

Warrington 10/25/64 Conversion, What is it? 10/4/60 A.M. Bailey

Scripture Lesson: - Matthew 18: 3. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Introduction: - The Bible teaches that God is a Holy and righteous God. He cannot tolerate sin. Sin separates from God. It brings the wrath of God upon the human soul. All of the troubles, ills, and problems of the world find their root in the fact that man has lost his moral, intellectual and spiritual sense of God because he has lost God. He will not find God until he finds the way back to God. Christ made the way back to God by his death upon the cross. He purchased man's redemption by the shedding of his blood. His death and resurrection made a new and everlasting covenant between God and man. Therefore the way back to God is not an intellectual way. You cannot think your way back to God. The carnal mind is at enmity with God. You cannot worship your way back to God, because man is a spiritual rebel from God's presence. The question then is, "what shall we do? Where shall we start? Where do we begin? What is our road back to God? There is only one way back to God, and that is the way of the cross. "except ye be converted", is the way of Jesus. This is how to begin. This is the way back to God. There are many people, who confuse

conversion with the keeping of the law. The law of Moses is set forth in specific terms in the Bible and the purpose of the law is made crystal clear.

It was not offered at any time as a panacea for the world's ills. It was given as a diagnosis of the world's ills. It outlines the reason for our trouble, not the cure.

The Scriptures say, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God!" (Rom. 3:19)

The law has given a revelation of man's unrighteousness, and the Word of God says, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

(Rom. 3:20). It is impossible to be converted by the keeping of the law. "By the law is the knowledge of ydsin." (Rom. 3:20). Law is a moral mirror. It condemns but does not convert. It points the finger but does not offer mercy.

There are many people who say that their religion is the Sermon on the Mount, but the man or woman is yet to be born who has ever lived up to the sermon on the mount. The Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God!" (Rom. 3: 23).

Actually the word "conversion" means "to turn around", "to change your mind". In the realm of religion it has been explained as meaning "to repent", "to be regenerated", "to experience religion", and "to gain assurance".

Conversion can take many different forms. The way it is accomplished depends largely upon the individual, his temperament, his emotional balance, his environment, and his previous conditioning and way of

life. Conversion may follow a great crisis in a person's life, such as the loss of wealth or a sudden bereavement.

We may say then, that conversion can be an instantaneous event, a crisis in which the person receives a clear revelation of the love of God;

or it can be a gradual unfolding, accomplished by a moment when the line is crossed between darkness and light, between death and life everlasting.

Actually, biblical conversion involves three steps. Two of these steps are active and one of them is passive.

In an active conversion, repentance and faith are involved. Repentance is conversion viewed from its starting point, the turning away from the former life. Faith indicates the objective point of conversion, the turning to God. The third point we may call the new birth, or regeneration.

Now in order to get to heaven, Jesus said that you must be converted. I did not say it, Jesus said it. This is not man's opinion, it is God's opinion. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!"

True conversion will involve the total mind, the total affection, and the total will. There are thousands of people who have been intellectually converted to Christ. They believe the entire Bible. They believe all about Jesus, but they have never been really converted to him.

There is a vast difference between intellectual conversion and the total conversion that saves the soul.

There are thousands of people who have some form of emotional experience that they refer to as conversion but who have never been truly converted to Christ. Christ demands a change in the way you live, and if your life does not conform to your experience, then you have every reason to doubt your experience! After you come to Christ hate and love will be involved, you will then hate sin and begin to love righteousness. Your affection to him will undergo a revolutionary change. Your devotion to him will know no bounds. Your love for him cannot be described.

There must also be the conversion of your will. Your will must be bent to the will of God. Self must be nailed to the cross. The only desire you will have will be to please him.

II.

In conversion, as you stand at the foot of the cross, the Holy Spirit makes you realize you are a sinner. He directs your faith to Christ who died in your place. You must open your heart and let him come in. At that precise moment the Holy Spirit performs the miracle of the new birth. You actually become a new moral creature. You become a partaker of God's own life. Jesus Christ, through the Spirit of God takes up residence in your heart. Conversion is so simple that the smallest child can be converted. It is also so profound that theologians throughout history have pondered the depth of its meaning.

God has made the way of salvation so plain that the "wayfaring men" though fools, shall not err therein. No person will ever be barred from the kingdom of God because he did not have the capacity to understand. The rich and the poor, the sophisticated and the simple, all can be converted

Ill. The converted person will love what he once hated, and hate what he once loved. There will be a change of heart about God. Where he once may have been careless about God, living in constant fear, dread and antagonism to God, he now finds himself in a state of reverence, confidence, obedience and devotion. There will be a reverential fear of God, a constant gratitude to God, and a new loyalty to him. Before conversion there may have been gratification of the flesh. Culture and intellectual pursuits or the making of money may have been of first and supreme importance. Now, righteousness and holiness of heart, and living the Christian life will be placed above all other concerns, for the pleasing of Christ will be the only thing of real importance.

Conclusion:- Conversion means a complete change of life in the individual, and more important, his acceptance in the kingdom of God through the finished work of Christ on the cross.

A woman from the State of Illinois relates the following experience. She had been confused, bewildered and very unhappy in her life. She had been contemplating suicide. Then one day she was listening to the radio when a religious

program came on. She listened. It was a program in which conversion was stressed. After the program she turned off her radio, knelt in her living room and received Christ. She said her husband, whom she formerly hated, she now loved. Her children immediately saw a difference in her. She was a better housekeeper. She joined a church and has won her father and several of her closest friends. She says that her fears, doubts, and confusions are a thing of the past. She now has hope, lives a different life, and has love for everyone. Her sins, which were many, have all been forgiven.

This can happen to you, if you surrender your life to Christ, surrender your heart to Christ. Yes, you can be changed, you can be happy; why live a miserable life, away from God, when he wants to be your guide and friend. Don't put it off. Tomorrow may be too late.

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