



men's

DIGGING

DEEP

2018-19

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Month Seven: Conversions and Non-Conversions

Introduction: Conversion

- A. “Repentance” and “conversion” are similar words. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change in lifestyle. Conversion refers to that consequent, overall change of lifestyle. As we evangelize, we seek to help people repent and be converted. Find a passage that makes clear the necessity of repentance, and a passage that makes clear the necessity to be converted. Find a Greek lexicon (e.g., as included in many Bibles in software such as OliveTree) and summarize the definition of the word translated “repentance” and “conversion” in the New Testament.
- B. The book of Acts is known for its record of early conversions to Christianity. Give the scripture references from Acts for the conversions of the following individuals or groups. And in each case read the text, and write an overview of how the person (or people) became converted to Christ. What consistencies do you notice? What additional details are provided in various accounts?
1. Saul
 2. The Ethiopian Eunuch
 3. The 3,000 Jews gathered in Jerusalem
 4. Lydia and the Philippian jailer
 5. Many to whom Paul and his traveling companions preached (give an example)
- C. The book of Acts also records a number of non-conversions, which also are very instructive. Give the scripture references from Acts for the non-conversions of the following individuals or groups. In each case, explain what indications the Bible gives about what contributed to the non-conversion.
1. Governor Felix
 2. Paul’s audience of philosophers in Athens, Greece
 3. Paul’s audience of Jewish leaders in Rome, Italy
 4. Stephen’s audience at the Sanhedrin Court in Jerusalem
- D. Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 is a review of Jewish History from Abraham to Christ. Read this chapter. At the conclusion of his speech (Acts 7:51-53), we read Stephen’s profound condemnation of the Jews who were, even then, rejecting Christ. Their non-conversion is

instructive, because it illustrates what may happen when we fail to be truly converted, or when those we teach fail to be converted. Let us then study this example and see what we can learn from the account of the Jews' rejection of Stephen's presentation of the truth:

I. God's offers the Gospel in a way that is easily understood

- A. There is no excuse for failing to be converted. God communicates with man not through mysterious urges or feelings, but in linguistic communication that humans can understand. What does 2 Peter 1:16-21 teach about the communication of God's mind to man? Find an example of a prophecy in the Old Testament and its fulfillment in the New Testament, and then consider: What is God's role in the fulfillment of the prophecy, and what is man's part?
- B. Stephen's speech provides a concise overview of the Israelites' failure to respond properly to the words of God through the centuries. In the passages from Stephen's speech, whom did the Israelites reject?
1. Acts 7:35-43: _____
 2. Acts 7:52: _____
 3. Acts 7:53: _____
- C. As we evangelize, we must be ready to tell others the words by which they may be saved. This obviously involves more than merely providing others with a good example of moral behavior. What do these examples teach us about the need for teaching words that people must understand in order to be saved?
1. Acts 2:40
 2. Acts 11:14
 3. Acts 15:7
- D. Suppose someone asked you for information about how to be saved from sin? To what passages would you tell them to turn in order to find God's words on the following topics? Cite at least two passages for each point, and memorize each passage.
1. The essentiality of hearing words about Jesus in order to be saved.
 2. The essentiality of believing that Jesus is the Son of God.
 3. The essentiality of repenting of sin.

4. The essentiality of confessing Christ as the Son of God.
5. The essentiality of being baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of sins.

II. In failing to obey the gospel as the Christians were preaching it, the Jews resisted God the Holy Spirit.

- A. Stephen did not accuse the Jews of rejecting him, but rather of rejecting God Himself. If a person rejects the authentic message of Christ, even when a human such as Stephen presents it, then he is rejecting God.
1. Consider the prayer of the Levites in Nehemiah 9:27-31. What does this teach about resisting words from God? Find at least one other passage concerning the proper response to the words of God and how God views a person who does not listen to His words.
 2. Suppose a person today says, "I know I love God, and I feel that I am close to Him," but does not read the Bible seriously or attempt to apply it? How might we appeal to such a person? Use Matthew 7:21 and John 14:15 in your answer. Think of one person in your life who believes in the true God but has not obeyed the Gospel, or is not faithful to the church. Commit to reaching out and appealing to that person this month.

III. A person cannot be saved while resisting God, even if he knows a great deal about the Bible.

- A. Sometimes we say to our children when they are not paying attention, "Do you hear me?" We do not mean to ask whether their ears are picking up sound waves, but rather, "Are you taking into account properly what I am saying?" Similarly, is it possible for someone to know a lot about the Bible, and yet be in a state of resisting God? Use Luke 8:18 in your answer.
- B. The Bible says a great deal about the responsibility of the hearer of the word of God to have the right disposition toward the word. What do the following passages teach about this subject?
1. Luke 7:17
 2. Luke 8:4-15
 3. James 1:21
 4. Acts 28:17-28

- C. The Pharisees are a biblical example of those who knew the Bible, but still resisted the Word of God. Find and read five Biblical accounts of their hardheartedness. (Consider the Sabbath controversies, the plot to kill Jesus, the coverup of the resurrection etc.)

Month Eight: Salvation by Grace

Introduction: God's initiative to save

- A. When we say we are saved by grace, we mean that without God's favor, which we never could merit, and which was demonstrated by his initiative in making a way for us to be saved, we would be lost. List three passages that demonstrate this fact.

- B. A classic text on salvation by grace is Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." What does this passage teach about salvation? Write a paragraph/outline, using other Scriptures for support, that you could use to explain this passage to someone. (If you do not understand the passage yet yourself, complete the rest of this month's study before answering this question.)

I. Salvation is a gift of God's grace.

- A. We are saved not by meriting our salvation by, for example, doing enough good deeds to outweigh our bad deeds. Our sin, which separates us from God, would cause us to be lost without God taking action to save us. What do the following passages teach us about our condition prior to receiving God's gift of grace?
 - 1. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - 2. Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23
 - 3. Ephesians 2:1-2

- B. Notice, however, that Paul does not say that salvation is by grace *alone*. The doctrine of John Calvin is that we are saved by grace alone, i.e., that man contributes nothing whatsoever in bringing about his salvation. Calvin's doctrine is that God is totally sovereign and pre-determines everything that will happen. Calvin's soteriology (i.e., his teaching about salvation) can be summarized in the following acronym. Before you fill in the blanks, read David R. Pharr's article here (<http://charlotteavechurchofchrist.org/DPharr/articles-spsword/calvinism.htm>) to get a good grasp on the meanings of these terms.
 - 1. T _____
 - 2. U _____
 - 3. L _____

4. I _____

5. P _____

C. From David Pharr’s article, or from your own study, write down a passage of Scripture that contradicts each major position in Calvinistic soteriology:

1. T _____

2. U _____

3. L _____

4. I _____

5. P _____

II. Salvation is through faith.

A. Faith is required for salvation. Faith translates a word that often means “trust,” which in the New Testament is shown to lead directly and necessarily to works of obedience. Read Hebrews 11 and write down five examples of how biblical faith works itself out in the lives of those who follow God. Cite the Old Testament Scriptures to which the verses refer.

B. Notice here, however, that Paul does not say that salvation is by faith *alone*. Salvation by faith alone is Martin Luther’s doctrine. (Luther even added the word “alone” to Romans 3:28.) He taught that man is saved by faith alone, but our works have nothing to do with whether we are saved. His position is false and represents too simplistic an understanding of what the New Testament teaches concerning the roles of faith and works in salvation. Compare the following two charts:

Saved by	Not Saved By
Faith Alone	Any works of any kind

Saved by	Not Saved By
Faith (Galatians 2:15) and works of obedience (James 2:14-26)	Faith alone (Matthew 7:21; James 2:24)
	Works of the law of Moses (Galatians 2:15)
	Works by which we earn salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)
	Works by which we might boast (Ephesians 2:9)

C. Read “Justification: By Faith or Works?” by Wayne Jackson, here: <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/294-justification-by-faith-or-works>. Answer the following questions concerning the reading:

1. What are the two extremes concerning the role of works in salvation?
2. Are those who teach salvation by faith alone consistent or self-contradictory in arguing for their position? Why or why not?

III. Salvation is not a result of works by which we may boast.

A. Paul says here that salvation is not a result of works, but obviously he means a particular kind of works: the kind of works on the basis of which we might boast or suggest that we had earned our salvation. That is, we are saved not through doing enough good deeds in order to put God in our debt. That Paul cannot be teaching salvation by grace alone or faith alone is obvious in that, throughout the Bible, salvation *is* said to be the result of works. What do the following passages teach about the role of works in bringing about a person’s salvation?

1. James 2:14-26
2. John 6:27
3. Galatians 5:6
4. Philippians 2:12
5. Matthew 16:27
6. Romans 2:6
7. Romans 2:8
8. John 6:29

- B. Observe also Titus 2:5: “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. . . .” Our salvation is by God’s mercy and not by our own good deeds, and yet, the effect of God’s mercy is actualized when we are washed in regeneration (i.e., baptized). Therefore, obedience on our part is compatible with our being saved by grace and not through the kind of works on the basis of which we might boast or suggest that we had earned our salvation. Find another passage of Scripture that teaches this same principle.
- C. Spend time praying about your view of faith and works. Do you operate on the basis that you must merit your salvation? Or do you live as though your works have no bearing on your salvation? Pray that you will be balanced in your thinking, trusting in the blood of Jesus, but living a pure life that respects that blood.

