

Sunday, July 5, 2026 am

Concerning First Principles

HOW CAN I KNOW I AM CONVERTED?

The idea of conversion is something we all need to examine and reexamine from time to time. It is a word associated with being saved and staying in that saved condition. When one truly obeys the gospel, they are converted, that is - they should be. A change has taken place. BUT is the change genuine conversion? Today I want to notice some things to consider that verify that I have been genuinely converted.

I. What is conversion?

- a. The word conversion means to take action that leads to a genuine change in one's life. The Greek word can also mean to revert or return (Acts 3:19). In God's word conversion is about turn to or returning to God. NOTE: In reality, it is ALWAYS about returning to God. When we are born we are innocent – we have not sinned and are not guilty. But when we do sin, we are separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2, Romans 3:23, 6:23). We need to return to that sinless state (i.e., be forgiven). When we do, spiritually we are converted.
- b. Conversion is actually about changing direction – the word is found only 3x in the NT (NKJV) – Matthew 18:3 – unless you are converted and become as little children...; Acts 3:19 – repent and be converted (The ESV says “turn”) so that your sins can be removed; and Acts 15:3 where Paul and Barnabas on their way to Jerusalem describe the conversion of the Gentiles.
- c. But the root word is used numerous times and it points to turning –
 - i. Matthew 13:15, lest they should understand with their hearts and **turn**, so that I should heal them;
 - ii. 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”;
 - iii. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of those who **turned** to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
 - iv. 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. The point of being converted is to understand 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.
- e. BUT do our actions reflect genuine conversion? Let us dig a little deeper.

II. How can I know that I have been genuinely converted?

- a. It is not based on feelings or a good conscience alone. Both can be deceiving.
 - i. Feelings are important and can give us direction. And we certainly need our conscience to be working properly.
 - ii. But both our feelings and conscience can be misleading. Just because you feel something is right does not make it so. If you have been taught (knowingly or unknowingly) that some error is the right thing, your conscience may tell you, you are doing well. But that does not change that the error is ERROR – wrong!
 - iii. John 16:2, Jesus warned His apostles that as they did their work, *They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.* We have an example of this in Paul – Acts 26:9-11. He consented to Christians being executed. But he was wrong!

- iv. Genesis 37:31-35 – Jacob for years believed the lies of his sons that Joseph was dead. But he was wrong – Genesis 45:25-28.
 - v. There are many who have followed a false plan of salvation who believe they are right, but if it error, they are wrong and still unsaved.
- b. It is based on knowing what God’s word tells you to do
- i. Assurance of genuine conversion begins with rightly dividing (accurately handling – NASB, LSB) the word of truth – 2 Timothy 2:15. This text also emphasizes our need to put forth diligent effort to learn what God wants us to do to be converted (Study to shew thyself approved... KJV)
 - ii. John 8:32 Jesus emphasized the truth shall make you free.
 - iii. Matthew 13:52, after explaining various elements associated with the kingdom of heaven (God) through parables, Jesus asked His disciples if they understood. They said ‘yes’. *Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”* His point, one who seeks to know God’s will (the scribe) will bring out of it its intended message.
 - iv. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 describes how God’s inspired word can make us complete through teaching, reproof (rebuke, identifying error), correction and instruction in righteous living.
 - v. The importance of continued study and reading of God’s word cannot be overemphasized if we desire assurance of our conversion.
- c. It is based on knowing that God cannot lie –
- i. Titus 1:2, *in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,*
 - ii. Hebrews 6:18, which we mentioned last week, notes that it is impossible for God to lie. When He makes a promise or declaration, it is truth – cf. John 17:17.
 - iii. We have to believe what He tells us is true. This is about accepting the inspired integrity of the Bible. If we question its inspiration (another lesson within itself), how can we trust it OR God’s desire to save us? What He says must take precedence over what man tells us.
- d. It is based on keeping what God has told you to do in His word.
- i. It is one thing to know what God wants us to do, but another to actually do it.
 - ii. Matthew 7:21- not enough to declare you know Him. Cf. John 12:42 notes that even among rulers, many believed in Jesus but did not confess Him because they feared the Pharisees (cf. John 7:13).
 - iii. Hebrews 5:9 speaks of Jesus being the author of salvation to those who obey Him.
 - iv. ***This includes following examples of conversion recorded in scripture.*** IF you want to know what to do to be saved, look to the examples of those recorded in scripture. If we do what they did, it will lead to the same result. That is why an honest study of the examples of conversion in the book of Acts is so essential. What you WILL find in the various examples is a consistent pattern. And while no account records everything they did, when you put them all together you learn what we are expected to do to be saved – H,B,R,C & Baptized (Acts 2:38-41, 8:12, 38-39, 10:48, 16:15, 33, 22:16, etc.)
 - v. Matthew 28:19
- e. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit .
- i. Romans 8:16-17, *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*
 - ii. This is a text that needs to be explained. It is misunderstood by many today.
 - iii. Some advocate that without the direction intervention of the Holy Spirit we cannot know God’s will. But that is not what scripture teaches. Furthermore, the religious confusion

