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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement

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BIBLICAL CONVERSION

There are many Biblical terms which common people misunderstand and misinterpret. One of the major reasons for this is ignorance. The false narratives and manipulated assumptions created by certain groups also add to this issue.

The consequences of such twisted and manufactured ideas are far reaching. Not only does it destroy the mutual understanding and respect, it even promotes enmity between different groups.

Conversion is one such Biblical term most people in India today really abhor. They may have their own excuse for the same. But as Christians it is high time, we are sure of what the Word of God says about conversion.

A BLESSING

Consider the number of conversions in the New Testament. It was not a change of name or religion. On each occasion it was a radical change in their mindset as well as movements. Notice few examples:

Zacchaeus the extortioner got converted and agreed to give half of his wealth to the poor and to return fourfold to all from whom he had extorted in the past (Luke 19:1–9). Saul of Tarsus, the blood thirsty persecutor got converted and became a tender-hearted brother who sacrificially served the Lord and His people (Acts 9:1ff).

So is every Biblical conversion then and now. It is the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit using the Word of God. The attitude and affections of the convert is changed and that in turn is reflected in the actions. A genuine convert to Christ not only finds satisfaction and peace of mind, he is a blessing at home and to the society as well. It can never be forced or induced by any human agency. Let us explore this topic and make it known to our country men. Yours in His service,

NTK

CONVERSION ABUSED AND CONFUSED

Conversion is the buzzword again in India today. Though we all use this term in our everyday usage like digital conversion or currency conversion, religious conversion has become the talk of the town now. Certain fraudulent conversions that took place in a corporate corridor have sent shock waves across the country.

When on one side there are different kinds of ‘conversions’ for progress and development, religious ‘conversion’ has become a contentious and controversial topic. An impression has been cast that any form of spiritual conversion should be suspected as a criminal offense.

In the background of such confused situation let us consider briefly what the Bible says about conversion in the Biblical point of view.



1. Whether in the Old Testament or New Testament the original terms used for **‘Conversion’** means, **‘to turn about,’ ‘turning towards,’** ‘to turn back,’ etc. (Psa. 51:13; Matt. 18:3; Acts 15:3). It refers to a change from one form or state to another.
2. Thus, in the Biblical context **‘Conversion’** refers to the act of man turning from all that is **unscriptural to scriptural**. That includes turning from idols to the living God, from darkness to light, falsehood to truth, bondage to freedom, death to life, etc. (1Thess 1:9; John 5:24). It’s a change of mind, not a name or religion.
3. True Biblical conversion is **always preceded by conviction, repentance, and faith**. Conviction is the personal acknowledgement of one’s sinfulness as the scripture rightly reveals. Repentance is the change of mind with sorrow and hatred for the past evil life. Faith is the committing of oneself to the Lordship of Christ, trusting in His promises (Acts 3:19; 26:20).
4. Conversion itself is not salvation or regeneration; however, it is only when one is genuinely converted, God graciously forgives his sins, regenerates and declares him righteous in Christ (Isa. 1:16–18; Acts 3:19). The Lord Jesus asserts that

without conversion one is unfit for the kingdom of heaven, irrespective of which community one belongs to, Matthew 18:3.

5. Even though conversion is the act of an individual, **there is a divine work involved in it** which is often beyond human comprehension. Using the Word of God the Holy Spirit works from without to bring conviction in the heart of an individual (Psa. 19:7; John 16:8; 1Pet. 1:2). God in His sovereign grace enables one to turn around at the right time. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the best example for this supernatural involvement (Acts 9:1–18; 9:7).



6. **God always expects a genuine convert to educate those who live in darkness** and evil ways to turn to Him (Psa. 51:13; James 5:19, 20). In the Old Testament, God wanted Israel to be a light unto the Gentiles, (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Similarly, Saul of Tarsus was miraculously transformed to be a witness to the Gentiles, (Acts 26:18).

