



# Light from the Word

## The Faithful Church: Sound Conversions

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17).*

God’s plan for fallen mankind, as written in the Word and taught by Jesus, is for sinners to be awakened to an understanding of their lost condition, to repent, and be converted. Thus the matter of conversion is fundamental to the teaching and doctrine of the church. Our Statement of Faith reflects the biblical teaching of a true conversion beginning with faith in Christ’s redemptive work on Calvary, repentance toward God, confession, restitution, and forsaking of sin.

The word conversion itself means “to turn about”, or “revert”. Such language helps us understand the distinct difference between one path and another. As Jesus taught, there is a road to destruction and a road to everlasting life (Matt. 7:13-14). One who is truly converted is on the road to eternal life. These paths differ dramatically—one is wide, the other narrow—and they lead in opposite directions. It is impossible to straddle them or to go in both directions at once.

The teachings of Jesus and the Apostles make very clear that the difference between the converted and the unconverted is as night and day. Or more to the point, one is dead and the other alive. Paul makes frequent reference to this change from being dead in sin to dead to sin and alive unto Christ:

*“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” (Eph. 2:1)*

*“For ye are dead (to sin), and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:3)*

*“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:2)*

*“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead*

*by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4)*

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3). In our theme verse above (2 Cor. 5:17), Paul describes the passing away of “old things” and becoming a new creature. Likewise, he evokes the imagery of changing clothes when he writes, “*Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*” (Col. 3:9-10).

The phrase “be converted” describes this new birth. Although spoken in the negative about those in unbelief, Jesus describes an awakening and understanding, followed by healing when he says, “*...they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*” (Matt. 13:15). He later describes the converted state as that of “little children”, evoking their innocence and the humility needed to become like them (Matt. 18:3). Conversion involves a complete and utter change of attitude.

Peter connected conversion to repentance and the forgiving of sin when he taught in the temple that we are to “*Repent ... and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*” (Acts 3:19). Likewise, in the preceding chapter he had answered the question, “*What shall we do*” (Acts 2:37) with “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” (Acts 2:38), connecting repentance to the sign of rebirth (baptism).

It is important to note that when both Paul and

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## Sound Conversions

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Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah, they were warning that conversion is closed to those whose hearts are hard and calloused, *“Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”* (Acts 28:26-27). Similarly, the grace which is so necessary for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9) is unavailable to the prideful, *“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”* (I Peter 5:5-6).

We should take warning against any lack of emphasis on true conversion in our time. Sadly, salvation has sometimes been taught solely as a moment of belief without real life change which must necessarily follow a genuine repentance and turning away from sin. Jesus warned about the seed of faith springing up but having no root and quickly

falling away. *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”* (Matt. 13:20-21). In this passage, the word “offended” means to relapse or fall into sin.

Both Peter and Paul warned strongly that the believer must take great caution that he does not revert to the old life, whether to the old law (Gal. 4:9) or to the “pollutions of the world” (II Peter 2:20). Once one has taken the road to eternal life, it seems that the traffic on “the other road” presents an ever-changing panorama of eye-catching sights. With eyes fixed on the road ahead and his heavenly goal, the converted soul will avoid veering off into the ditch and experiencing a spiritual wreck.

Paul described an “acceptable life” as not conformed to this world but rather as one lived as a sacrifice of “reasonable service”, fully and completely *“transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Rom. 12:2).

Only through experiencing salvation through faith in Jesus’ shed blood and turning away

from the old life of sin and serving self can we experience the vision set forth by the Saviour Himself when He said, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10).

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

- Romans 12:1-3