

Salvation 101
Lesson 6 Conversion

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: Conversion is the change that takes place in the heart and life of a sinner as a result of regeneration. The primary elements in conversion are repentance and faith. There is much controversy and disagreement among professing Christians regarding the relationship that repentance and faith play in salvation. Therefore, it is necessary to have a biblical understanding of what genuine repentance and genuine faith are.

The primary relationship that needs to be distinguished between regeneration and conversion is cause and effect. It is similar to distinguishing between lightening and thunder. Though they happen simultaneously, there is a definite cause and effect relationship. The lightening bolt that flashes from the sky is extremely hot and when it contacts the cool air in the atmosphere it produces a crack of thunder that rumbles through the sky for miles. Clearly, the bolt of lightening is the cause and the thunder is the effect.

So in the salvation of man, the regenerating power of the Spirit of God contacts the dead and sinful spirit of man and transforms it. The effect is the conversion of the heart which produces repentance and faith through the entire life of the individual. The new nature which has been instantaneously implanted into the regenerated soul experiences repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though in regeneration man is passive, in conversion, man is the active agent. (It is not God that repents and believes, it is the individual.) The action of God to regenerate the spirit produces a reaction in the heart of man to repent of sin and self righteousness and believe on Christ for His righteousness. The instant that a person is regenerated, he becomes aware of the holiness of God, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the forgiveness that is found in the death of Christ.

Though regeneration and conversion are separated to better understand the differences between them, they are inseparable and simultaneous in the salvation experience. For example, a car engine requires gas, oxygen, and spark to run properly. Though all them contribute simultaneously to make an engine run, mechanics will frequently analyze them independently to better understand the individual elements. If these elements are not in the right order, the engine will backfire, idle roughly, or not run at all. A good mechanic must know the proper sequence and adjust the timing so that the engine runs smoothly. So in order to properly understand the salvation experience, the Christian must understand the individual aspects of regeneration and conversion.

It is essential to understand that conversion is not the cause of regeneration rather the fruit of it. You are not regenerated because you repent and believe; you repent and believe because you are regenerated. This is a most important distinction to be made because otherwise repentance and faith become a work of man that God responds to instead of being the gift of free grace. We are to preach repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ knowing that God must do a work in their hearts.

Failure to wait upon God and trying to force the issue is the cause of many false professions today. If God is in it, a person being saved is as easy as falling off a log. If God isn't in it, it is the ultimate exercise in futility. You would have better luck trying to call fire down out of heaven or raising someone from the dead. Our responsibility is to preach the gospel, not to get people saved. As Spurgeon said, "you can't make a fly" how do you think you are going to regenerate a soul?

Another common mistake is to view repentance and faith as a one time act, rather than a continuous experience in the life of a Christian. The Bible states this in a single sentence, "The just shall live by his faith." When there is a genuine conversion, the fruits of repentance and faith will continue to be manifest in the life of the convert. Where these fruits are lacking, there needs to be great concern about the validity of the individual's profession and an urgent need for them to make their "calling and election sure".

Definitions: For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.

English: Conversion -

Repentance -

Faith -

Greek: (3340) metanoia met-an-o-eh'-o -

(4102) pistis pis'-tis -

Hebrew: (5162) nacham naw-kham' -

(530) emoonaw em-oo-naw -

Quotation: "Concerning this word REPENTANCE... the very sense and signification both of the Hebrew and also the Greek word is, "to be converted and to turn to God with all the heart, to know His will, and to live according to His laws; and to be cured of our corrupt nature with the oil of His Spirit, and wine of obedience to His doctrine." Which conversion or turning, if it be unfeigned, these four do accompany it and are included therein: CONFESSION, not in the priest's ear, for that is but man's invention, but to God in the heart, and before all the congregation of God; how that we be sinners and sinful, and that our whole nature is corrupt, and inclined to sin and all unrighteousness, and therefore evil, wicked, and damnable; and His Law holy and just, by which our sinful nature is rebuked: and also to our neighbors, if we have offended any person particularly. Then CONTRITION, sorrowfulness that we be such damnable sinners, and not only have sinned, but are wholly inclined to sin still. Thirdly, FAITH that God for Christ's sake doth forgive us, and receive us to mercy, and is at one with us, and will heal our corrupt nature. And fourthly, SATISFACTION, or amends making, not to God with holy works, but to my neighbor whom I have hurt, and to the congregation of God, whom I have offended, (if any open crime be found in me); and submitting of a man's self unto the congregation or church of Christ, and to the officers of the same, to have his life corrected and governed henceforth of them" William Tyndale