As a matter of fact, a personal experience of conversion alone makes one eternally grateful to God for the mercy and grace he obtained. And in turn that makes one a zealous witness for the Lord.

7. **Any false or forced conversion is deplorable and strictly rebuked** (Acts 8:13, 21, 22; Matt. 7:21–23). Conversion of an individual must be purely voluntary and based on clear understanding of the Word of God (Matt. 13:15). The Lord Jesus never forced anyone to follow Him, in fact He even suggested the Apostles to leave (Luke 14:27; John 6:66, 67).
8. **True conversion results in a dramatic transformation** internally as well externally. Plenty of conversion stories in the New Testament substantiate it. Apostolic instructions to new converts present the expected way of life, worthy of the Lord Jesus (1Peter 2:25; 4:3; Eph. 4:17–32; Colo. 3:5-17). People who lived in gross wickedness and corruption begin to lead a holy and righteous life. This evident change becomes an example and testimony (1Thess. 1:6–10).
9. **Conversion does not change one's status before men.** For example, Onesimus the runaway slave from Philemon, though got converted while imprisoned at the Roman prison was still a slave to Philemon. Apostle Paul, his spiritual father acknowledges that Onesimus is still accountable to his master (Philemon

vv. 10–19). The most important change a convert experiences is the new standing he gets before God and His people.

10. **Conversion does not make one's life easy and prosperous.** The New Testament nowhere promises a trouble-free life for the followers of Christ. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus often presented His standard of discipleship as self-sacrifice, suffering, endurance, etc. (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26, 27). He has even warned His followers of rejection and hatred similar of which He had to face from the world (John 15:18-21).

Then what do we achieve by conversion? It is turning away from the godless, sinful ways to God our creator who in His grace is willing to forgive our sins and regenerate us on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Apart from this new standing before God and His

people, we have been blessed with all the blessings of the heavenly places. Actually, numerous are those benefits; like no more darkness, bondage, guilt, loneliness, and hopelessness, etc.,

Conclusion

What a tragedy it is that, Biblical conversion with such profound realities is so complicated and confused in the eyes of many! Basically, it is because of the ignorance of the people regarding Biblical truths. At the same time, corrupt and fraudulent practices by certain groups also led people to view conversion with suspicion.

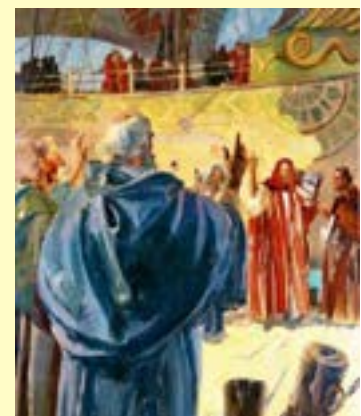
In this scenario let us understand and experience true conversion according to the Word of God. Let's make sure that we who claim to have been converted are real and the transformation is visible. It is high time we live out the gospel more than the proclamation of it. **G&P**

▶ OUTLINE-1

Bro. Daniel Varghese, Punalur

CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

1. It was a grounded Church, Acts 11:19 – 21; 8:1
2. It was a growing Church, Acts 11: 21 – 24
3. It was a gracious Church, Acts 11:23; 13:2, 3; 14:26
4. It was a generous Church, Acts 11: 27 – 30
5. It was a garnished Church, Acts 13: 1 – 3



▶ OUTLINE-2

Bro. Pressennen P. P. Madurai

MINISTRIES OF THE RISEN CHRIST



1. **Comforting the Sorrowful, John 20: 13 – 17**
2. **Giving Peace to the frightened, John 20: 19 cf. Isa 41:10**
3. **Opening the eyes of the Blind, Luke 24: 13 – 31 cf. 2Pet 1:9**
4. **Assuring the weak believer, John 20: 25 – 27 cf. Heb 3:12,14**
5. **Restoring the backslidden, John 21: 21**
6. **Entrusting Ministry to Followers, Matt 28: 18 – 20**

