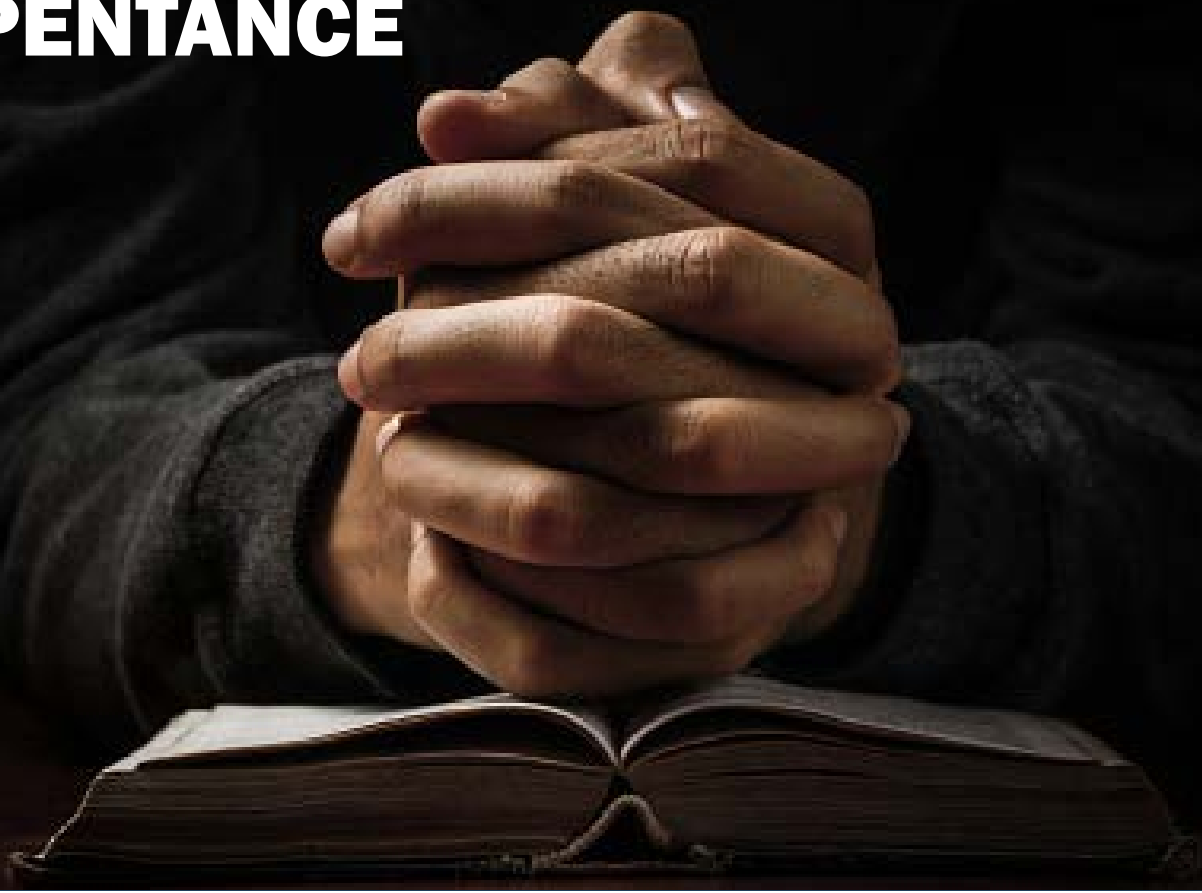


GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical For spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement.



CONVERSION AND REPENTANCE



IN THIS ISSUE :

Perspective	Study	Outline	Reflection	Anecdote	Exhortation	Meditation
Conversion and Repentance 1	Brief Notes on Tabernacle-5 The Casting of the Sockets 3	Repentance 3	Lessons from a Trip to Turkey 4	Running Away from sin 4	When Trials Come! 5	Christ and His Fragrant Name 7

CONVERSION AND REPENTANCE

 By Nelson Thomas

Conversion is a word that we often come across in various contexts. In most situations, conversion signifies growth and development. For example, land conversion for city expansion and rail conversion from meter gauge to broad gauge are all evidences of progress. Conversion of currency is very much essential for travellers. Digital conversion, especially tools to convert computer files makes life easy.

