brother Ricardo, attended only to me because of my critical state. During the night he sat beside my deathbed and asked me if I believed in God.

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In my anguish rather than conviction, I said “yes”. Then he asked my permission to pray to the Lord that His powerful hand might accomplish in me that which had been impossible for a team of highly qualified doctors. For hours he read passages to me from the book of Job and prayed. The next day, as the doctors made their rounds, they said my condition had improved.

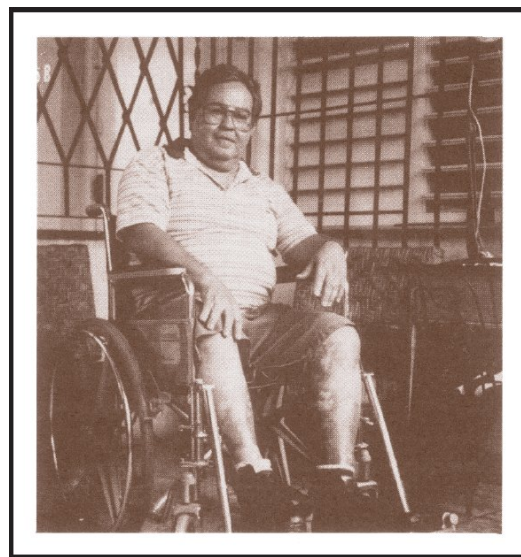
After that night, each minute of each day, during the agony which continued on for nearly three years, I turned closer and closer to Christ, asking Him for relief from my intense pain, and strength to withstand the inhuman treatments. Suffice it to say that for nearly a year I was in bed on my back with barely enough strength to raise a spoonful of food to my mouth.

They performed multiple and complex surgeries on my body, trying to resolve an innumerable series of grave complications which I suffered one after another. In the end, I was left with severe physical and neurological limitations that made it necessary for me to use a wheelchair. But by then I had “lost” my dissolute life and I had gained **new life in Jesus Christ**.

During my convalescence an old friend and convert to Christ, was visiting me and teaching me from the Word. *Now* I was drinking from this never ending fount with a sincere heart. I asked forgiveness from our Creator and once and for all I accepted Christ, and asked Him if He would permit me to give what remained of my life to Him.

Even with my open wounds, I was immersed in Christian baptism on the Havana waterfront, assisted by Brother Manuel Bermúdez Piera, to whom I owe my first steps in the study of the Word. At last, thanks be to God, I was reconciled with Him, not by my own efforts, but by His love and His mercy.

Today, full of joy, I can express my present feelings saying, along with the apostle Paul, that whatever things I lost from my old life, I now consider rubbish, because I have gained Christ. I have been reconciled with God, who loves me and sustains me, and I can live with the certainty of receiving eternal life according to His promise.



Brother Lazaro left this troubled world for his eternal home in 2005.

FROM BROTHER JOE:

In 2001, Linda and I conducted a series of meetings with the churches in Cuba. We took along a Collapsible Portable Baptistry that is still in use to this day. We also took a wheel chair for Lázaro. He loved it, and accompanied us in and around Havana.

He was in pain every hour of every day but was always involved in the service of the Lord. His dying regret was that his wife and children never became Christians. But after he died his wife and all but one of his boys surrendered themselves to Christ. I personally believe that God opened the curtains of Heaven for a brief moment so Lázaro could witness their baptisms.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE GOD IS LEADING UNTIL YOU ARRIVE AND LOOK BACK.

SAVED TO SERVE THE SAVIOR,

JOE R. GARMAN, EVANGELIST

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