**Our Lord faithfully accomplished all His ministries.
It's a pattern for us too.**

▶ REFLECTIONS

Enoch Reuben Muniah, Johannesburg

CREATION AND ITS CREATOR

(Part 8)

Effects of Sin

In the judgment that followed the fall, God said to Eve, “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (Gen. 3:16). Her experience of conception and child-birth would not be easy. Her birth pangs will be uncomfortable and sorrowful and her desire shall be to her husband and he shall rule over her (Gen. 3:16). This will be a perpetual reminder of the dreadful effects of sin. A warning from God always precedes judgment.



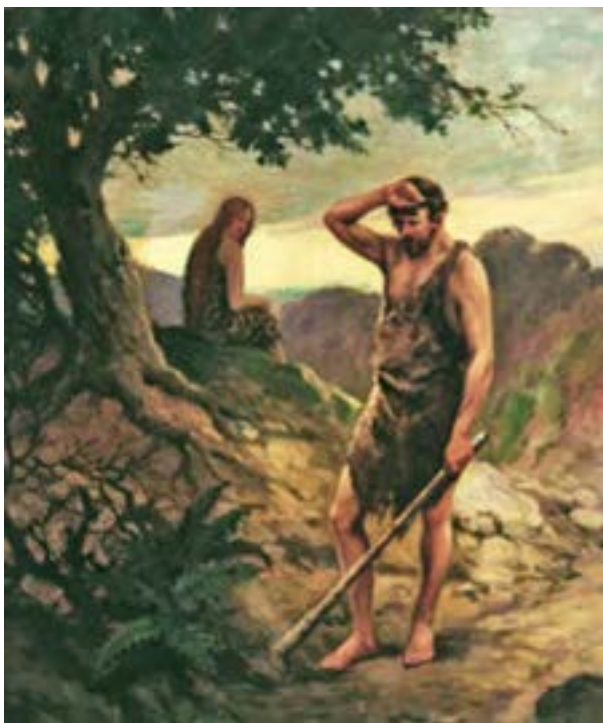
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Seed of the Woman

This great promise in Genesis 3:15 known as ‘Protoevangelium’ (the ‘first gospel’, a Messianic interpretation of the text) promises the ultimate coming and victory of Christ our Redeemer. There will come One (Christ Jesus) who will not be of the man’s seed and who therefore will not be under your dominion.

He will be uniquely the Seed of the woman, miraculously conceived and virgin-born. Though Satan will succeed in grievously bruising Him, Christ will ultimately and completely crush him and all his evil ambitions on the cross.

Retribution



God’s retribution for Adam was the cursing of the ground. The produce of the ground would be thorns, thistles, and noxious weeds. It will be with tears and intense labour, tilling and toiling by the sweat of his brow before he could eat of it.

Subsequently, Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden. Their expulsion from the paradise called ‘Garden of Eden’ was a result of disobedience. They had paid dearly for their sin. “Wherefore, as by one man, (Adam) sin entered the world and death by sin; and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). Sin never goes unpunished. The soul that sins, it shall die (Eze. 18:20).



Identity

God’s pronouncement of ‘good’ over all that He created was His stamp of approval, as it were, but His pronouncement of ‘very good’ after the creation of mankind was His smile of approval. God’s word reminds that “we are fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14); made in the image and likeness of God. And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). The words ‘image’ and ‘likeness,’ affirms our identity and fellowship with the living God.

The fact that God gave man (plural - Adam, and Eve) dominion or power over everything that He created, means that man's brain was wired to do just that. Man was given intellect but animals were given instinct. Man's intelligence behoves him to ask questions such as where have I come from, what am I doing here and where am I going. Man's destiny is fore-ordained by God; from the cradle to the grave as far as this earthly life is concerned.

Apart from the angels, man is God's highest form of creation. "What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet", (Psalm 8:4-6).

Ingratitude

Since the dawn of civilisation man has never ceased to contest and discredit the Bible. Prophet Jeremiah writes, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). Indeed, we learn about God from creation. Apostle Paul writes, "For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

Paul further writes, 'they glorified not God even when they knew Him, they were

unthankful, they became evil or vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened. They changed the truth or traded the truth for a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator', (Rom. 1:21-25). For this cause, God gave them up to uncleanness, vile affections and to a reprobate mind.

Conclusion

We concur that there is, scientifically, ample empirical evidence, which is compelling and overwhelming proof and reveals a universe that is consistent with the Biblical account of creation.

Ironically, more than ever before, science has given credence to and confirms the validity of the Bible. The holy scriptures reveal to us a God who transcends time-matter-space and the laws of the universe.

Geologists, biologists, archaeologists, scientists, physicists, astrophysicists, and cosmologists all bear witness to the marvellous works of creation by a supreme being, God.

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the works of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech and night to night reveals His knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out throughout all the earth and their utterance to the ends of the world (Ps. 19:1 NLT). The testimony of the heavens is bearing witness to the design of the divine architect and master craftsman, God. **G&P**

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Study: Part 8
(Based on Joshua 1–8)

More Steps to Reach the Victory Side **Josh, ch. 3.**

Review:

We have seen the six important steps that Joshua and the people of Israel took to reach the other side of Jordan. They were movable, patient, holy, focused and following the LORD, while exalting Him. All these are essential steps for us as well to reach the victory side. Let us consider three more steps from the same passage.



1. Act by faith, Josh. 3:13, 15, 16a.

“As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD”

The priests are not just to stand close to the edge of the water and believe the ability of God to divide the river. Only after those involved acted upon their faith and got their feet wet, Jordan dried up and people crossed over. So is in Christian life.

It is true that unlike the Old Testament, we have been blessed with all the spiritual blessings of the heavenly places in Christ. However, we need to act by faith taking one step at a time, doing whatever He says even if it is apparently difficult.

2. Risk life, Josh. 3:17; cf. 4:10.

“the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan.”

Immediately after the sole of the priests touched the water, the river was divided, v. 15, 16. On one side, the water became like a heap of waters! Then they had to go to the middle of the river and stand there bearing the Ark till all the Israelites crossed over. How risky it was! Imagine, in case the heap of waters falls on them! By faith they had to take that risk so that the Israelites safely reach the victory side. This speaks of the role of Christ in taking the dangerous place – the depth of the sea – to taste death for us to take away our sins and lead to victory (cf. Psa. 69:1, 2)

This also refers to the leader’s responsibility. They may have to take the place of danger for the benefit of the people. Wherever a leader hesitated to take risk, people will have to suffer.

3. Death to self

When we carefully compare the crossing of the Red Sea with the crossing at the river Jordan we can find certain unique spiritual meanings in these exercises of crossings.

As soon as they crossed over, Joshua told them to erect two memorials. One in the middle of the river Jordan and another at the first camping place – Gilgal, Josh. 4:2, 3, 9. What was purpose of those memorials?

Primarily, it was meant to be a sign for the future generation, Josh. 4:6, 7. It was also intended to be a testimony to the gentiles, v. 24. Anyone who sees the huge heap of stones should be challenged by seeing the mighty works of God.

However, there was no command to erect a monument during the earlier crossing at Red Sea. They only had to ‘stand still and see,’ Exo 14:13. Because it was God’s own work, on His own initiative.



Whereas at Jordan there were many requirements. The Lord demanded faith, obedience, and discipline. Because what was happening at the crossing of Jordan was unique that they should never forget.

It was there the rebellion and wanderings of the Israelites ended. The defeated and disobedient life of wilderness is buried there. Yes, it was the place of their death—death of the self-life. In their campaign, Israelites often returned to Gilgal to remind themselves of these truths, Josh. 10:15, 43. Samuel too used to visit this place for remembrance and renewal, 1Sam. 7:16.