"Conversion turns the balance of the judgment, so that God and His glory outweigh all carnal and worldly interests. It opens the eye of the mind, and makes the scales of its native ignorance fall off, and turns men from darkness to light. The man that before saw no danger in his condition, now concludes himself lost and for ever undone (Acts 2:37) except renewed by the power of grace. He that formerly thought there was little hurt in sin, now comes to see it to be the chief of evils. He sees the unreasonableness, the unrighteousness, the deformity and the filthiness of sin; so that he is affrighted with it, loathes it, dreads it, flees from it, and even abhors himself for it. He that could see little sin in himself, and could find no matter for confession, now sees the rottenness of his heart, the desperate and deep pollution of his whole nature. He cries, 'Unclean! Unclean! Lord, purge me with hyssop, wash me thoroughly, create in me a clean heart.' He sees himself altogether filthy, corrupt both root and branch. He writes 'unclean' upon all his parts, and powers, and performances. He discovers the filthy corners that he was never aware of, and sees the blasphemy, and theft, and murder, and adultery, that is in his heart, of which before he was

ignorant. Hitherto he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, no beauty that he should desire Him; but now he finds the Hidden Treasure, and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the Pearl he seeks.” Joseph Alleine

“Can Christ be in thy heart, and thou not know it? Can one king be dethroned and another crowned in thy soul, and thou hear no scuffle?” William Gurnall

“Wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession.” William Secker

“The Bible, which ranges over a period of four thousand years, records but one instance of a death bed conversion - one that none may despair, and but one that none may presume.” William Guthrie

“Wouldest thou know when thou hast been humbled enough for sin? When thou art willing to let go thy sins.” Thomas Watson

“The wicked do but weep for their sins past, but the godly purpose to sin no more.” Henry Smith

“If an unregenerate man should leave off sin under fear of death or hell, it would not be out of hatred to sin, but out of the fear of the punishment, as the bird is kept from the bait by the scarecrow.” Thomas Manton

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

New Hampshire Confession of 1833

Article VIII Repentance And Faith

London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 14 Of Saving Faith - paragraphs 1-3

Chapter 15 Of Repentance unto Life and Salvation - paragraphs 1-5

Spurgeon’s Catechism

Q - How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

A - The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us (Eph. 2:8) and by it uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling (Eph. 3:17)

Q - How may we escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?

A - To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16), trusting alone to His shed blood and righteousness. This faith is attended by repentance for the past (Acts 20:21), and leads to holiness in the future.

Q - What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A - Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace (Heb. 10:39), whereby we receive (John 1:12), and rest upon Him alone for salvation (Phil. 3:9), as He is set forth in the gospel (Isa 33:22).

Q - What is repentance to life?

A - Repentance to life is a saving grace (Acts 11:18), whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sins (Acts 2:37), and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ (Joel 2:13), does with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it to God (Jer. 31:18,19), with full purpose to strive after new obedience (Ps. 119:59).

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (Answer in writing)

1. What is the difference between legal and evangelical repentance?
2. Give the names of preachers in the New Testament who preached repentance and faith (give references)?

3. Who is the object of our repentance? Our faith?
4. What would be an example of repentance that is not genuine?
5. How can you tell if someone has genuine repentance and faith?
6. What are the primary elements in conversion?
7. What does a person need to do who is lacking the fruits of repentance and faith?
8. What does it mean to live or walk by faith?
9. What is the cause of many false professions today?
10. Is the individual passive or active in conversion? Why?

Key Scriptures: (Look up these verses and fill in the blanks)

Jeremiah 31:33 The New Testament (covenant) that God has made promised to put His Law in the Christian's _____ parts and to _____ it in their hearts.

Matthew 3:1,2 The message that John the Baptist preached was _____ .

Matthew 4:17 The message that Jesus preached was _____ .

Mark 1:15 The message of Christ was to _____ and _____ the gospel.

Luke 13:3 Jesus' message to those who thought that bad things were happening to others because they were greater sinners than themselves was that _____ ye repent ye shall _____ .

Acts 2:38 Peter's message on the day of Pentecost was _____ and be _____ .

Acts 13:39 All that _____ in Christ are justified from all things.

Acts 13:48 All that were _____ to eternal life _____ .

Acts 17:30,31 God _____ all men _____ to _____ because He has appointed a day where He will _____ the world in _____ .

Acts 20:20-21 Paul was an example to the Ephesians Christians by preaching _____ and from house to house both to _____ and _____ that they need to have repentance toward _____ and faith toward our _____.

Romans 2:4 It is the _____ of God that leads to _____.

Romans 4:5 Salvation is granted to him that _____ not for it, but rather _____ on Christ for _____.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes by _____ the _____ of God.

II Corinthians 7:10 There are different types of sorrow. Only _____ sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. But the sorrow of the _____ leads to _____.

Ephesians 2:8 We are saved by _____ through _____ which is the _____ of God not the work of man.

Hebrews 8:10 Those who are converted are called the _____ of God.

James 2:17-19 Faith without _____ is _____. We can _____ our faith by our _____. Even the devils _____ and _____ even though they have not been converted.

Key Chapter(s) (Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter):

Acts 16

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: Acts 20:21

Personal Definition: (Write a definition in your own words)

Conversion -

Personal confession: (Study the confessions and write your confession in your own words)

Repentance and faith-

Meditation question: (be prepared for discussion)

What comes first regeneration or repentance and faith?

Extra Credit

Explain how repentance and faith were present in your conversion experience.