

# THE PIONEER BAPTIST

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## AFTER CONVERSION--WHAT?

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**INTRODUCTION:** Webster's definition of **conversion**: "A spiritual and moral change attending a change of belief with conviction; a change of heart; a change from worldliness to godliness; a change of the ruling disposition of the soul, involving a transformation of outward life."

**Conversion** is a spiritual and moral change of attitude: 1)towards God about sin; 2)towards God about His son; 3)towards God about His word; 4)towards God about His people.

**Conversion** is an inward change leading to an outward change of life. We call this change an experience of grace because it is wrought by the Spirit of God in the human heart by the use of the truth. I Corinthians 15:10, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*"

I have heard tell of a man who objected to praying for the Lord to apply the truth to the hearts of the lost. He said the sermon was good and the truth was all that was needed. That man's objection was a revelation of his theology. He denied the truth of depravity; the truth that the human heart is wicked, that the carnal mind hates God, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, that the Gospel is hid to the lost, that the sinner must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. In a word, his theology denied the reality of sin.

If sin were just the misfortune of a good man--a man who loves God and is in fellowship with God--then the Gospel would be naturally believed and no

change would have to be wrought in the mind or soul of the sinner. And in such a case, prayer would be useless. If the Spirit of God does not have to work a revolution in the heart and mind--if he does not have to do a work that cannot be done by the word--then prayer for God to work would be a waste of breath. If a sword or other weapons without human wisdom and power can kill the enemy and win the war, it would be folly to raise an army and get men killed. I Thessalonians 1:5, "*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*" If the word only is all that is needed for salvation, Paul was guilty of folly when he prayed for the salvation of Israel. Romans 10:1, "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*"

There is a twofold implication in praying for sinners: 1)that the Gospel and the preacher are not enough for salvation; and 2)that the Holy Spirit is equal to the task of converting the sinner, giving him eyes to see and a heart to believe the Gospel. This does not mean any weakness in the Gospel as the means of salvation; the weakness is in the sinner to see and believe. The Gospel saves the believer, but it has no power to make a believer. Only God can give the disposition to believe. And I believe with all my heart He is able to do this, and so I pray in faith that He can if He will.

There are three distinct elements in conversion:

1. There is the realization of our sinful and lost condition--such a realiza-

tion disturbs and distresses, and makes one uneasy and unhappy. This is a painful experience, but it is a necessary experience. It is not necessary as any price for salvation. The sinner is not saved by mourning, but how can a man want to be saved from a condition that is satisfactory? If sin does not cause one to mourn, if sin does not cause misery, then salvation would bring no joy.

2. Another element in conversion is the realization that we can do nothing about it so far as making amends for our wrong doing. If the sinner could fix up the past and never sin again, he would be his own Savior and would not need to look to another. The scriptures make it clear that the sinner cannot save himself--that he cannot make himself right with God by his own works--that salvation is of grace. Ephesians 2:8-10, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" Titus 3:5, "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*" In conversion, the sinner loses all hope in himself.

3. Another element in conversion is the belief that Jesus Christ can and did do something about sin--that he put it away by the sacrifice of himself. He had no sin of his own to put away; he put away the sins of others. The sinner cannot make himself right with God, but the Savior can and did. That is why salvation is by faith. It is by faith be-

cause Christ did the saving work on the cross, when he bare our sins in his own body. By suffering for us he settled our sin-debt; therefore, to be saved we must take the place of sinners and look to him for acceptance with God. God accepteth no man's person; we are accepted in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:6, *"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."*

These three elements are in every conversion and I do not hesitate to say that if you lack one or all, you are not saved. They may not be very pronounced in the beginning, but if you have them, they will become more pronounced as you grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.

### **WHERE ARE YOU?**

It is not the question of where you are physically---that needs no discussion--you know that you are here in this building. You would know what I meant if I should ask, "Where are you as to your health? or as to your finances? or as to your reputation?"

The question is: What is your status as a moral being accountable to God? What is your position or standing before God? As a converted person--converted to faith in Jesus Christ--where are you? The Bible gives answer:

1. You are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14, *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* Romans 7:4, *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."*

2. You are not under the wrath of God. John 3:36, *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* Galatians 3:13, *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."*

3. You are in Christ. I Corinthians 1:30, *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made*

*unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* Romans 8:1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

4. You are dead to sin. Romans 6:2, *"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* Romans 6:11, *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

### **WHAT ARE YOU?**

You are a person of two natures, flesh and spirit. You have had two births. These natures are not brothers but enemies. Galatians 5:17, *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* These natures are not twins, or friends; they are foes. So you are going to experience a warfare. You will not find it easy to live the Christian life. You will not find yourself satisfied with your progress and attainments. You will find yourself crying again and again, "O God, make me a better Christian."

You are a child of God--babes to begin with, but susceptible to growth. But to grow you will have to feed on the sincere milk of the word. You will begin to backslide the day you begin to neglect the word of God. God has provided a church and preacher to help you know more about the riches of His grace and the things He has prepared for you. You can no more prosper as a Christian without feeding on the word than you can prosper physically without food for the body.

You will have a heavenly Father who will not allow you to run wild. You will be subject to discipline, and you will learn by sad experience that it will not pay to be careless and loose in your living. You may not be a good child, but he will be a good Father. You may not be a wise child, but He will be a wise Father.

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## PRESENT AND FUTURE SALVATION

### *Romans 5:1-3*

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This text gives us two aspects of salvation: justification now and glorification in the future.

Sin has done two things to every man: it has made him unsafe and unsound. It has exposed him to danger, even to the danger of God's wrath and it has ruined his entire nature, so that his affections are ruined and his understanding is darkened.

Salvation is deliverance from sin--deliverance from danger and deliverance from a depraved nature.

The present aspect of salvation is justification or deliverance from the penalty of sin, or deliverance from condemnation and eternal punishment. The future aspect of salvation is deliverance from a ruined nature. Deliverance from penalty of sin is instantaneous at the very moment of faith. Deliverance from a ruined nature is a process, beginning in regeneration and completed when the believer awakes in the likeness of Christ. Philippians 1:6, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" See also I John 3:2.

There is a sense in which the believer is now saved; and in another sense he is yet to be saved. He is now saved in the sense of justification; he is yet to be saved in the sense of glorification. Some scriptures puts salvation in the past tense (Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*"); others put salvation in the future (Romans 13:11, "*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*"). Salvation in its fullest and most complete sense is represented as a chain of Divine acts in Romans 8:28-30, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them*

*that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*"

The born again believer has no sin on him, for Christ bare his sins in his own body on the tree. However, the believer has sin in him--he still has to struggle against a sinful principle that dwells within. Paul was speaking of this sinful principle when he said, "*I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.*" Romans 7:18; and again in Philippians 3:3, "*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*" And John says, "*If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves.*" I John 1:8. Galatians 5:17 tells us, "*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*"

Some of us believe that a born again believer is eternally safe:

1. Because he is no longer under the moral law of God, epitomized in the Ten Commandments. Romans 6:14, "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*" Galatians 3:13, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.*"

2. Because he has his standing before God in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

3. Because they are held in the hands of both Jesus Christ, the Son, and God, the Father. John 10:27-29, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*"

The test as to whether one is a born again believer or not is:

1. He continues in the faith which is in Christ Jesus based upon what God says about Him as Lord and Savior. John 8:31, "*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*" See also I Peter 1:5.

2. He loves God and the people of God. I John 4:7, "*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*" See also I John 3:14.

3. He engages in good works. Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" See I John 2:29. 4. *He rejoices in hope of future glory. And this hope makes him pure in aim and desire. I John 3:3, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."* If a man hopes to be sinless like Jesus; he wants to be sinless, and tries to be sinless; and mourns over his sins and confesses them. I John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"