Month Nine: Faith

Introduction: God's test of Abraham's faith

- C. Study the life of Abraham by carefully reading Genesis 12-23. As you read, take special note of the things Abraham did in obedience to the words of God, versus the things he did based on his own desires. Make a list of occasions when Abraham obviously obeyed, and occasions when Abraham obviously disobeyed.
- D. One of the most notable things that Abraham did out of obedience to the words of God is to offer up Isaac. As you read Genesis 22:1-19 answer the following questions:
1. Under normal circumstances, would it have been right or wrong for Abraham to sacrifice his son?
 2. Why might anything have been different in this circumstance?
 3. What does this passage teach us about the significance of God's authority in our lives?
 4. Can you think of another situation in which someone sacrificed their child? Was this an act of faith, or an act of disobedience? What drove this person to sacrifice his child? Is there any reason to think that God was pleased with this sacrifice?
- E. To "walk by faith" means to believe and do those things that are authorized in the word of God (2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17).
1. Read Romans 10:5-15 and Romans 1:18-20. From whence does faith come? Create a list of at least five of things that we know by virtue of observation, and five things we know by revelation. (e.g. We know His eternal power from observation, but we know the plan of salvation only by revelation.) Use other passages to support your list.
 2. Given Romans 10:17, is believing something "by faith" the same as believing something to be true even though there is no evidence for it, or is believing something "by faith" believing something for which there is good evidence?
 3. Given Romans 10:17, is "faith" a good word for denoting what we believed based upon our opinions? Suppose a person said that he had faith or believed in his heart that something was the case, and yet the Bible said otherwise? What would the situation be then? (Use 2 John 9 and 1 Corinthians 4:6 in your answer.)
- F. Read James 2. In James 2:1-13 we read James' condemnation of the sin of partiality, by which some Christians were mistreating the poor and elevating the rich. James' argument for his condemnation of that partiality is the fact that faith in God must show itself in the

appropriate works (2:14-26). Those who claimed to be Christians but mistreated the poor were hypocritical, having only a dead faith. Anyone who claims to be a Christian and yet does not behave according to the teachings of Christ and His inspired writers in whatever area is hypocritical.

1. Read Romans 2:21-22. What are the sins mentioned in this passage as being committed by those very people who condemned the same sins in other people?
2. Read Matthew 23:2-4. What are the sins implicated in this passage?
3. What are some practical ways in which we can avoid the sin of partiality today? What are some ways in which Christians are in danger of slipping into this sin?

G. In the remainder of this lesson, we will consider various points James makes concerning faith the will save and a defective kind of faith that will not save.

I. Faith and works of obedience must not be separated.

- A. How does James' text support the claim that "Faith and works of obedience must not be separated" in James 2:14-17?
- B. How does James' text support the claim that "Faith and works of obedience must not be separated" in James 2:18-20? (What is his point about the monotheistic demons?)
- C. In James 2:21-24 we read that Abraham was justified by faith, but only when he obeyed what God had commanded. In James 2:25-26, James gives another example of faithful obedience. Whom does James hold up as an example of faith here?
 1. Find another chapter in the New Testament that discusses the faith of both Abraham and Rahab? Compare and contrast this passage with the assessment of faith in James 2.
 2. Read Joshua 1-2. Some have suggested that Rahab's lie in Joshua 2:4-5 is justified in James 2. Does James commend the lie or not? Does the Bible elsewhere condone or condemn lying? Find at least one Old Testament passage and one New Testament passage to support your answer, and use Hebrews 11:30-31 in your answer.
- D. Read Numbers 20:8-12. How does God connect faith and obedience in this text?

II. Abraham's obedience.

- A. Abraham did not always walk by faith. Using the list you made at the beginning of the study, describe an occasion in Scripture when Abraham did not operate within God's revealed will for his life.
- B. Given Romans 10:17, how is it that Abraham walked "by faith" when he went to sacrifice Isaac? (Use Genesis 22:2-3 in your answer.)

III. Rahab's obedience.

- A. Read Joshua 2:8-11 again. What truths about God did Rahab believe before her conversion to Judaism? (Like Abraham, Rahab was operating according to faith, although she probably had only an elementary understanding of God's law during the events in question.)
- B. Believing in God implies that one will express his belief in works of obedience, particularly in service to others. Find at least three examples in the book of Acts that illustrate the Christian's obligation to serve others. (As a people who are committing to restoring the church of the first century, we must be committed to restoring our personal lives to mirror those of the faithful Christians of the first century.)
 - 1. Read Galatians 5:13, and do one new thing this month in obedience to this verse.

IV. James' final illustration of Christian faithfulness.

- A. James' last illustration of the inseparability of faith and works comes in 2:26. What analogy does James use in this verse?
 - 1. This passage is also critical for a biblical definition of death. Death is not annihilation, but a separation. What does 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 teach concerning this? Find another passage that discusses the relation of the soul to the body.
- B. Someone who claims to have faith in God but has not done what God says in order to be right with God is yet lost. Summarize what the following passages teach on this matter:
 - 1. Acts 15:9; cf. 1 Peter 1:22
 - 2. Acts 19:1-5
 - 3. Romans 6:1-5, 17-18
 - 4. Colossians 2:11-13

- C. Read the tract “Receiving the Gift of Salvation” by Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt, here:
[http://apologeticspress.org/pdfs/e-books_pdf/
Receiving%20the%20Gift%20of%20Salvation.pdf](http://apologeticspress.org/pdfs/e-books_pdf/Receiving%20the%20Gift%20of%20Salvation.pdf). Write down at least two facts about
faith that became evident from the reading.