



The Foundation of the Christian Faith

Course: Salvation

Lesson Five

Title: Conversion

Text: Acts 3:19 'Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;'

Introduction: '...be converted', (Greek; *epistrepho*).
Meaning of *epistrepho* 'to turn towards' - *epi* 'towards' and *strepho* 'to turn'.

What is evangelical conversion?

- 1) Conversion is a 180 degree turn. It follows on from repentance and leads to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Conversion is essential for salvation - repentance alone cannot save. Repentance is a changed mind about sin and conversion follows repentance. Repentance means to change the mind. Conversion is to change direction. The Prodigal Son – had a change of mind when feeding pigs. Then he changed direction and went home. Conversion is a turning away from sin and selfishness and turning towards Christ and His righteousness. To be a disciple of Christ a person must be willing to turn away from seeking after the things of the world. Jesus said, '...likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.' Luke 14:33. There must be a turning away from the world before there can be saving faith.
- 2) Conversion is turning away from:
 - (1) ...self righteous acts to gain God's approval.
 - (i) Trying to be righteous
 - (ii) Vows of asceticism
 - (iii) Religious ceremonies
 - (2) ...a lifestyle of satisfying self-interests that is devoted to me, my and mine. This includes my family and friends
 - (3) ...a lifestyle devoted to the events and concerns of daily life. Not all these things are bad. The people of Sodom lived for the enjoyment of daily things. They were eating, drinking, selling, marrying - these are not wrong but they become an idolatrous thing when they take the place of God in our lives. The family is a precious gift that God has given to us, but living for these things is sinful.
- 3) Conversion is turning to new life in Christ and setting our hearts on the Kingdom of God. Matthew 6:33, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'

Introductory Story: Personal testimony - the need to turn from the old life to new life in Christ and give Christ full control of our lives.

In 1974 I made a commitment to Christ. I was very sincere in my commitment but there were things in my life I was not willing to give up. I went back.

A year later I came to the place where I wanted to be saved more than anything else. I was willing to turn from everything to follow Christ. But I did not know how I could live a Christian life.

I went to a meeting where a singing team was ministering. This was the night my life was changed. The preacher told how Satan sits on the shoulder and says 'it's OK it does not matter'. But when we go and do it, then he points at us and says 'you're no good', so that we give up because we feel condemned.

This was exactly what had happened in my life the year before, and was now happening again.

As the man preached I realized that Christianity is new life in Christ and that night my life was completely turned around.

We cannot overcome by trying to live right.

Conversion is turning from self in control to letting Christ take control of our lives.

When I look back I see that I had a genuine experience at the time when I first committed my life to Christ. But full salvation did not come until a year later when I had a real conversion experience.

Main Points:

1. Conversion is turning from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Acts 26:18 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.' It is the conversion from one kingdom to another.

Paul was sent with the gospel of Jesus Christ for this purpose:

...to turn (Gr. *epistrepheo*) them (the Gentiles) from

- (1) ...darkness to light. The way of the sinner - walking in darkness means having no direction, being in great danger, a path to destruction.
- (2) ...power of Satan unto God. The way of the righteous - walking in the light means having direction, able to see dangers, a path to life.
 - (i) power of Satan - sin in control
 - (ii) power of God - righteous lives

2. Conversion is continuous. Hebrews 11 is the great chapter of faith.

The faith of these great men and women of God is seen in that they looked away from the pleasures and desires of this world and looked towards the kingdom of God.

- (1) Left the comforts of the world to be pilgrims and strangers. Seeking after another country. Citizens of heaven.
- (2) Rejected the pleasures of sin for the reproach of Christ.
- (3) Willing to endure hardship and persecution.

We are to follow their example and look to Jesus. Hebrews 12:2, 'Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

- (4) The word 'looking' is the Greek word 'aphorao' which Strong's explains as 'to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something.' It comes from two Greek words 'apo' meaning 'away from' and 'horan' meaning 'to look'. It literally means 'to look away from'. To look unto Jesus we must turn our backs on something else.

3. Every Christian should seek the conversion of others.

Every believer should be seeking to convert others because it has wonderful results. James 5:19-20 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.'

The results of converting the sinner who is walking in darkness (astray from the truth). Turning a person from sin to Christ will

- (i) Save a soul from death
- (ii) Hide a multitude of sin.

The Christian should always seek to cover sin not to uncover it.

It is never acceptable for Christians to gossip about the sins of others. The Christian should seek to convert the unbeliever and to protect the believer.

If a Christian sins then other Christians should seek to cover the sin and the sin should be dealt with privately.

Only in the most extreme cases should sin be publicly rebuked.

Summary

Conversion means to turn towards. There are two sides to conversion. Turning away from sin and turning to faith in Christ.

1. Turning away from sin means
2. Turning to faith in Christ means committing ourselves entirely to faith in Christ alone for salvation and to the Lordship of Christ in our lives.
3. Every believer should be actively involved in converting others. The results of conversion are sin is forgiven and a person receives eternal life.

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