

# Back To Basics

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**A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles**

## **SPECIAL ISSUE:**

## **EXCEPT YE BE CONVERTED**

*Johnie Edwards*

**C**onversion is essential to our salvation. Jesus said to His disciples, "...Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:1-3). Conversion demands change or a turning about on the part of man.

**BENEFITS OF CONVERSION.** There are a number of benefits of conversion.

*Blotting Out of Sin.* "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). The only way one can have his sins blotted out is to be converted!

*Times of Refreshing.* Want to be refreshed from the Lord? Then be converted (Acts 3:19).

*Saves a Soul from Death.* James reported, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death..." (Jas. 5:19-20).

*Hides a Multitude of Sins.* Being converted "shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:20).

*Provides an Heavenly Entrance.* Jesus told His apostles, "...Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:1-3).

**THE APOSTLES' COMMISSION IS ABOUT CONVERSION.** "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Mt. 28:19). "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:15-16). "And that repentance and remission of sins, should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47).

**GOD'S LAW CONVERTS.** God uses His law in conversion. The Psalmist penned, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul..." (Ps. 19:7). This is the reason the gospel must be taught as it is "the power of God unto salvation..." (Rom. 1:16). This accounts for Paul writing, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation..." (Eph. 1:13).

**CASES OF CONVERSION.** Acts 2-19 records a number of examples of the great commission being put into action as the men of God were "witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

## New Testament Conversions

HEARD GOSPEL	BELIEVED	REPENTED	CONFESSED	WERE BAPTIZED	SAVED FROM PAST SINS
Jews on Pentecost Acts 2:1-47		Repented Acts 2:38		Baptized Acts 2:38, 41	Sins Remitted Acts 2:38, 41
Samaritans Acts 8:5-12	Believed Acts 8:12			Baptized Acts 8:12	Saved Mark 16:16
Simon Acts 8:13	Believed Acts 8:13			Baptized Acts 8:13	Saved Mark 16:16
Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-39	Believed Acts 8:37		Confessed Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10	Baptized Acts 8:38	"Went on His Way Rejoicing" Acts 8:39
Saul Acts 9:1-18; 22:1-16; 26			Confessed Acts 22:10	Baptized Acts 22:16	Sins Washed Away Acts 22:16
Cornelius Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18	Believed Acts 15:7	Repented Acts 11:18		Baptized Acts 10:48	Saved Acts 11:14
Lydia Acts 16:14-15				Baptized Acts 16:15	Saved Acts 16:14-15
Philippian Jailer Acts 16:25-34	Believed Acts 16:31-34	Repented Acts 16:33		Baptized Acts 16:33	"Rejoiced" Acts 16:34
Corinthians Acts 18:1-8	Believed Acts 18:8			Baptized Acts 18:8	Washed - Saved 1 Cor. 6:11; 15:2
Ephesians Acts 19:1-7				Baptized Acts 19:5	Redeemed - Saved Eph. 1:7; 2:8

**HEARING + BELIEF + REPENTANCE + CONFESSION + BAPTISM = SALVATION FROM PAST SINS**

### **Back To Basics**

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# WHAT CONVERSION IS

John Isaac Edwards

**C**onversion is a Bible subject. The word, in six various forms (*convert, converted, converts, converteth, converting, conversion*), appears 15 times in the King James Version.

In a general sense, conversion is a turning or change from one state to another. "...turn from these vanities unto the living God" (Acts 14:15), "...turn them from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18), and "...turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Th. 1:9) are expressions of Bible conversion.

Conversion, basically, is a threefold process by which man turns from sin to God.

**A CHANGE OF HEART BY FAITH.** Evil hearts must be changed (Mt. 15:19-20). It is the law of the Lord that effects this change (Ps. 19:7). There is but one agent of change for the hearts of all men — faith (Acts 15:9). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Samaritans underwent a change of heart by faith "when they believed Philip preaching..." (Acts 8:12).

**A CHANGE OF LIFE BY REPENTANCE.** Heart-pricked Jews were commanded, "Repent..." (Acts 2:38). God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a change of one's will that results in a change in one's conduct (Mt. 21:28-30). The conversion of the Philippian jailer demonstrates repentance as he "washed their stripes" (Acts 16:33).

