

## *Conversion Defined*

Conversion. I will be brief, but we need to know what we are talking about. In addition to what I have said in previous pages, let me summarise what the Bible teaches regarding this matter of conversion.

The picture is clear. Sinners hear the gospel preached. They come under the conviction of their sin. They cry out to Christ in repentant faith. God imputes to them the righteousness of Christ. They are justified. Their lives are utterly changed. They begin to live out their new life in Christ by way of progressive sanctification. Thus they show that they must have been born again (John 3:3-8), that they have been taken out of Adam and put into Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22,45-49). In short, they are converted, and they have a new attitude, a new mind, a new will, a new heart, a new desire, producing a corresponding change of life. Obviously so – since regeneration is a renewal; indeed, a re-birth – it can be nothing less than a momentous change! This is conversion. And it is essential. Until a sinner is converted, he will live and die – and spend eternity – under the wrath of God.

The following scriptures – merely a sample – set out the meaning of the word clearly enough:

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness [have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, (NIV)] with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying: ‘Let each one of you speak truth with

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his neighbour', for we are members of one another... Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord (Eph. 4:17 – 5:10).

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of

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the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:3-14).

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith towards God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:2-10).

To my mind, a man has to be deliberately blind if he cannot see it. If I may accommodate Christ's complaint to the Jews (John 5:40), I put it bluntly to all such: 'You are not willing to see'.

At any rate, this is what I mean by 'conversion'.