Today for us, the crossing at the Red Sea illustrates Christ’s death for us. On His own initiative, He died to redeem us. Whereas the crossing of Jordan speaks of our death with Christ on the cross. Both these aspects of Christ’s death must be afresh in our heart to enter in to the rest and victory our Lord promises (Cf. 2Cori. 5:14). So, to reach the victory side every believer must continue to experience this death with Christ (John 12:24). Though it happened at conversion, we need to know, reckon, and yield to Him accordingly (Rom. 6:6, 11, 13). **G&P**

To be continued (DV)

▶ ANECDOTE -1

PARTIAL CONVERSION

At the Santal Ashram in India, one day in the week was declared a holiday for the low-caste sweepers. The ashramites would volunteer to do the sweeping, scavenging and cleaning the latrines. A member of the ashram, a Brahmin convert was reluctant to scavenge and clean latrines. When asked by Dr. Stanly Jones when he was going to do his part, he replied, “Well, I am converted but I am not converted for that far.”



Source: Unknown ■

▶ ANECDOTE -2

DEATH TO SELF

One sister was about to leave for China for missionary work, one friend said, “What on earth, are you going to bury yourself in China for? You will never stand the climate; you will be dead in six months.” She replied, “my dear girl, I want you to know five years ago I died, when Jesus called me to China, I bowed my head at the cross and died to everything except God and China”.



One may be well known and respectable among the followers of Christ, yet repeatedly rejecting the opportunity to repent reveals the rebellious attitude of that individual

NTK



6 FACTS ABOUT REPENTANCE

The most repeated and equivalent term for conversion in the New Testament is repentance, which means, ‘to have another mind’ or ‘to change the mind’ (Acts 2:38; 20:21). So, to understand the Biblical idea behind conversion, we must 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 God’s gracious work in the heart of a penitent sinner, based on the finished work of Christ on the cross.

No one can forcefully or deceptively bring about such internal transformation in another person. God Himself does it as one yields 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). Let us consider six facts about repentance.



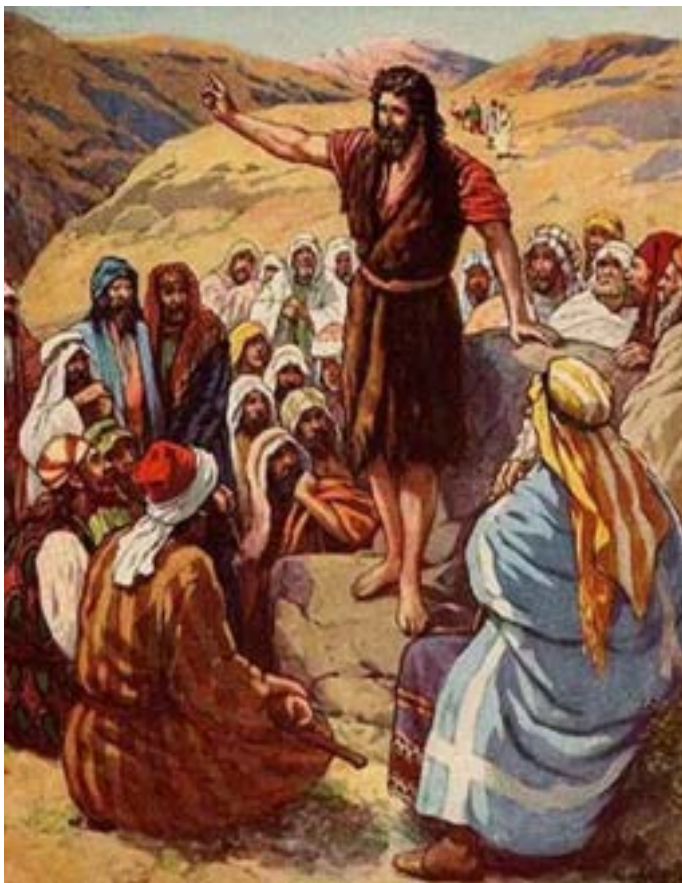
1. It is a universal divine directive, Acts 17:3

“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 is why from John the Baptist to the apostles, all of them emphasized the need

for repentance during 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).