**A CHANGE OF RELATIONSHIP BY BAPTISM.** It is not enough to just change one's heart and life; relationship must also be changed. This is accomplished in baptism as one is "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) and "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), "which is the church" (Col. 1:24).

The relationship of the Ephesians changed when "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). Paul wrote, "That at that time (before baptism) ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now (after baptism) in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12-13).

Conversion is a command (Acts 3:19) and is necessary for kingdom entrance (Jn. 3:5). Read the articles that follow to learn more about conversion.

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# CONVERSION OF THE JEWS ON PENTECOST

Donnie V. Rader

In Acts 2, we find the beginning of the fulfillment of the great commission to carry the gospel to the world (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:47). This chapter tells the story of the first converts under this commission. Peter later refers to this as “the beginning” (Acts 11:15). Let’s consider an overview of this great chapter.

**THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (vv. 1-13).** The apostles received the Spirit (vv. 1-4). They were able to speak in other languages as the Spirit directed them. The multitude was amazed (vv. 5-13). There was an audience that had gathered in Jerusalem from all parts of the earth (v. 5).

**PETER’S SERMON (vv. 14-36).** Peter begins by stating that the apostles were not drunk, but the miracles were a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (vv. 14-21). The heart of the sermon stated that Jesus was raised from the dead (vv. 22-36). Three points are made about His resurrection: (1) This is the one that they had crucified (vv. 22-24). Though their wicked hands had put him to death, God had raised him up. (2) David had prophesied of this resurrection (vv. 25-31). Peter quotes from Psalm 16:8-11 and gives evidence that David did not speak of himself, but of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (3) Jesus is now exalted as Lord and Christ (vv. 32-36). The climax of the sermon is: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (v. 36).


**THE RESPONSE OF THE MULTITUDE (vv. 37-41).** Upon hearing the evidence of the resurrection, the people asked what they needed to do (v. 37). Peter responded by commanding repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (v. 38). They gladly received the word and obeyed (v. 41). Those who had an

open mind to receive the truth willfully obeyed the instructions they had been given. The number was about 3,000.

**THEY CONTINUED IN THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE (vv. 42-47).** They followed apostolic authority (v. 42). They continued steadfastly (v. 42). They worshiped (v. 42). The things that are mentioned in verse 42 are acts of worship. They were benevolent to their brethren in need (vv. 44-45). They continued in daily service to God (vv. 46-47).

From this case of conversion we learn what they received upon obedience to the gospel. They received the remission of sins (v. 38). God then added them to the church (v. 47). We conclude that when they were baptized for the remission of sins, they became a part of the Lord’s church. The steps one must follow to become a Christian are the same steps to enter the Lord’s church. You can be saved just like the Jews on the day of Pentecost. If you have not obeyed the gospel, why not do what they did?

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## CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS

*Jerry Fite*

**S**amaritans! You mean those with whom the Jews had “no dealings” (Jn. 4:9)? Jesus previously instructed His apostles not to go into “any city of the Samaritans” but rather to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt. 10:5). But the time had now come for the good news of Christ to enter into the cities and hearts of the Samaritans. Let us notice some interesting facts regarding the conversion of the Samaritans.

**THE SAMARITANS HEARD THE CONFIRMED WORD.** Philip’s miraculous signs backed up his message. Unclean spirits came out of the possessed, crying with a loud noise. The palsied and lame were healed. The Samaritans not only heard the word Philip proclaimed, but they “saw the signs which he did” (Acts 8:6). The disposition of the hearts of the Samaritans was united in the truth of Philip’s message. They knew from what they saw that God was the source of what they were hearing.

**THE SAMARITANS HEADED THE GOOD NEWS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM.** Preaching the gospel (Acts 8:25), proclaiming the Christ (Acts 8:5), also involves preaching the kingdom (Acts 8:12). Jesus’ right to rule or His authority to save the souls of man had been established in His resurrection and ascension (Phil. 2:9; Acts 4:12). Preaching the gospel also highlighted the good news that the long awaited kingdom was here. People could now be translated from darkness into it (Col. 1:13). This kingdom is also the church to which the Lord had been adding the saved (Acts 2:47; Heb. 12:23, 28). Today, when we preach the Christ we need to emphasize that His kingdom is already here and that the realm of His saving rule is the one church (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). With so many man-made churches or denominations in place today and promoting the error of Premillennialism, the good

news of the kingdom must be preached so souls can truly be converted to the Lord.

