

Converted From and Converted To

Conversion Series #2

Lk 22:31-34

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Last week we discussed the statement of Jesus, “Unless you are converted . . . you will not enter The kingdom of heaven”

1. Several times in the New Testament, warnings are given about things that will prevent or deny a person entrance into God’s kingdom
2. Conversion, which is the process of turning our lives around and turning to God, is one of the things that ensures our entrance into God’s kingdom
3. The fact that such importance is placed on conversion is reason enough for us to pay special attention to it

B. Today I want to focus this idea of conversion a bit more sharply

1. Illustration

A turn involves two things: it involves a terminus a quo and a terminus ad quem. It involves a turning from something and a turning toward something.

William Barclay

2. Barclay’s statement is at once, both obvious and insightful
 - a. the act of turning one’s life around, or being converted, recognizes that prior to conversion that person was headed in a direction, toward some things, that result in condemnation and separation from God
 - b. the act of turning one’s life around, or being converted, also recognizes that the goal of conversion is to head in different direction, toward other things, that result in salvation and fellowship with God
 - c. it may be a simple idea, but unless we are aware that conversion involves both a turning from and a turning to, we are likely to miss the impact that conversion necessarily makes on a person’s life

C. Our text this morning, well illustrates the idea of a turning from and a turning to

1. Luke 22:31-34

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." 33 But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" 34 And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." NASU

2. Note that Jesus was actually telling Peter he would need to experience a turning in his life
 - a. Jesus foretold the denial of Peter – part of the “sifting” like wheat at Satan’s hand
 - b. Jesus had prayed that Peter’s faith might not fail (in spite of knowing about the denials), and that Peter strengthen his brothers

- c. the key phrase is this: “when once you have turned again”
- d. that’s the idea of conversion

I. THINGS WE MUST TURN FROM

A. Jeremiah 18:5-8

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does?*” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. “At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy *it*; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.

NASB95

1. This is a statement of God’s sovereignty, his authority, his right as creator to do with his creation as he wills
2. In this case the discussion is about nations, and God’s right and ability to uproot and destroy them because of the evil in them
3. But look at what God says: “if that nations against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it.”
4. We might simply make a case that God wants people to turn away from evil, whatever its form – to reject it for the evil that it is – Note Jeremiah’s constant affirmation:
 - a. Jeremiah 26:3’ -- Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.’ NASB95
 - b. Jeremiah 36:3 -- “Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.” NASB95
 - c. Jeremiah 36:7 -- “Perhaps their supplication will come before the LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and the wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people.” NASB95
 - d. Jeremiah 44:5’But they did not listen or incline their ears to turn from their wickedness, so as not to burn sacrifices to other gods. NASB95

B. Acts 14:11-15

When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have become like men and have come down to us.” And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. NASB95

1. Paul’s admonition to people at Lystra is that they turn from vain things like idolatry and the worship of false gods

2. Idolatry and every form of worship of false gods is man's self-inflicted ignorance gone to seed – an ignorance that will destroy people

C. Acts 26:15-18 (Paul's account of his conversion to King Agrippa)

“And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ‘But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’ NASB95

1. From darkness – darkness is used as a description of the realm of evil and sin – Paul's purpose in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was to turn them from darkness
2. From the dominion of Satan – the darkness, the realm of evil and sin, is the dominion of Satan; it is where he rules and it is where men are condemned and separated from God
3. Paul's goal was to turn people away from these things

II. CONVERSION IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT TURNING TO SOME THINGS

A. Luke 1:13-17

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. “You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

“It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” NASB95

1. Part of John's purpose was that of a prophet – “to turn the hearts of the Fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous”
2. Essentially, it was to turn the hearts of the people back to God and to godly ways
3. While we might assume that turning from evil means turning to God, that is not necessarily true – it's possible to turn from outright evil to a morally neutral position, but that isn't what conversion is about

B. Acts 11:20-21

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. NASB95

1. Here is where the message of the New Testament gets specific
2. The call of the gospel is that people turn in faith to Jesus Christ
 - a. John 3:14-17 -- “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness , even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life “For God so loved the world , that He gave His only begotten Son , that whoever believes in Him shall not perish , but have eternal life . “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world , but that the world might be saved through Him. NASB95

- b. the reference is to the passage in Numbers 21 where Moses made a bronze serpent and put it on a pole so that anyone who looked upon it (turned to it) would be healed
 - c. when people turn to Jesus, when they look to him, he will provide the salvation needed and grant eternal life
3. In the conversion we're talking about, it means a turning away from evil, from sin, from darkness and the dominion of Satan, and turning to Jesus Christ

C. Illustration

“Repentance is seeing our sin and turning from it; faith is seeing Jesus and turning toward him.” -- Jim Wallis, The Call To Conversion, p. 5.

1. We need to understand what God calls us to turn to
 - a. not merely a new philosophy of life
 - b. not just to a religion
 - c. not to the “church”
 - d. not to religious custom or tradition
2. The gospel message is a specific call for people to turn to Jesus Christ and put their faith in him, so that they can find forgiveness of sins, so that they can be redeemed from the consequences of sin, so that they can have eternal life, so that they can live in fellowship with God
3. This is the whole purpose of evangelism – to call for conversion
 - a. to turn people away from sin and Satan
 - b. to turn people to Jesus

CONCLUSION

A. F. Laubach (NIDNTT, 1:355) says, “Conversion involves a change of lords.”

1. If you're not a Christian I want you to know that this is what the gospel is all about – a call to change lords – to make Jesus Lord of lords and King of kings
2. If you are a Christian I want you to remember to whom you turned in your conversion

B. Invitation