Successful businessmen are those who convert their contacts into customers and time into money. Similarly, victorious politicians know how to convert their good works into votes. The latest trend in India is to convert dysfunctional rail coaches into restaurants on wheels. In all these situations, conversion is not only desirable but also seen as the basic necessity for advancement.

RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

However, when it comes to religious conversion, the issue is complicated. An impression is created in the mind of many, that with conversion something bad has been taken place. Many in their confusion and perplexity prefer to maintain a stoic silence on this lest they be misinterpreted. Yes, there is a valid reason for the negative connotation created in the mind of the general public. There have been numerous occasions when people have been forced to convert from one religion to another. Many poor and helpless were compelled to embrace a different faith just for the

sake of their survival. Whether by force or fraudulent methods such religious conversions leave deep rooted pain and animosity in the hearts of various people groups.

Anyone with the slightest sense of justice will know for sure, forcing someone to abandon their conviction to follow another belief system is an attack against their basic human rights and freedom. The irony is that many who make a hue and cry on human rights and even of animals fail to seriously consider the freedom of man to follow his faith and conscience. As a result, when it comes to religious conviction any change is considered questionable.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

There are some others who take a double standard; while commending conversion to their own community, they forbid the same if it is from their faith to another. In the backdrop of such misperception over conversion, let us consider briefly what the Bible says about conversion and its various aspects.

As a matter of fact, the term conversion occurs only once in the whole Bible. Apostle Paul used this word while referring to the response of the Gentiles to the gospel of Christ during his first missionary journey. (Acts 15:3) And the related word 'convert' also finds very few occurrences only. Yet, the idea of conversion is found throughout the scripture and it is part of the fundamental

teaching of the New Testament.

THE MEANING

To begin with, let us consider the meaning of the word. According to the Webster dictionary, conversion means, “the act or process of changing from one form, state, etc., to another”. This change may also include from faith, religion, political party, et

According to W. E. Vine, the Greek the word used for conversion in Acts 15:3 implies “a turning from and a turning to”. That is exactly what happens when a person responds to the gospel of Christ. He returns to God forsaking the evil way of life. Hence, conversion refers to the whole process of this transformation, wherein man turns away from all that which God hates and turns to Him by faith.

REPENTANCE

The most repeated and equivalent term for conversion in the Bible is repentance, which means, ‘to have another mind’ or

‘to change the mind’. (Acts 2:38; 20:21) So, in order to understand the biblical idea behind conversion we have to consider the teachings related to repentance and its significance in a believer’s life.

A careful study of repentance in the New Testament reveals that conversion is basically a change of heart, not a change of name or religion. This happens as a result of God’s gracious work in the heart of a penitent sinner, on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross. No one can forcefully or deceptively bring about such internal transformation or conversion in another person. God Himself does it as one yield to Him. Of course, one may hypocritically claim to be anything; but born again fellow believers with the gift of discernment will expose the genuineness sooner or later. (Acts 8:13, 21b – 23)

Though God never compels anyone to return to Him, in His love and mercy He wants everyone to know for sure that God saves all those who repent and return to Him. (Acts 17:30; 26:20)

---> (Page- 7) Six Things About Repentance

“

“If God’s today be too soon for thy repentance, thy tomorrow may be too late for God’s acceptance.”

- D. L. Moody

”


“

“One of the most fundamental marks of true repentance is a disposition to see our sins as God sees them.”

- Charles Simeon

”

BRIEF NOTES ON TABERNACLE – 5: THE CASTING OF THE SOCKETS

 By Charles .E. Wigg , Australia

We have seen that the pillars of the fencing of the tabernacle stood in the sockets of brass which typifies the Lord Jesus Christ who went through all the sufferings. The sockets were cast, and to do this the bronze had to be subjected to extreme heat sufficiently severe to melt the metal so that it would pour like water into the mould.

This emphasizes the terrible nature of the fierce wrath of God, which the Lord Jesus bore when He hung on the cross. Before He died, He cried “It is finished”, blessed words! The work was done to the eternal satisfaction of our righteous God, nothing remains to be done, all the judgement was borne, exhausted. What a socket

in which to stand. “I am resting in the finished work of Christ!”

As the socket of brass cut off the pillar from contact with the desert, so the death of Christ separates me from the world. I stand complete in Him, strong in His strength, “Perfect and complete”, in all the will of God.

THE BANDS OF SILVER

Around the tops and bottoms of the pillars were bands of silver, in which hooks were formed on four sides. To the hooks on the desert side, and the Tabernacle side chords were attached, and these were attached on the other end, to bronze pins that were driven into the desert. The pins or pegs

were strong, and provided an anchor that would not move, and speak of God’s power to keep.

The saints of the dispersion, to whom Peter wrote, had suffered much. All the wrath of the gates of Hades, and of Rome had been hurled against them, but Peter tells that they were “kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation”. I would suggest that the pegs represent the power and the chords the faith.

The hooks on the other sides were to receive silver rods, which united pillar to pillar, thus combining the strength of all, and providing a strong unyielding support, to which the linen sheets were

then attached.

The silver speaks of redemption; it was obtained when the people were numbered, when each had to pay the atonement money, a half shekel for each, rich or poor, young or old, high or low.

This reminds us that the Lord Jesus paid the same price for each one of us. Peter tells that we have not been redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet.1: 18-19. The communion of the blood of Christ, along with the “unity of the Spirit”(1 Cor. 10; 16; 12; 13) that unites the saints together, and combines their strength, leads them to support each other.

SERMON OUTLINE:

REPENTANCE

1. Goodness of God leads to..... (Romans 2:5)
2. Authority of God commands it..... (Acts 17:30)
3. Compassion of God waits for it.....(2Peter 3:9)
4. Grace of God grants it.....(Acts 11:18)
5. Love of God rejoices over it.....(Luke 15: 7)

LESSONS FROM TURKEY

“The assemblies then throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 9:31 (JND)

 By Bro. George Sturm, Albania

During the first week of October, a group of believers from our assembly took a trip to Turkey to visit the Biblical sites like Alexander Troas, Assos, and the locations of the seven churches of Revelation. Being in Albania, it was very easy to travel to nearby Turkey.

One of the great lessons that were reinforced during our trip was that the Lord was not speaking in vain to those churches in Revelation when He gave encouragement and warnings. The warnings were real then, and they are real now. Likewise, the consequences of not heeding the Lord’s words were real then, and they are real today.

Except for Smyrna(Izmir), so we were told, the other cities all lack a Christian testimony. Obviously, they forgot to walk in the fear of the Lord as the above verse says. There was toleration of sin, playing with immorality, importing of idolatry, holding to false teachings, lukewarmness, and other major problems.

Praise the Lord for assemblies who are heeding God’s word. I thank God for the fresh report I just received of an assembly who had an evangelistic outreach for Halloween. Instead of compromising with the world, they distributed Gospel literature and then came back to the meeting hall for prayer and some good pizza!

Unfortunately, these warnings are often not heeded and it should be no surprise when one’s sin finds you out. The same day that I heard of the above Gospel outreach, the truth came out about the leader of one of the largest evangelical churches in Albania – he was guilty of moral failure and inappropriate use of social media in a manner that violated the scripture. It would not surprise me if the lampstand of that church goes out.

Yes, the lessons from our Turkey trip were life-changing, but the blessings did not stop there.... Maranatha,

ANECDOTE:

RUNNING AWAY FROM SIN

Once a young woman wanted to join a local church claiming her new-found faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Naturally the leadership interviewed her to know how genuine her testimony is.

One of the elders asked, “Do you believe you were a wretched sinner before you came to Christ for salvation?” “Yes of course, I do acknowledge my past sinful life”, she replied. He asked again, “How do you feel today?” “Today I feel, I am the greatest of the sinners, much more than ever” was her reply. “Then what change since your conversion?” asked the elder. “The change is” she replied, “Earlier I was running after sin, today I am running away from sin”!

WHEN TRIALS COME!

 By Bro. Tom Johns USA

We are surrounded by human suffering and pain. Over the years, I have witnessed young lives being snatched away after succumbing to incurable diseases and accidents, children die at tender ages, infants born with brain tumors, families going through terrible circumstances, people afflicted with mental illnesses, and the list goes on. I have heard prayer requests from devoted born-again Christian parents for their child with a birth defect, for an inoperable tumor, and for reversal of paralysis, among other heartbreaking situations. In most cases, even after some temporary relief, the person stays in the same condition or dies of further complications.

Take a study on the roles of Job's friends, their counsel to Job, and how God was displeased with them. God said, "My wrath is kindled against you [Eliphaz] and your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7). What kindled God's wrath against Job's counselors? Certainly, they were not maliciously blaspheming God; they were instead desperately trying to justify God's actions. While doing so they were accusing Job of secret or hidden sins.

BE SYMPATHETIC

It is wrong to suggest that our actions have no consequences. Jonah fled from the presence of God, and he found himself inside the belly of a

big fish, praying for a miraculous deliverance (Jonah 2:1-6). Also it is wrong to suggest that something bad happens only when we do bad things. Job was a righteous man. In Job 1:8, God testified, "For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and righteous man, fearing God and turning away from evil." His miseries were not the result of secret sins as his friends had falsely claimed. When we act insensitively towards the plights of others, we make the same mistake as Job's friends.

For further clarification, we may turn to James 5:11: "We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and had seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful." Job's counselors failed to communicate this important message about the fundamental character of God, and they spouted only the superficial knowledge which comes from a peripheral understanding of God. Thus God's anger was kindled against Job's friends, who neglected to convey the merciful nature of God's dealings with man.

DIVINE COMPASSION

God's ultimate purpose in putting Job through so much suffering was to communicate to Job and to us His great compassion and mercy. We do not understand how God worked all things for good, but it obviously was done. How can this

be communicated sensitively to someone facing terrible tragedies in life? Will such preaching make much sense to a woman who just has buried her husband, crying out, clutching to her belly, which holds her first child, yet to be born?

Often we pray for miracles, but miracles seldom happen. When we are in the ditch and lay wounded due to the beatings we have suffered, we pray for a "Good Samaritan" to show up, sweep us out, carry us to the inn, apply oil to our body, and provide food to curb our hunger. But hardly ever do we see that happen. Even if some such things do happen, we overlook those miracles because of other looming challenges staring us in the face which are more horrifying than the previous challenges. We tend to forget to appreciate the goodness we just have experienced and start fretting over the next impending disaster.

These may not be the stories of all. But I am sure that there are at least a few of you who could relate to these situations.

In the face of these realities we are asked to trust God and believe He does things to demonstrate His compassion and mercies. The Bible has a good number of incidents besides what happened to Job to illustrate this truth. One that particularly stands out is the life of Joseph from the Old Testament, who suffered many trials in life.

(To be continued)

CHRIST AND HIS FRAGRANT NAME

 By Bro. Michael Browne, England

“The song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—For your love is better than wine. Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.” Song of Solomon 1:1-3

Of the thousand and five songs Solomon wrote, (1 Kings 4.32), this is his masterpiece. It is in fact ‘the song of songs’. It is the song therefore the Holy Spirit has chosen to be included in scripture redolent of Christ’s fragrance, beauty, and love for His bride. Let us consider THREE things:

1

HIS KISS

V.2

In scripture the kiss is the token of reconciliation, peace, and as here, of love. So David kissed Absalom, and the woman that was a sinner kissed the Saviour’s feet. The Shulamite, chosen and won by Solomon, longs for the intensity of his affections experienced by his many kisses.

Our lovely Lord Jesus, the greater than Solomon, has reconciled us to God by His blood, spoken peace to our rebel hearts, and now we long for ‘the kisses of his mouth’ for deeper revelations of His love seen in His word.