**THE SAMARITANS GAVE HEED BY BELIEVING AND BEING BAPTIZED.** The Samaritans did more than hear the proclaimed word; they willingly gave heed to the demands of the message (Acts 8:6). They responded to the good news of the kingdom by believing and being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12). Multitudes, comprised of both men and women, responded to the gospel in obedience of faith, not by faith only (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

**THE SAMARITANS REALIZED THAT ONE DOES NOT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT IN WATER BAPTISM.** When the Samaritans “received the word of God” by being baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, they did not receive the miraculous spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts were given by summoning the apostles, Peter and John, to come pray and lay their hands upon the baptized believers (Acts 8:14-17). Baptism in the name of the Lord is immersion in water for the remission of sins, not where one is baptized in or receives miraculous spiritual gifts (Acts 2:38; 10:48).

**THE SAMARITANS REMIND US THAT THE GOSPEL CAN CONTINUE TO SPREAD IN DIFFICULT TIMES.** Jesus promised that the gospel would spread from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts 1:8). How it came was through the church being persecuted in Jerusalem, driving men such as Philip to enter into Samaria. May we never forget when one door is being closed that another one may be opening for the gospel.

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## CONVERSION OF SIMON

Joe R. Price

**T**he record of Simon's conversion is concise: "Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:13). Though brief, this account provides a clear picture of the gospel's power to save sinners in contrast to false displays of power that many see as "the great power of God" but cannot save the soul (Rom. 1:16; Acts 8:9-10).

**SIMON'S CONVERSION WAS PERSONAL.** The word of God says Simon "himself" was converted. No one was converted on his behalf. It was Simon's own sins that needed cleansing and it was Simon himself who responded to the gospel call of salvation (Acts 8:4-5). Similarly, one person cannot obey the gospel on behalf of another. Doctrines of proxy belief and obedience are utterly false and are powerless to save.

**SIMON'S CONVERSION FOLLOWED GOD'S REVEALED PATTERN ON HOW TO BE SAVED.** Simon "also" believed and was baptized; he was saved just like the Samaritans (Acts 8:12-13). Every sinner is converted in the same way today. The gospel is a pattern or mold that is the same for all: "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). The gospel is the "form of doctrine" that Simon obeyed to be set free from sin. Simon was not converted to Christ by praying the "sinner's prayer" and asking Jesus into his heart as his personal Savior. Simon was not converted by first waiting for empowerment from the Holy Spirit in order to be able to believe the gospel. Jesus said, "He that believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:15-16). That is what Simon did, and the powerful gospel of Christ saved him.

**SIMON'S CONVERSION WAS REAL.** Simon's conversion was as real as the Samaritans' (Acts 8:13). Like them, he heard and believed the preaching of Christ when he saw the mighty miracles that showed the message was from God (Acts 8:5-8). His repentance is implied in that he freely chose to be baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:13, 16). Simon then "continued with Philip" just like the first Christians "continued steadfastly" upon their conversion (Acts 2:42). The notion that Simon was not really a Christian is false. His ensuing sin did not nullify his conversion any more than Peter's later sin invalidated his (Gal. 2:11-14). Men are powerless to successfully show Simon was not really a Christian; he was.

**SIMON'S CONVERSION DID NOT REMOVE THE POSSIBILITY OF FALLING AWAY.** Simon sinned after he became a Christian (Acts 8:18-21). Conversion to Christ does not make one immune to temptation and sin. The possibility of sinning and falling away from Christ is real and Christians must heed the warning (Jas. 1:12-16; Gal. 5:4; 1 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 3:12-14).

Simon the Christian was told to repent and pray for God's forgiveness in order to escape sin and death (Acts 8:22-24; 1 Jn. 1:9). The gospel is powerful to cleanse Christians when they sin. What good news!

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## CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Larry R. Ping II

**A**s we study about Bible conversions, we call your attention to Acts 8:27-40 and the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. Consider these remarkable lessons gleaned from this account.

**PHILIP'S ATTITUDE IN TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD.** When Philip was called to go and preach to the eunuch, he "ran" to accomplish the task (Acts 8:30). It is easy to see that Philip had the enthusiasm required to be pleasing to God. We need zeal and desire in our teaching today (2 Cor. 7:11). How can we expect our students to be excited about learning if we ourselves are not?

**THE EUNUCH'S MORAL CHARACTER.** Have you ever cataloged the traits of the eunuch? He was a man of "great authority," who "had charge of all" the Queen's treasure and had come to Jerusalem "to worship" (Acts 8:27). Further, the eunuch was a man void of pride, confirmed by his invitation to Philip to join him for the purpose of learning (Acts 8:31). While all of these qualities were great, they were not in and of themselves enough to save the eunuch. He lacked obedience to God's law, much like Cornelius (Acts 10) and Lydia (Acts 16).

**THE EUNUCH'S WILLINGNESS TO LEARN.** Pride did not keep the eunuch from seeking answers to his questions (Acts 8:31). Many may be lost because they refuse to ask a question that they desperately need the answer to. Pride and haughtiness come before a fall and destruction (Prov. 16:18). If you have a question, do not hesitate to ask it! Your eternal life may depend upon it.

**WE MUST TEACH CHRIST.** We have gotten away from teaching Christ. If it was good enough to convert the Samaritans and the eunuch (Acts 8:5, 35), it ought to be good enough for us. Today's pulpits are filled with opinions, psychology, and "soft"

preaching which could be heard in any number of denominational buildings. We must lift high Jesus Christ, who will "draw all men" unto Him (Jn. 12:32). Let's get back to preaching Christ!

**TEACHING CHRIST IS TEACHING BAPTISM.** When the eunuch posed the question, "what doth hinder me to be baptized," it is inferred that teaching Christ involves teaching baptism. These two go hand-in-hand and cannot be separated. If a man preaches about Christ but omits baptism, he is a liar (1 Pet. 3:21). If a man preaches baptism, but not Christ, he too is a liar (Mt. 1:21). Christ and baptism are married and are not to be put asunder.

**BAPTISM IS IMMERSION.** The text reads "they went down both into the water" and were "come up out of the water" (Acts 8:38-39). To men, baptism may mean sprinkling or pouring water upon a person, in many cases an infant. The word of God makes it clear that baptism is a "burial" (Col. 2:12). When our Lord was baptized, the record reflects that He "went up" out of the water (Mt. 3:16). If one intends to be saved by "baptism," he must be immersed (1 Pet. 3:21).

**OBEDIENCE BRINGS JOY.** After being baptized, the Bible records the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). He was taking great delight in the fact that his sins had been washed away (Acts 22:16). There is no greater joy to be had than to be thrilled with the salvation of a lost soul. There is "joy...in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Lk. 15:7).

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## CONVERSION OF SAUL

David Eldridge

One of the most dramatic examples of conversion in the book of Acts is the conversion of Saul.

**SAUL'S LIFE PRIOR TO CONVERSION.** In his early life, Saul “persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it” due to his zeal for Judaism and the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:13-14). He consented to the death of Stephen, the first recorded martyr for Christ, and guarded the clothes of the men who stoned him (Acts 22:20). Being enraged at Christians, Saul imprisoned and beat them, compelled them to blaspheme, and cast his vote for their deaths (Acts 22:19; 26:10-11). In this way, Saul “made havoc of the church” of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 8:3). Saul did these things “in all good conscience” because he was doing it “ignorantly in unbelief” (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:13).

**SAUL'S CONVERSION.** The following events are chronicled in Acts 9, 22, & 26. At Saul's request, he received letters authorizing him to bring Christians from Damascus back to Jerusalem so that they could be punished. As Saul and his company neared Damascus, a light “brighter than the sun” shone around them, causing them to fall to the ground. Saul heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply was: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Hearing this, Saul, “trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’” The Lord instructs, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” Having been blinded during this event, Saul's companions led him to Damascus where, for three days, he did not eat or drink. A disciple in the city of Damascus named Ananias was sent by the Lord to Saul. Ananias came to him and, when he had laid his hands on him, Saul received his sight. Ananias told Saul the things he “must do”:

“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). At this command, Saul “arose and was baptized” — it was at this point he was truly converted.

