LESSON 20

True Conversion

Read: Luke 15:11-24; Acts 9:1-22; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

The basic meaning of the word 'conversion' is 'change'. The word conversion may be used to express various changes.

First of all, the word 'conversion' is used when a person changes from one religion to another. For instance, when a heathen or a Buddhist becomes a Christian, we call that a conversion to Christianity.

Secondly, a 'conversion' may mean a moral improvement that is not necessarily religious in character. An immoral person may undergo a positive change in lifestyle and manners without being motivated by Christian principles.

Thirdly, we sometimes refer to the expression when there is a so-called 'outward conversion'. An outward conversion takes place when there is a change in a person's principles and behaviour, but no inner, genuine change of heart. In such a person there is no depth in His convictions and no saving interest in Christ.

Finally, there is the true and real conversion. This is a vital and essential change. This most blessed and much to be desired change begins with the renewal of the heart and expresses itself in a person's entire life. Such a change is of heavenly origin; it is produced in the heart by God the Holy Spirit.

1. Q. What is true conversion?

   A. True conversion is:

   (1) A heartfelt sorrow for sin.

   (2) A turning in faith from sin to Christ.

   (3) An earnest desire and endeavour to live a godly life, manifested by good works.

2. Q. Can a converted person obey God perfectly? (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

   A. No, “for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”

The stories of King Manasseh, the Prodigal Son, and the Apostle Paul are stories of true conversions. It is necessary to be converted, for without it no one can receive eternal life.

All conversions cannot be acknowledged as true conversions. Wherever true conversion has taken place, there will be a manifestation of repentance, faith, and good works.

I. True Conversion Is Necessary

1. In what words does the Bible teach the necessity of conversion?

   (a) Matthew 18:3: “Except ye _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _, and _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _, ye _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _.”

   (b) Acts 26:20b: “That they should _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _   _ _ _, and _ _   _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.”

2. After a person has been truly converted, he finds he is not able to live a perfect life. Therefore, it is necessary to flee from sin every day and turn in faith to Christ. This we call daily conversion.

   (a) Jesus told Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _: _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _,   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _” (Luke 22:32).

   (b) Peter proved he had truly turned from his sin when “he _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _” (Luke 22:62).

II. How True Conversion Will Be Manifested

A. By sincere repentance of sin.

1. Q. What did the Prodigal Son say that showed he was sorry for his sin? (Luke 15:21)

   A. " _ _ _ _ _ _, _, _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _."

2. Q. Is it enough to feel sorry for our sin?

   A. _ _, it is _ _ _. By the grace of God, we must also leave the ways of _ _ _.

3. King Saul confessed his sin and wrong (1 Samuel 15:24), but he died unconverted. God requires of us to turn "even to me with all your _ _ _ _ _, and with _ _ _ _ _ _ _, and with _ _ _ _ _ _ _, and with _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _: and rend your _ _ _ _ _, and not your _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _, and _ _ _ _ unto the _ _ _ _ your _ _ _"

   (Joel 2:12-13a).

B. By turning in faith from sin to God.

1. A converted person is one who has turned from darkness to _ _ _ _ _, and from the _ _ _ _ _ of _ _ _ _ _ unto _ _ _. (Acts 26:18)

2. Q. What did the Prodigal Son do after he realized his need? (Luke 15:18a)

   A. He returned to _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

3. Q. For us to receive His mercy and pardon, what does God require of us? (Isaiah 55:7)

   A. We must forsake the _ _ _ of sin and return unto the _ _ _ _.

4. God has great power. In His infinite grace, He is able to change and to turn our sinful human hearts. We may and should pray, "Turn _ _ _ _ me, and _ shall _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _" (Jeremiah 31:18b).

C. A truly converted sinner humbly and obediently serves God in all good works.

1. Why should converted sinners do good works?

   (a) To show gratitude to God for their salvation.

   (b) To earn salvation.

   (c) To give evidence that we have salvation.

   See Ephesians 2:8-9 and James 2:18.

   Underline the two correct answers.

2. Good works are those that g _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _. (1 Peter 2:12c)

III. A Personal Question: Are You Converted?

When the Philippian jailor was converted (see Acts 16:19-40) he asked the question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” This was a serious concern for the jailor; for him it was a matter of life and death. What did he mean by this question? There are two sides to this inquiry, a negative and a positive one.

On the one hand the question is, how can I be delivered from a great evil, from my sin and guilt, from the wrath of God and from eternal ruin? On the other hand, we have here a desire and a deep longing for a great good, for divine forgiveness, a craving for the love of God, for eternal life.

Were you ever, like this jailor, brought to the realization that salvation is the great need of your life? Did you ever seriously ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?” If you are still careless and indifferent about this most important matter of your salvation, if you have never asked the question, “What must I do to be saved?”, then you are not prepared to meet your divine Judge; then you cannot have true peace and, without God’s grace, you will perish forever!

Plead with God that He may teach you by His Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord to take away the hardness of your heart and to make you sincerely concerned about your need for salvation. Plead and keep on pleading until God for Christ’s sake hears your cry.

If you are seriously concerned about your salvation, you may wonder and ask, who can ever save me? The answer is: Look to Jesus, and to Him alone. He is the only Saviour. Jesus has never failed a poor and needy sinner who fled to Him for refuge. His merciful compassions are infinite!

The message to the jailor was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” If you cannot believe, and are burdened by unbelief, pray and plead for faith. Faith is a gift of God. He gives it to all who sincerely ask for it.

Evaluator: _____