2. It is evidence of God's grace and mercy for the fallen ones.

God's decree to repent is 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 God patiently gives man more time to repent (2Peter 3:9 cf. Reve. 2:21). Such divine concern and intervention for our good 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's repentance is an example, (Job 42:5, 6). Notice his enlightened understanding about God and himself. Similarly, David's repentance also shows that he got a fresh knowledge of his 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 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 prompts them to 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).

Regret vs. Repentance

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.

Many think only unbelievers need to repent. 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, but 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 humbler and more 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 (Rom. 12:2).

5. Absence of genuine repentance is tantamount to rebellion.

In the Old Testament, we see the Lord always abhorred the heartless, hypocritical empty ritualism of the Jewish religion, (Isa. 1:11ff). He always called upon the people for a change of heart, an internal transformation, not an outward show with certain gestures or rituals (Isa. 29:13; Eze. 33: 31–33; Matt. 15:7–9).

Similarly, in the New Testament, 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 be well known and respectable among the followers of Christ, yet repeatedly rejecting the opportunity to repent reveals the rebellious attitude of that individual. God may give them some more time to repent, but a time will 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 favour 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).

Remember Zacchaeus, the moment he confessed his sins and repented, the Lord Jesus responded, "Today salvation has come to this house." (Luke 19:8, 9)

Our repentance and renewed life also give 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? **G&P**

▶ **PRACTICAL**

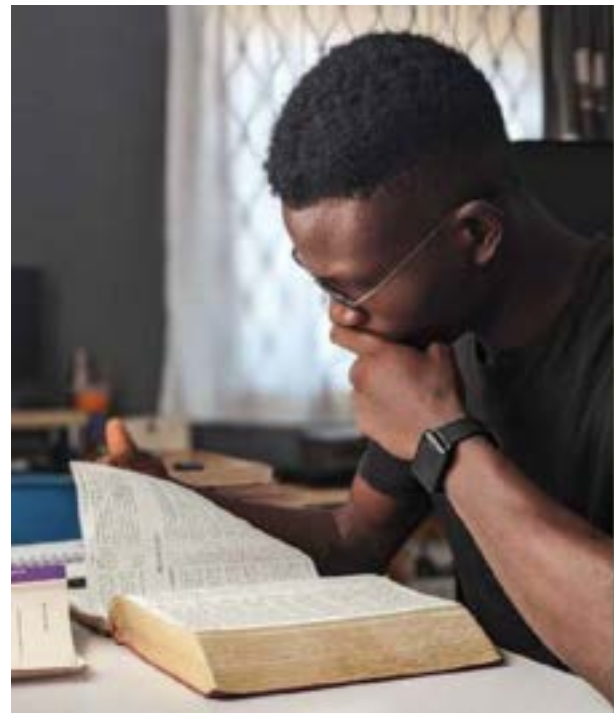
Nelson Thomas, Mumbai

SAVING FAITH

By the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the work of salvation is complete, yet not all are saved automatically. How can an individual experience salvation?

No amount of work, however good it may be, brings salvation for man. There is only one condition for salvation: that is, faith (Eph. 2:8; Acts 16:30, 31; Rom. 10:10). Remember, salvation is God's work for man, not man's work for God.

Man by birth is spiritually blind, dead, away from God and in enmity with Him, heading towards the eternal hellfire. He is incapable of doing anything good to be saved. God alone must deal with this issue. After accomplishing the work of salvation on the cross He calls upon men and women to believe in it (Jn. 3:16; Mark 16:16; Acts 8:13). An unsaved person is condemned for not believing in the gospel, because believing is the only condition for salvation (Jn. 3:18).