Many in the religious world teach that Saul was converted during his “experience” on the road to Damascus prior to his baptism. If Saul was converted on the road to Damascus... The Lord did not know that Saul was converted — He told him that there were things that he “must do.” Saul did not know that he was converted — he was scared, blind, not eating, not drinking, and praying continually. Ananias did not know that Saul was converted — he told him to be baptized to “wash away your sins.” If Saul was converted on the road to Damascus, he was the only person to ever have been converted without having his sins washed away! Those who say that Saul was converted on the road to Damascus claim to know something that Paul, Ananias, and the Lord Jesus Christ did not know.

**THE PATTERN OF SAUL.** Paul later wrote that his conversion served as “a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Tim. 1:16). Consider the pattern of Saul's conversion. He serves as a pattern of who can be converted. Paul considered himself to be the chief of sinners, yet he was converted (1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 7:25). He serves as a pattern of how to be converted. Saul was converted when he heard, believed, and was baptized. The apostle Paul who penned the majority of the New Testament was converted in this way. Does it not make sense that we will only be converted by taking the same steps? He serves as a pattern of what to do once you have been converted. After his conversion, Saul lived a life of faithful service before the Lord (Acts 9:20-22; 26:19-23).

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## CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS

Marc W. Gibson

**T**he conversion of Cornelius is significant because he is the first Gentile to obey the gospel. His conversion demonstrated to the Jews that “God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (Acts 11:18).

**THE SINNER — CORNELIUS.** Cornelius is no insignificant individual, being a centurion of the Italian Regiment (Acts 10:1). He is also “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2). Though he is a sincere, religious man, Cornelius is lost in sin. He does not know about the Savior of mankind, Christ Jesus. Therefore, he is told to send for Peter who will tell him “words” concerning what he must do to be saved (Acts 10:6, 22, 32; 11:14). Cornelius and his invited guests gather to hear from Peter the inspired message revealed and commanded by God (Acts 10:33).

**THE PREACHER — PETER.** While Peter is staying in Joppa, God shows him a vision of a great sheet containing all kinds of animals (Acts 10:9-12). He is told to kill and eat, but he refuses to eat what he considers unclean (Acts 10:13-14). He is then informed that he must not call unclean what God has cleansed. This vision happens three times, leaving Peter to wonder about its meaning (Acts 10:15-17). After he arrives at the house of Cornelius, Peter wonders no more. He begins by saying, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35). This “whoever” includes the Gentiles, who will now be “fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

**THE MESSAGE — JESUS.** Peter proceeds to preach Jesus to Cornelius and his invited guests. He preaches Jesus as “Lord of all,” whose life, death, and resurrection were according to the will of God who ordained Him “to be Judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:36-42). He further proclaims that “through [Jesus’] name whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). With these words, remission of sins has now been “preached in His name to all nations [Jew and Gentile]” as the Lord and the prophets said (Lk. 24:47; Is. 2:2-3).

**THE RESPONSE — BELIEF AND BAPTISM.** As Peter is speaking, the Holy Spirit falls upon all who hear the word and they speak in tongues (Acts 10:44, 46). This is not what saves Cornelius, for, as we noted earlier, it would be “words” by which he would be saved, not the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:14). These “words” are the gospel of Christ which is God’s power unto salvation for both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 1:16). The outpouring of the “gift of the Holy Spirit” is a sign to the Jews of God’s inclusion of the Gentiles into His kingdom (Acts 10:45; 11:15-18). Peter knows that no one can forbid water (or withstand God) by refusing to baptize a believing Cornelius into Christ and His body; therefore, he commands them to be “baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:47-48; 11:17). Water baptism is a command, not a suggestion. Believers of the gospel must be baptized to be saved (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). You, too, can be converted like Cornelius if you believe and are baptized into the body of Christ!

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## CONVERSION OF LYDIA

David McPherson

**O**n his second missionary journey, Paul received a heavenly message while in Troas. “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’” (Acts 16:9). In answer to the call, Paul and his traveling companions sailed Westward for what would be his first preaching in Europe.

Having arrived safely in Philippi, Luke writes, “And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us” (Acts 16:13-15).

**GOOD GROUND.** What a beautiful demonstration of “good ground” (Lk. 8:15). The seed is sown and well received in noble hearts. By implication, Lydia was determined to be faithful by the messengers who took her up on her offer of “come to my house and stay.”

**KEY ELEMENTS IN THIS CONVERSION.** The key elements in this conversion (as in all conversions) involved the things heralded, heard, and heeded.

*What was heralded?* You can rest assured that Paul preached the gospel. In Romans 1:16 he wrote, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Paul unashamedly taught Lydia of God’s saving power there by the river.

*What was heard?* That very gospel. Thanks be to God for messengers who sound out the true message and hearers who joyfully receive it! Lydia’s disposition must have been similar to that of Cornelius who told Peter, “Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God” (Acts 10:33).

*Was it heeded?* Absolutely! As in all other cases of conversion in the New Testament, Lydia was baptized. When one is immersed with the one baptism (Eph. 4:5), into Christ (Gal. 3:27) and the one body (1 Cor. 12:13), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), the gospel has been heeded, attended to, obeyed.

**LYDIA MENTIONED AGAIN.** In addition to the things revealed to us in verses 13-15, we read only once more of Lydia. Following a brief stint for Paul and Silas in prison, they revisit their new sister. “So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed” (Acts 16:40).

While not a great deal is said of this godly woman, not much greater could be said of her. “The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:14). No, this was not some better felt than told experience. But rather Lydia’s heart, that with which one can think (Prov. 23:7), purpose (2 Cor. 9:7), and believe (Rom. 10:10) was pricked by the gospel. May the same be rightly said of countless others. God help us to help ourselves and those we encounter to be converted like Lydia.

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## CONVERSION OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

Tom Roberts

Soon after the acceptance of the Gentiles was introduced and assured by the conversion of Cornelius by Peter and the witness of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10-11), Biblical emphasis shifted from primary Jewish conversions to those of the Roman world. Jesus had predicted that the gospel would be preached in “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Paul’s mission to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7) led him eventually to Philippi, a major city of Macedonia and the beginning of the gospel in Europe (Acts 16). While there, he was arrested, beaten and thrown in prison for casting out a spirit of divination. What, to many, would have been an insurmountable obstacle, became an opportunity to convert one to Christ. Paul and Silas were praying and singing about midnight and the “prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25).

**THE GOSPEL IS NOT BOUND.** While circumstances may be less than perfect, the power of the gospel is not diminished. Paul was a prisoner, but the truth was not bound (2 Tim 2:9).

**DIVINE INTERVENTION.** Paul was aided during his imprisonment by the earthquake which set him free, but that miracle did nothing to instruct the jailer about his salvation.

**THE GOSPEL WAS PREACHED.** It is the gospel that is the power of salvation (Rom. 1:16). The record states that “they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house” (Acts 16:32).

**FAITH WAS PRODUCED.** We must not forget that faith comes from hearing the word (Rom. 10:17). As the jailer asked that important question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30),

he was told to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31).

**FAITH AND OBEDIENCE RESULTED.** Many have erroneously concluded that verse 31 teaches “salvation by faith only.” However, the text shows that the jailer showed his faith by listening to the truth, his repentance by washing their stripes and his obedience by being baptized (Acts 16:33). How did the jailer know about baptism? It is included in “speaking the word of the Lord” (Mt. 28:18-20). Further, after his baptism, it is stated that the jailer rejoiced, “having believed in God” (Acts 16:34). The participial phrase, “having believed,” includes all actions that were produced by faith. Saving faith is an obedient faith (Jas. 2:18, 22; Gal. 5:6). Faith alone is dead (Jas. 2:17, 24, 26).

**THE POWER OF SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES.** Cases of conversion are powerful examples. They are there by God’s will to show us how to be converted and blot out our sins (Acts 3:19). Of what value are they, “except ye be converted?” All these examples of conversion exemplify the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) and show the apostles faithfully following the Lord’s command to “go into all the world.”

**WHAT ABOUT YOU?** Do you have the faith to follow the examples of conversion? Do you believe? Have you repented? Have you been baptized?

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## CONVERSION OF THE CORINTHIANS

*Craig Thomas*

**T**he conversion of the Corinthians is recorded in the first half of Acts 18, during Paul's second journey. The conversion of the Corinthians demonstrates several principles still applicable today. First, it involved a team effort. Paul was not alone as he preached in Corinth. He had as his fellow laborers Priscilla and Aquila (v. 2), along with Silas and Timothy (v. 5). Our success in preaching the gospel is multiplied when brethren work together for a common goal. Second, Paul spent at least 18 months preaching and teaching in Corinth (v. 11). Whenever one is breaking new ground, patience is a virtue. The soil must be prepared, the seed must be sown, and the potential crop must be watered and cultivated (1 Cor. 3:6-15). A great harvest of souls took place at Corinth, but it did not occur overnight. We would do well to remember that in our gospel labors. Third, Corinth was an unlikely place for success in preaching the gospel. Corinth was a major center for commerce and shipping. It was also a major center for a decadent religion revolving around fornication. Such activities produced a populace steeped in the vilest of sins (1 Cor. 6:9-10). We must remember not to "pre-judge" people as to whether or not they are "suitable" candidates for the gospel. Finally, the conversion of the Corinthians establishes a Biblical pattern from which we must not deviate. How was their conversion effected? "And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). The Corinthians were converted as all men are converted; by hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel.

**HEAR.** Christianity is a "taught" religion (Jn. 6:44-45). As one good preacher friend of mine is fond of saying, "Christianity is a thinking man's religion." The gospel is God's only "drawing card"

(2 Th. 2:13-14). It makes a persuasive appeal to change our way of thinking and acting (Acts 2:40-41). Denominationalism and liberalism have lost sight of this critical fact. Just yesterday, I received a notice from liberal churches of Christ in Michigan advocating carnal means ("Old Fashioned Country Fair," and "Coffee Cafe") to attract people rather than the simple gospel. Such efforts may attract, but they are powerless to effect true conversion because "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17; 1:16-17).

**BELIEVE.** The first aim of preaching the gospel is to produce belief. Jesus said, "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). We certainly must be cordial and "nice" to folks, but we must use God's word to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn. 16:8). Without such conviction, folks will not be truly "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37) and ask the most important question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

**OBEY.** Hearing and belief alone leaves one unconverted and lost! Conversion is only effected when they are coupled with obedience (Jas. 2:14-26). There are five aspects of obedience that must be critically impressed upon prospects: 1) confessing Christ (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:36-37); 2) repentance from sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30), 3) baptism (Mk. 16:16; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21), 4) "giving all diligence" to grow as a Christian (2 Pet. 1:5-11), and 5) remaining faithful (Col. 1:21-23). Obedience is essential since Jesus is the "author of eternal salvation" only to those "who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9).

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## CONVERSION OF THE EPHESIANS

*Jesse Flowers*

**T**he apostle Paul's 2nd and 3rd preaching journeys brought him to the great city of Ephesus. From Luke's account, we may conclude that he spent more time preaching the gospel there than any other city in his travels (Acts 19:10; 20:31).

**THE FIRST FRUITS OF EPHEBUS.** When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he "entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19). Those who heard Paul's teaching wanted him to stay longer, but he could not at that time (vv. 20-21). He did, however, leave Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus who taught Apollos "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). On Paul's return trip to Ephesus, he met twelve disciples that had only received John's baptism. The apostle taught them the fullness of the gospel, after which they were baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 19:5; 2:28). Eventually, all in Asia were able to hear the gospel proclaimed (v. 10). Thus, "many" (v. 18) more believers were made. As Luke recorded, "So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

**GREAT CHANGE IN THE EPHESIANS.** By reading the epistle written to the Ephesians, one can better appreciate the transformation that occurred in their lives (Eph. 4:20-24). Paul described them as being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), but made alive in Jesus (Eph. 2:5). Before Christ, they "walked according to the course of this world" (Eph. 2:2). However, in becoming a new creation, they walked in good works (Eph. 2:10). It was because of God's rich mercy, great love, and grace towards mankind (Eph. 2:4, 8) that such a glorious change was made possible. These men and women responded in obedient faith to receive salvation (Eph. 2:8). As a result of this great change, the Ephesian Christians were to: (a) "no longer walk

as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind" (Eph. 4:17), (b) "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph. 4:1), (c) "walk in love, as Christ also loved us" (Eph. 5:2), (d) "walk as children of light" having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:8, 10), and (e) "walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16).