among professed believers of this doctrine demonstrates it is not true – 1 Corinthians 14:33 – God is NOT the author of confusion.

- iv. First, the compound word for “bears witness with” as a Greek word (συμμαρτυρέω, symmartyreō) is related to the word from which we get our English word symmetry which describes things working together. MOST translations say the Spirit bears witness WITH our spirit (together with), NOT **to** our spirit. Thus proper grammar declares whatever this is, involves cooperation. We are doing something along with the Holy Spirit.
- v. A study of scripture reveals that IT is the product of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit today guides us THROUGH the word (not miraculously) –
 1. John 14:26 – the apostles were promised the H.S. would remind them of the teachings of Jesus. 16:13 – He would guide them into all truth.
 2. The book of Acts records the fulfillment of this. Acts 1:8 after asking Jesus about the kingdom they were told to go to Jerusalem and wait. *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” Acts 2:1-4 records the apostles being baptized by the Holy Spirit. They begin to preach the word of God to the crowds. AFTER the preaching of the word, Acts 2:37 records *Now when they **heard this**, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* NOTICE that it was the preaching that prompted them to respond. Peter tells them to obey the gospel – Acts 2:38-41. 3000 do that day. NOTE that as you proceed through the book of Acts, you find numerous miracles and the Holy Spirit interacting with various disciples. But NOT once do you read of the Holy Spirit saving anyone. Every example of conversion in Acts, WITHOUT EXCEPTION – including Paul and Cornelius involved a man coming and preaching the word to them.
 3. 2 Peter 1:19-21 notes clearly that the prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (the word is His product).
 4. Cf. Hebrews 10:15ff - *But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before.* This is followed by a quote from Jeremiah 31:33-34
 5. Acts 28:25ff, *So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers.* He then quotes Isaiah 6:9-10
 6. Ephesians 6:17 describing the armor of God, the “sword of the Spirit” is the word of God! The gospel is described as God’s power unto salvation – Romans 1:16. It gives us “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” (2 Peter 1:3). Acts 20:32 notes that the word of God’s grace is *able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*
 7. Many other passages concur with this, but time will not permit further development.
- vi. What does the Holy Spirit tell us to do through His word? It is found in the examples of conversion found in Acts which also concurs with the rest of the New Testament:
 1. Believed – Acts 10:43, 16:31, John 8:24, Romans 10:10
 2. Repented – Acts 17:30-31, 2:38, Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9
 3. Confessed – Romans 10:9-10, 1 Timothy 6:12-13
 4. Were baptized – Acts 22:16, 1 Peter 3:20-21, Galatians 3:26-28, etc.
- f. It is based on a truly changed life. When one truly converted it means:
 - i. You will know them by their fruit – Matthew 7:16-20, while warning about false prophets and KNOWING them by their actions, Jesus also notes that a good tree (heart) will produce good fruit. Fruit is any result or “produce” that comes from actions.

- ii. As we noted at the beginning when one is converted they are changed. And that change is noticeable – e.g., 1 Peter 4:3-4 – they think it strange that you do not run with them... You are different; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – such were some of you.
- iii. This difference includes a changed mind – you think differently, a changed heart – your motives are different, a changed relationship – your circle of friends and acquaintances changes, and changed conduct – you do and don't do things differently. You are genuinely different than before
- iv. Ultimately, there is a change in your status before God – you were lost, but NOW you are saved.

In summary, conversion is about change. Are you truly a different person? When one obeys the gospel with a proper understanding, they will be changed. But often, even as Christians, we sometimes begin to drift back toward our former ways. If such has happened, you need to rekindle your conversion. If there is some way we can help, we are here. Are you confident in your conversion? Think about it!