God condemns a sinner primarily because of his rejection of the work of salvation accomplished on the cross (2Cori. 5:14, 19). There is nothing more a man needs to do, but to believe.

However, not all faith saves. Faith is one of the most misunderstood Biblical terms. We use the word 'faith' in different context and connotations. If we are not sure about the true faith that saves us, we may be deceived.

Four different ideas: -

A. THE CREED.

“Faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints”. Jude.v.3. cf. v.20; 2 Pet. 1:1. Here Jude and Peter both refer to the body of truth, the doctrine revealed in the Bible. Saying yes to such creed or belief will not transform anybody. It is not saving faith.

B. INTELLECTUAL BELIEF. JAM. 2:19.

Mere mental knowledge of anything, even things concerning the Lord has no regenerative value. Many Christians are aware of the story of Christ and other Biblical truths, but that is not saving faith (Cf. Jn. 2:22; 3:12; 6:69; 8:24, 25; 1Jn. 5:20; Heb. 11:6b). That is only knowledge of a historical Christ. Even the devil has such knowledge. James emphatically says faith that does not affect our life is dead (Jam. 2:26).

C. SECULAR FAITH, JOHN 2:23-25.

Everyone believes something or somebody in his everyday life. One believes a doctor and quietly lies before him for a surgery. A passenger believes a driver and sits in the vehicle to reach the destination. Such every day practical faith is very much temporary in nature and it has nothing to do with spiritual life or salvation.

The Lord knows the merit of such faith. That is why though they believed Him, He did not believe them. Still, many misunderstand their secular faith to be spiritual faith. As the days go by either they will show their reality or the Lord will make it public (1The. 3:2; 1Jn. 2:19; Mtt.7:22, 23).

D. SPIRITUAL OR SAVING FAITH, (EPH. 2:8; ROM. 3:22—25; 5:1).

Saving faith is the God-given ability to trust God's Word as true and yield fully at His disposal. Faith is God's gift implanted in us by the Lord (Eph. 2:8). According to the writer of Hebrews, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who fixed faith in us and it is He who shall perfect faith in our heart (Heb. 12:1).

It is this faith that saves us. By such supernatural faith we see things that are unseen to the normal man. Faith substantiates the invisible things as true (Heb. 11:1). It is by faith we accept all what is said about the Lord Jesus Christ and accept the salvation and other blessings He offers.

Make no mistake; faith in itself is having no merit. Faith is not our effort. Salvation is not a reward for our faith. God gives it freely, but we receive it by faith (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 3:25). All the merit goes to God who accomplished the work of salvation, (Jn. 3:16, 18; 7:31; Acts 20:21; 1Jn. 5:12, 13).



For example, when someone gives a gift, receiving it by faith is not a work. Gift is not a reward for his faith, gift is always free gift. Or when someone in a sinking ship

jumps to a life boat; the merit for his safety does not go to his faith in jumping but to the boat which is the object of his faith. It is the boat that takes him to safety.

Saving faith is not our doing but relying, trusting on what Christ has done (Acts 16:30, 31; Gal. 2:16; Heb. 11:6a), wholly committing upon Christ in complete dependence (Jn. 14:6; 5:24; 1Jn. 2:23).

What to believe?

- The existence of God (Heb. 11:6).
- God's promises (Jn. 5:24).
- The Son (Jn. 6:40).
- The uniqueness of Christ in saving (Acts 4:12).
- His name (Jn. 1:12).
- God's power to save (Col. 2:12) etc.

In short, believe all that the Bible says about Christ and His finished work on the cross. Believe the all-sufficiency of His saving grace. Even if little in

measurement, faith is precious (2Pet. 1:11; Eph. 1:19).

