

## Testimony - Gabriel Castro

I was raised in an Evangelical church in Brazil. My parents had converted from Catholicism in the late 1970s, even before they got married. Still, as a child, through school, media, and interactions with my extended family, I was exposed to the prevailing culture in Brazil: one of popular Catholicism that was very similar to “moralistic therapeutic deism”. In that perspective, the way to heaven is just to be a “good person” and believe in a generic God. In Brazil, this culture was present even in Evangelical churches that were not deeply rooted in Biblical truth.

As I grew older, I progressively understood that behaving like a “good person” wasn’t enough. When I was a teenager, two things became clear to me. First, that I was a sinner, and that there were no true “good people” (Romans 3:23, Mark 10:18). Second, that I could not save myself from the eternal consequences of sin. I needed to believe in Jesus, make my public profession of faith, be baptized, and follow Him with all my soul, strength, and mind.

My decision to be baptized came at 17, after I realized that I did not need to have every single theological question figured out before I decided to make my public profession of faith: I needed to focus on Jesus and His redemption. I remember a specific sermon in which the pastor spoke beautifully about the simplicity of the Gospel in contrast with the confusion of human knowledge apart from God. I asked to be baptized right after that.

At that point, I had realized that putting too much emphasis on works is a dangerous trap: we are saved by faith, through the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who died the death that we deserved to die. Of course, a true follower of Christ will show the visible effects of salvation in His words and actions — the fruits of the Spirit will appear. But mere words and works will not save us.

Since publicly accepting Jesus Christ as my savior, I have been maturing in faith and knowledge of Scripture. Now, as a father, I work diligently to communicate these truths to my kids: we are saved and justified by Christ’s death and resurrection, which gives us the certainty of being with God for eternity in our glorified bodies.