2

HIS LOVE

V.2

This kiss of pure and holy affection is a picture of the love existing between Christ and His Church. Oh how He loves us! It is a love that is better than wine.

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul draws a relationship between wine and the Spirit, ‘Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit’. Not the heady influence of natural wine, but better far the intoxicating love of Christ applied by the Spirit’s fullness to the heart is what we are taught here, cf. Rom 5:5.

3

HIS NAME

V.3

His name is as ‘a perfume poured forth’, and its fragrance pervades the house of God today as did Mary’s oil of spikenard scented the house in John 12. If Solomon’s name was fragrant to the Shulamite, how much more sweet is our Beloved’s name to us! All that He is and has done is told out wherever the fragrance of His Name is spread abroad.

To God He was a sweet smelling savour in His death, Eph 5:2. To His people is given the high privilege of manifesting ‘the fragrance of His knowledge’ in every place as they live and witness to His Name, 2 Cor 2:14. To the sinner the Name of Jesus is “the fragrance of life unto life” if they will but turn to Him in faith. (2 Cor 2:16).

In giving Christ Jesus “a name which is above every name”, the Father has ensured the fragrance of that lovely Name shall be poured out for ever, perfuming eternity with its sweetness.

SIX THINGS ABOUT REPENTANCE

 By Nelson Thomas, Mumbai

1 IT'S AN UNIVERSAL DIVINE DIRECTIVE, ACTS 17:30

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

The call for repentance is God's instruction for everyone worldwide. That's why from John the Baptist to the apostles all of them emphasized the need for repentance in the course of their sermons. (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38, etc.). They realized, without repentance people live in sin and bear the consequences and perish. (Ezek. 18:31) The Lord Jesus even referred to the prayers of the souls in hell for the repentance of their loved ones on earth. (Luke 16:30) Notice how much imperative repentance is!

2 IT'S AN EVIDENCE OF GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY FOR THE FALLEN ONES.

God's decree to repent is actually an evidence of His longsuffering and compassion toward sinful, rebellious people. He does not want anyone to perish bearing the consequences of their sins, but to enjoy forgiveness and new life. (1Tim. 2:4; Ezek. 18: 30 - 32)

The entire mission of Christ was to call sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32) One of the major works of the Holy Spirit today is to convict man of his sin, God's righteousness and judgment. (John 16: 8) Apostle Peter writes that even the Lord is patient, giving man more time to repent. (2Peter 3:9; Reve. 2:21) Such divine concern and intervention should not be overlooked. (Acts 5:31; Rom. 2:5)

3 TRUE REPENTANCE IS VISIBLE AND EVIDENT

Repentance is not just a doctrine but a practical experience of every true born again believer. This is basic to be saved. It involves three things

a. Change of mind - The Intellectual aspect

Job says about his repentance in Job 42:5, 6. We can notice his enlightened understanding about God and himself. Similarly, David's repentance also shows that he got a fresh knowledge of sin and God. (Psa. 51: 4)

b. Change of heart - The Emotional aspect

Deep sorrow over sin is the outcome of conviction of one's sins. Paul calls it 'godly sorrow that leads to repentance'. (2Cor 7:10) Without having such a genuine grief on account of their terrible sinful state, no one can be saved. Consider any genuine conversion; one of the essential features is that they mourn at their spiritual bankruptcy. (Luke 18:13; 22:61; Matt. 5: 3, 4; Psa. 51: 17)

c. Change of will - The Volitional aspect

An enlightened view of self and sin not only breaks the heart of an awakened sinner, it also helps them change their path, returning to God's way. (Acts 26:20) Being convicted of their true state, with all humility they seek the salvation God prepared for them through His Son. Gospel and the salvation it offers are relevant only for those who acknowledge their sin, not for the self-righteous ones. (Luke 5:32)

Remember, in genuine repentance, all these three should go together. In the story of the prodigal son this is very clear. He understood his folly, arose and returned to his father confessing his fault, and was no more with the swine. (Luke 15: 17, 18, 21)

There are some who regret over their mistakes only when they are caught. They are only worried about their reputation and the consequences. Some others are ready to pay the penalty or any other form of punishment, yet they return to the same evil path after sometime. Such temporary remorse is not true biblical repentance or conversion.

True repentance is always noticeable and results in internal transformation which will have an effect on their outward lifestyle. (1Thess. 1:9)

4 EVIDENCE OF TRUE REPENTANCE IS AN ON-GOING EXPERIENCE OF REPENTANCE.

Many think, only unbelievers need repentance. But a true born again child of God, as he progresses in his Christian life not only grows in the knowledge of the things of God, he will also develop an increased sensitivity to evil. Thus, he begins to see his inadequacy and the abiding sin nature more and more. That in turn makes him more humble and submissive to Christ for cleansing and strength. (1John 1: 7, 9 – 2:2)

That's why the word of God exhorts God's people to repent repeatedly. (2Cor. 12: 21; Rev. 2:5, 16, 22, etc.) A truly converted saint constantly examines his life in the light of God's word and makes the needed amendments in life. (Rom. 12:2)

5 ABSENCE OF GENUINE REPENTANCE IS TANTAMOUNT TO REBELLION.

Remember, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, God does not appreciate nominal external religious services. The Lord always calls upon the people for a change of heart, an internal transformation, not an outward show with certain gestures or rituals. (cf. Isa. 29:13; Eze. 33: 31 – 33; Matt. 15:7 – 9) God always abhorred the heartless, hypocritical empty ritualism of the Jewish religion of the so-called 'His own people'. (Isa 1: 11ff).

Similarly, John the Baptist vehemently reprimanded the Jews for their hypocritical effort to show external piety without having any internal change. (Luke 3:7). The Lord Jesus often warned of the fraudulent followers. (Matt. 7: 21 – 23; John 2: 23 – 25; 8:31, 32) Apostle Peter strongly rebuked one Simon who professed faith and joined the congregation of Philip with a hidden agenda. (Acts 8:13) Notice Peter's reaction,

“Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” (Acts 8:21b – 23)

If deceitful conversions took place in the early days of the church, how much more careful we ought to be today! It does not matter if one is baptized and part of a zealous evangelical local congregation; if the evidence of genuine repentance is missing, it's only a profession.

One may have respect and occupy an important position among the followers of Christ, but continually rejecting the opportunity to repent exposes the reality. God may give them some more time to repent, but the scripture also reveals that a time may come when it will be impossible for them to repent. (Rev. 2:21; 22:11; Heb. 6: 4 - 6)

6 TRUE REPENTANCE LEADS TO DIVINE FAVOR AND BLESSINGS.

Basically, repentance is an individual's response to God's word. But the moment one repents and returns to God, He graciously begins to work for the penitent sinner. (Acts 5:31; 11:18) Along with forgiveness and restoration we begin to enjoy all other blessings, even the ever abiding presence of God. (Psa. 107: 10 – 13; Eph. 1: 3 - 14) The moment Zacchaeus confessed his sins and repented, the Lord Jesus responded, “Today salvation has come to this house.” (Luke 19: 8, 9)

Apart from that, our repentance and renewed life also gives joy to heaven as well as the servants of God. (Luke 15:7; 2Cor. 7: 7c, 9) Even the society will benefit from the life and activities of a genuinely transformed Christian. On the contrary, an unrepentant rebellious lifestyle gives sorrow to the heart of God and hurts many around them. Dear reader, be honest, is true repentance part of your life? When was the last you mourned in the presence of God? If not now, when are you going to repent and lead a genuine, true life?

GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical For spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement.

'Grace & Peace' is an electronic periodical, sent out monthly, aiming the overall spiritual growth of Christian Believers. You can reproduce this e-periodical fully or in part in any medium, provided it is unedited, and retain the original author / copyright information and a reference to our website - gracepeace.net

For further details contact:- gracepeaceu@gmail.com

Prepared, and posted by Nelson Thomas Kumaramparampil(NTK) for the Glory of God & the Joy of the saints.

Editorial assistance : Tom Jacob

Design & Layout : Jiju Mathew

Visit:-www.gracepeace.net