Living by faith

Such trust in the finished work of Christ is needed not only for salvation, but even for our everyday life thereafter (2Cor. 5:6, 7; Heb. 10:38; Col. 1:23; 2:7; Heb. 11:1). Faith that saves us also sustains us. We must continue to trust and take God at His word. We need to grow in our faith and keep it till the end (2Tim. 4:7; Rom. 8:24). Faith is closely related to hope – trusting Christ for the work He will do in future also.

Only as we keep on trusting in His power, we can experience peace, joy and victory that salvation has brought in our life (Gal. 2:20; 5:6; Eph. 1:19). Our spiritual strength and effectiveness depend upon our continuous relationship with Christ in trusting and abiding in Him (Rom. 14:1; 2Thes. 1:3; 2Pet. 1:5—8; 3:18; Gal. 5:6; 1Thes. 5:8; Jam. 5:18—26). **G&P**

► NEWS & VIEWS

HOSTILITIES AGAINST CHRISTIANS

Aggression against Christians continues unabated in various forms in different parts of India. Several groups of the majority community regularly attack Christian gatherings and their church buildings. During Christmas they even assaulted the vendors who were selling

Christmas related materials. During Easter in Patna, Bihar, a mob attacked a gathering and vandalized the venue. In Odissa not only they assaulted a Lord's servant, they forced him to eat cow dung and drink sewage water. The irony is that the assailants themselves call the police to take actions against the victims.

Anti-Conversion laws

Apart from such mob attacks, it seems the authorities are targeting Christians through new legislations and law amendments. Already 13 states in India have passed anti-conversion laws, out of which the recent ones are the most stringent. According to the latest legislation by the state of Maharashtra, anyone who wants to convert or organize a conversion ceremony must give 60 days' notice to the authorities and once the conversion is over it must be registered within 21 days.

Any 'unlawful' conversion is a cognizable and non-bailable offence for which the punishment will be up to 7 years' imprisonment and rupees five lakh penalty. If the offence is involving women, minors, scheduled casts and scheduled tribes or persons with disabilities, the penalty will be higher.



'Unlawful' refers to allurements, coercion, deceit, force, inducement, misrepresentation, and other fraudulent means, even 'brainwashing' through education. Glorifying one religion over another in

order to influence a conversion also is now an offence. This law regards persons who assist an individual to convert 'unlawfully' as aiding and abetting the offence. This includes anyone who counsel, persuade, or assist the convert in any manner.

Rulings and Control

There are certain court rulings also that adversely affect Christians in India. The recently introduced 'Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026' is also seen as a government effort to control Christian institutions and even to indirectly take over the church owned assets.

Recently in Dungarpur, Rajasthan, authorities have revoked the recognition of a Catholic owned secondary school alleging that the school is influencing students towards Christianity. Despite the vehement rejection of allegations by the management as well as the parents, authorities have ordered to shift the students to nearby schools and close the



institution.

All these developments point towards an alarming situation in India as far as Christians are concerned. Never have we seen such hostility and opposition from the public as well as the ruling classes.

As the days go by the animosity towards the followers of Christ are only increasing. Social media comments reveal the gravity

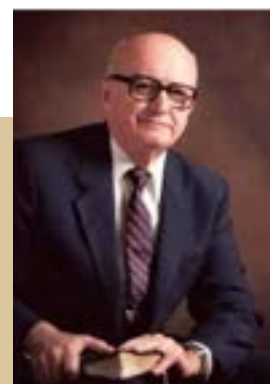
of their anger towards Christians, particularly missionaries. The root cause of course is ignorance coupled with false narratives by those who oppose the gospel of Christ.

Let us pray earnestly for a change and that at the same time God's people may have the discernment to act with wisdom and care in the midst of such antagonistic environment. **G&P**

“You can't tell the exact moment when night become day, but you know when it is day time.”

Author Unknown

“When a person is truly converted, certain things always happen; there are certain marks which show the reality of that conversion.”



William MacDonald



John MacArthur

“All the aspects related to someone's conversion and newly transformed life in Christ are accomplished sovereignly by God.”

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