

Conversion

What Is It?

By: Michael R. Hughes

Text: Ezekiel 18:24-32 (esp. vv. 31,32)

Theme: God's people, the Jews, were in a terrible state of idolatry and otherwise spiritual adultery. They were in need of conversion. From them, we purpose to see and to understand from God's view the true nature of conversion and what it signifies to us today under the N.T.

Introduction:

1. We often read reports from preachers and missionaries attesting to a certain number of conversions in a given locality.
2. Yet also we too often read these statements with an unconcerned attitude not fully realizing what conversion is about.
3. Not only do some people not have an idea about what conversion is, others have preconceived, false notions on the subject and these need to be corrected in order that the individual might truly appreciate what genuine conversion is.
4. Basic errors regarding conversion:
 - a. Some believe that conversion comes as a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Some mistakenly understand conviction to be the same thing as conversion
 - c. Others falsely assume that conversion guarantees the security of the soul against falling from grace in the shadow of eternity.

Discussion:

- I. What do we mean - *Conversion*?
 - A. What mankind in general believes it is (*convert*) -
 1. “To change or transform” - *Webster’s New World Dictionary, Revised Edition.*
 2. “To change into another state, form, or substance” - *Reader’s Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*
 3. “To turn, as convert grain into flour” - *Webster’s 20th Century Unabridged*
 - B. But man is not our authority -
 1. Many times, as regards things of a religious concern, definitions given by men are in opposition to those given by God.
 - a. Illustrate with *church* and *baptism*
 - b. Matthew 23:18;
Romans 7:3,4
 2. But man is in agreement with God on the word *conversion*. Remember, man says basically that it involves passing from one state into another.
 - C. What does God say?
 1. *Conversion* is a healing of the soul - Matthew 23:13-15
 - a. Man’s soul is diseased with sin - Romans 7:23
 - b. It’s a terminal illness; man, of himself, has no cure -
 - 1) Romans 7:23
 - 2) Jesus Christ is the necessary physician.
 2. Conversion is becoming child-like and entering the kingdom of heaven - Matthew 23:1-3
 - a. Must be translated, *i.e.* changed from one state into another- Colossians 3:13

- b. God's kingdom is the church of Christ - Matthew 6:18,19
 - c. We come into the one body, the church/Kingdom, a change of state - I Corinthians 12:13
- 3. Conversion is having one's sins blotted out - Acts 3:19
 - a. Sins and iniquities separate men from God - Isaiah 59:1,2
 - b. The only way to be reconciled with God is through Jesus Christ
 - 1) Jesus Himself stated this - John 14:6
 - 2) Everything prior to Christ pointed to Christ
 - a) Genesis 3:15 ; Deuteronomy 18:15
 - b) Man cannot be justified by the law of Moses.
- 4. Conversion is saving a soul from death - James 5:19,20
 - a. This is spoken about Christians
 - b. Sometimes members of the church need to be converted.
 - 1) "Once saved, always saved" is a dangerous false doctrine
 - 2) II Peter 2:20-22
 - c. The people to whom Ezekiel was speaking were in a covenant relationship with God until they broke it, but were then in need of conversion. They had the curse of death upon them unless they would repent.
 - 1) They needed to pass from one state into another.
 - 2) Ezekiel 18:24

II. Examples of conversion -

- A. God defines conversion as the healing of the soul -

1. James 5:16 Confess faults one to another that ye may be healed.
 2. Spiritual healing, conversion.
- B. God defines conversion as entering into the kingdom
1. John was a converted man
 2. He was in the kingdom - Revelation 1:9
- C. Conversion is having sins blotted out -
1. Philippian jailer - Acts 16:31-33.
 2. Paul - Acts 22:16
 3. Paul was not converted by the vision nor was the jailer converted by the earthquake.
 - a. These two men are good examples that *conversion* is not synonymous with *conviction*.
 - b. These men were convinced and convicted before baptism but not converted to the Lord until baptism when they passed from one state into another - from death to life.
- D. Conversion is saving a soul from death -
1. In the days of Ezekiel, God's people faced death because of their sins
 - a. The purpose of the prophet, as well as the other prophets, was to turn the people away from death by converting them.
 - b. They were those who were in a covenant relationship with God yet in need of conversion.
 2. Simon the Sorcerer - Acts 8:20-23

III. How is conversion brought about?

- A. It is by the word of God
1. We would affirm that in conviction, conversion, and sanctification the Holy Spirit

- operates only through the word of the Lord.
2. We would deny any contrary statement and challenge opposers to present proof.
 3. The Holy Spirit uses agency.
 - a. In fact, the Holy Spirit is God's agent.
 - b. The Holy Spirit's mission is to convict and reprove the world - John 16:7,8
 - c. But he uses the word to accomplish this mission- Acts 11:14
- B. Led of the Spirit-sons of God - Romans 8:14
1. But this is by the law of the law of the Spirit - Romans 8:1,2
 2. Show connection with chapter 7
- C. "Hear ye the word of the Lord."
1. This was Ezekiel's message to God's people.
 2. It was the message of all the prophets
 3. It is the message of the Holy Spirit today.
 4. Just as Jesus used a medium in baptizing, so does the Holy Spirit in his work - John 4:1,2
- D. No exception given to the rule.
1. No direct conversions recorded in the Bible
 2. If Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, then God is a respecter of persons.
 3. The Philippian jailer was converted only when he obeyed the truth - Acts 16:31-33
- E. Psalm 19:7 - "The law of the Lord is perfect, *converting* the soul."

Conclusion:

1. The mission of the church is not that of conversion.

2. Our job is to teach the word of God; it will produce the conversions -
Matthew 28:19,20
3. Let us then preach the word, pure and simple, that there might be many souls converted to Christ.

Invitation: