

Conversion Series #4
How To Stay Converted
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. The past few Sunday mornings we've looked at the idea of conversion, being converted to Jesus Christ

1. The word converted means turned – the idea being that a person is turned away from one thing toward another
2. A Christian is specifically turned away from sin, the world, false religion, and all that stands in opposition to God
3. A Christian is turned to Jesus Christ
 - a. this is the difficult thing for many to understand
 - b. they seem to think we're converted to Christianity as some sort of religious philosophy, or to the church
 - c. the truth is that to be a Christian, we are turned to Jesus
4. The practical application of that turning will certainly involve the development of a Christ-like life
 - a. that includes personal morality
 - b. it includes beliefs, attitudes and behavior
 - c. but these are the results of our conversion, not the basis
 - d. Jesus is the basis for conversion, and it is Jesus who can and will produce the appropriate changes in a person's life

B. There is another concern that we must look at – how to stay converted

1. When I was converted, I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought the old things had passed away, that all things had become new, and that my old corrupt nature, the old life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army--that there was a battle on hand. -- *D. L. Moody, Leadership, Vol. 3, no. 3*
2. There are two extremes to which people go when they discover that after becoming a Christian, they still aren't perfect
 - a. one is that they discover something called denial – they just deny they still struggle with sin
 - b. the other is that they become fearful, never sure about their relationship with the Lord
3. Neither of these extremes is healthy or productive

C. Today, I want us to think about how to stay converted

1. We can do it without denying our continued struggle with sin
2. We can do it without living in fear of the Lord

I. WE MUST DEAL WITH REALITY

A. The reality I'm talking about is the fact that converted people still wrestle with sin

1. Peter is a great example, so let's consider some things from his life
2. Luke 22:32-33

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!" NASU

 - a. Peter was already a disciple of Jesus
 - b. Jesus was foretelling a failure on Peter's part, in which he would deny Jesus three times
 - c. we might like to think that by now Peter had things together and there wouldn't be any denials of Jesus
 - d. the truth is, Peter, a chosen disciple, future apostle, great preacher of the gospel – this Peter was still a sinner
 - e. the hope in all this is that Jesus also knew that Peter would “turn again” and be a blessing to his brethren
3. Galatians 2:11-14

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? NASU

 - a. Galatians was written some 25 years or more after Pentecost, but we do not know the exact time of Peter's visit to Antioch
 - b. regardless, we are safe in assuming that it was some time after Pentecost, perhaps following the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 (probably 14 or more years)
 - c. the point: Peter is still struggling with sin!
 - d. we assume that Paul's confrontation caused Peter to turn once again

II. REMEMBER WHAT JOHN WROTE ABOUT

A. 1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. NASU

B. We need to know that there is just one way to have fellowship with God and that is to walk in the Light

1. You can't just live in sin, deny what's going on and think that everything is going to be fine – that's denial
2. But neither should we become so afraid when we sin that we think that we're sunk, lost, and forever unloved by God
3. This is a passage about getting real with sin, and this is how to stay converted – keep dealing with your sin
 - a. what do you do when you realize you've sinned – acknowledge it, don't deny it
 - b. confess it – Jesus is faithful and righteous – he will forgive you
 - c. if you say you have no sin, you make Jesus a liar and his word isn't in you

III. THREE KEYS TO STAYING CONVERTED

A. Remember that conversion is a turning away from some things and a turning to something else

1. It's turning away from sin and everything ungodly
2. It's turning to Jesus Christ
3. Every Christian would do well to remember this simple process because it lays the groundwork for a lifetime of being and doing the will of God

B. Always be real about your sin

1. Never fall for denial – it will cause you to miss the real you
2. Never let your sin cause you to be afraid of God – it will cause you to miss Jesus

C. To stay converted, keep turning back to Jesus whenever temptation causes you to turn away

1. Remember why Jesus died on the cross – to save sinners
2. Yes, God is always disappointed and disapproving of our sins, but he is always willing to forgive us
3. This is why you must be converted to Jesus – nothing or nobody else can save you

CONCLUSION

A. Have you been converted to Jesus?

1. Stay converted – it's the only hope for dealing with the real you
2. Stop denying the truth about your sins
3. Don't allow your fears to keep you away from God
4. Staying converted means staying with that to which you were converted in the first place – Jesus

B. Invitation