

True Conversion

Introduction. If there is one idea that pervades the New Testament, it is the idea of "new." The word comes from *kainos* which means, "new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted to as old." The word is translated as "new" 39 times in the New Testament and "fresh" three times. The Greek word appears in 16 New Testament books.

Many subjects are spoken of as being "new." We have a "new" covenant (Matthew 26:28); a "new" and living way (Hebrews 10:20); we wear a "new" name (Revelation 2:17); we are "new" creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17); we are promised a "new" Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2); a "new" heavens and "new" earth (2 Peter 3:13); and sing a "new" song (Revelation 5:9).

However, this "newness" does not come automatically. The newness in Christ comes only after conversion. There are many false concepts of conversion: "Get religion," "Have an experience," "a changed life," etc. The only way we can know what constitutes true conversion is to study the word of God. In this lesson, we will examine the definition and necessity of conversion, along with examples of conversion in the New Testament.

I. **The Definition And Necessity Of Conversion**

- A. Conversion, which comes from the Greek word *epistrepho* is defined as "to turn about or to turn towards; to return to a path from which one has gone astray." In relation to man's salvation, the word signifies a turning from sinful actions to God (Acts 26:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; James 5:19-20). The structure of the word indicates that returning is a responsibility given to each individual.
- B. Conversion is essential.
 1. In Matthew 18:3, conversion is an antecedent to "entering the kingdom of heaven." This expression commonly denotes the church or becoming a Christian.
 2. In John 12:40, conversion is an antecedent to being "healed." "Healed" is a metaphor for a spiritual cure.
 3. In Acts 3:19, conversion is an antecedent to having "sins wiped away." This expression refers to the practice of writing debts on tablets covered with wax, and then smoothing the wax with a blunt instrument, removing any trace of writing.

II. **The Fruits Of Conversion**

- A. Repentance.
 1. Repentance is an obvious fruit of conversion (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:17-18). As one turns toward God, one must relinquish sinful

- activities. The change of heart toward sin and the subsequent cessation of sin is repentance.
2. Once someone has become a Christian, they cannot continue to sin (Romans 6:6-7; 1 John 1:5-7). "Walk" describes habitual action and would apply to any sin. But this does not mean that a child of God will never sin after becoming a Christian (1 John 1:8-10). When we do sin, God has prescribed what we should do (Acts 8:20-23).
 3. Examples of repentance.
 - a) Saul the bloodthirsty persecutor (Acts 9:1) became Paul the tender-hearted brother (Acts 21:13; 2 Corinthians 6:11).
 - b) The sinful Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) became justified Christians (1 Corinthians 6:11).
- B. Faithfulness.
1. Faithfulness is the prime demonstration of a converted life. Being faithful means "trusted" or "reliable" and diligent in performing all the duties God commands (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 15:1-2). A Christian must be faithful in many areas.
 - a) Faithful in attendance and worship (Psalm 122:1; Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - b) Faithful in remaining pure in attitude, language, and dress (Luke 21:34; Romans 12:1-2).
 - c) Faithful in growth (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; 2 Peter 3:18).
 - d) Faithful in sacrifice (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
 - e) Faithful in putting others first (1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:1-4).
 - f) Faithful in spreading the gospel to the lost (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:4).
 2. Faithfulness is required because a child of God can fall away (2 Peter 2:20-22). The devil constantly seeks to draw us away from faithfulness to the Lord (1 Peter 5:8).
 3. Examples of faithfulness.
 - a) The restless demon-possessed man (Mark 5:5) became a quiet disciple (Mark 5:15).
 - b) The Samaritan woman with the sinful past (John 4:17-18) became a teacher of truth (John 4:29).

Conclusion. Many profess to have been converted, but their hearts have not been changed. Conversion is no repairing of an old building; it takes everything down and erects a new structure. It is not the sewing on of a patch of holiness; but with the true convert, holiness is woven into all of our life practices. The sincere Christian is a new fabric from the foundation to the roof. He is a new man; a new creature; all things are new. Conversion

is a deep work; a heart work. It turns everything upside down and works all throughout us.

Heroes are normally considered to be war veterans, actors, actresses, sports figures, etc. But my heroes are Christians who are steadfast. If I were to ask you in the audience if you believed what the Bible says, what would you answer? If you do believe, why are you waiting to make the change? Why do you not become converted and partake of the new birth (John 3:5)?