

Sunday, February 4, 2024 am

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CONVERTED

Today, I want to go back to a basic subject at the foundation of the Christian faith. I want to talk about what it means to be converted. Whether you are new in the faith or have been a Christian most of your life, it does us good to be reminded about conversion. Peter as he wrote his final letter said, *For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you...* (2 Peter 1:12-13). Paul wrote in Philippians 3:1, *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.* So with this in mind, let us take a few moments to talk about conversion.

I. Conversion

- a. The word means, to revert or return, indicating a genuine change in one's life. Conversion, even to God is ALWAYS about returning to Him. When we are born, we are pure and sinless. But when we sin, we are separated from God – Isaiah 59:1-2, Romans 3:23, 6:23, etc. Thus, conversion is turning back to God.
- b. Conversion is about changing direction. The word is only found three times in the NKJV New Testament (Matthew 18:3 & Acts 3:19 & Acts 15:3 – describing the conversion of the Gentiles)
- c. BUT the original Greek word is actually found a number of times. These give us a greater understanding of the word.
 - i. Often the word simply meant to turn around (cf. Matthew 9:22 – Jesus turned around, 5:39 – turn the other cheek)
 - ii. Or to return to somewhere (Luke 2:20 – shepherds returned glorifying God, Luke 8:55 – as Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus, “Then her spirit returned...”; Acts 15:36 – Paul and Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city...”).
 - iii. But other times it has reference to the change in direction that leads to a changed life. Examples of this include:
 1. Matthew 13:15, *lest they should understand with their hearts and **turn**, so that I should heal them;*
 2. Acts 9:35 & 11:21 – many “**turned to the Lord**” (meaning they obeyed the gospel);
 3. Acts 26:20, Paul before Agrippa explained his conversion and commission to “*the Gentiles, that they should repent, **turn** to God, and do works befitting repentance*”;
 4. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of those who **turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God**;
 5. James 5:19-20 – if one *wanders from the truth and “someone **turns** him back, let him know that he who **turns** a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”* NOTE: The KJV uses the word “convert” in this text.
- d. This word can apply to obeying the gospel and becoming a Christian (“turned to the Lord”, Acts 3:19 (cf. Acts 2:38)),
- e. It can also apply to returning back to the Lord (James 5:19-20). Scripture gives instructions to Christians and their need to return to Him if they sin (1 John 1:7-9, Acts 8:22, etc.).
- f. The point is to understand that conversion means there is REAL change in one's life. In the same way that one might convert a house into an office OR you convert US currency to Mexican pesos, so our spiritual conversion is a change from one following the world to now being a follower of Jesus.

II. What is involved in conversion?

- a. Since conversion means a change in direction, let us notice some things involved in being converted.
- b. **A changed mind** – you think differently.

- i. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 addresses how we are engaged in spiritual warfare which included *“bringing every thought in captivity to the obedience of Christ.”* Paul point is that the Christian thinks different than the world (and how he used to think when he was in the world.)
 - ii. The worldly, “set their minds on things of the flesh” (Romans 8:5-8), Philippians 3:18-19 – Paul noted that those who are enemies of the cross of Christ serve the ways of the world and “set their mind on earthly things.”
 - iii. When we are converted, we set our mind on things above – Colossians 3:1-2, Romans 12:2 speaks of renewing the mind. Our life is about doing what we can to get to heaven.
 - iv. The Christian asks, “How can I please God & Jesus?”, “What would Jesus do in this situation?”, “Is this drawing me closer to God and away from Him?”, etc.
 - c. **A changed heart** – this is the conviction that leads to our conversion. True conversion takes place in the heart.
 - i. Acts 2:37 – as Peter preached “they were cut to the heart...” This led to their obeying the gospel (Acts 2:38-41)
 - ii. The Biblical heart is not our fleshly blood pump (though there are parallels to consider). The spiritual heart is related to how we think. Matthew 9:4 as Jesus healed a paralytic AND forgave His sins, He asked some in the audience, “What do you think evil in your hearts?”
 - iii. Proverbs 4:23 tells us that out of our hearts spring the issues of life.
 - iv. Matthew 12:34-35 notes that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks...”
 - v. Matthe 5:8, Jesus noted that it is the pure in heart who would see God.
 - vi. When we are converted, it has an impact on that which defines us. Who we are within governs everything about us – how we talk, where we go, who we associate with, what we do, etc.
 - d. **A changed relationship** – this is God’s part when we obey the gospel.
 - i. Galatians 3:26-27 – when we are baptized into Christ, we put on Christ.
 - ii. You are now a child of God. 1 John 3:1 - *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*
 - iii. You now belong to Him – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Recently we have addressed the blessedness of this relationship. Think about what it means to know that God is your heavenly Father, and that you are a “joint heir with Christ.” (Romans 8:17) Hebrews 2:11 notes how Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. Galatians 2:20 also reminds us of this.
 - iv. Romans 6:17-18 notes that while we WERE slaves of sin, now we are slaves of righteousness.
 - v. As we contemplate this change in relationship, it truly ought to give us comfort and hope.

III. The converted life

- a. Conversion is an action that we take and are involved in –
 - i. Matthew 18:3 – *“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are **converted** and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Jesus put the responsibility on the one listening. We need to understand that we are the one that determines to change ourselves.
 - ii. Acts 3:19, this idea ties into Acts 2:38, “repent and be baptized...” NOTE: Conversion is NOT the repentance, but the result of repentance.
- b. As we have been noting throughout this lesson, conversion is about being changed. You are a different person than you were before. That is emphasized continually in scripture.
 - i. 2 Corinthians 5:17 – you are a new creation. Be reminded that being converted will impact EVERY area of your life.
 - ii. Romans 12:1-2 – you have been transformed. No longer conforming to the world.
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – “and such were some of you...”

- iv. Conduct that is worthy of the gospel – Philippians 1:27, etc.
- v. 2 Corinthians 5:9 – we are striving to be well pleasing to our Lord. Colossians 1:9-10, *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*
- vi. People can see that change - 1 Peter 4:3-4 notes that this change is evident. The world ought to see that you are now different. Acts 9:19-21, as Saul (Paul) obeyed the gospel, the change was noticeable immediately. Those who knew he saw the change.
- c. Continued steadfastness – this is not an occasion action, but it who you are from now on! You are enduring – Hebrews 12:1-2, Acts 2:42 – they continued steadfastly, Colossians 1:23 – continuing in the faith, grounded and steadfast...

And thus we are reminded about what it means to be converted. Being converted is essential to your salvation. Unless you are truly converted, you will not surrender your life to Jesus. Many profess to be followers of Christ, but their words and actions portray a different picture.

As we have seen, it means that you now belong to Christ and your life is about serving Him. You are a changed person in EVERY aspect of your life. And thus we ask, have you truly been converted? Think about it!