**PUTTING OFF THE OLD, PUTTING ON THE NEW.** Paul was very specific in what he wrote to the Ephesian brethren in regards to the changes that must take place in their lives. They were to "put off" the bad habits of the old man of sin, and "put on" the good characteristics of the new man of righteousness (Eph. 4:20-32). Lying was to cease; only truth was to be spoken (v. 25). Anger that was allowed to develop into a sinful state was to be prevented (vv. 26-27). No longer steal; rather perform good and honest labor with a willingness to give to others (v. 28). Speak words that build people up, instead of offensive and harmful speech (vv. 29, 31). In the place of meanness and hardness, Paul said let there be kindness, a tender heart, and forgiveness (vv. 31-32). Let us too "put off" and "put on"!

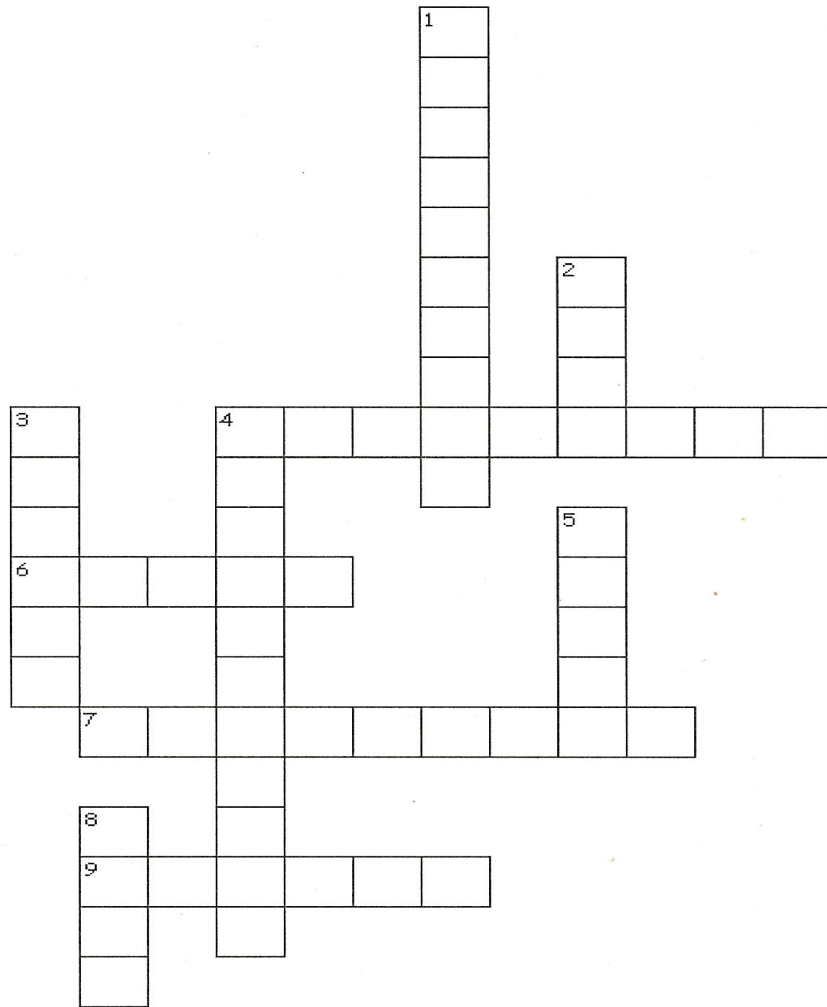
**CONVERTS AND STRONG CHURCHES.** Paul's work in Ephesus is a great blueprint for us to follow. Converts to Christ are also made today by "reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). Then we must continue teaching the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27) both "publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

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# Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

## New Testament Conversions



### ACROSS

- 4. Acts 10:1-48
- 6. Acts 16:14-15
- 7. Acts 19:1-7
- 9. Acts 8:26-39

### DOWN

- 1. Acts 8:5-12
- 2. Acts 9:1-18
- 3. Acts 16:25-34
- 4. Acts 18:1-8
- 5. Acts 8:13
- 8. Acts 2

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,  
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

## CASES OF NON-CONVERSION

Mark Mayberry

**L**et us consider various cases of non-conversion, noting the similarities and differences in each.

**UNBELIEF AMONG THE JEWS.** Dismissive of the evidence, the Jewish Sanhedrin rejected the truth and resorted to threats. They could not deny that a noteworthy miracle had occurred. Yet, they commanded the apostles not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:1-22; 5:27-42).

Unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking, men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen falsely accused Stephen and dragged him before the Council (Acts 6:8-15). In his defense, Stephen charged his accusers with presently repeating Israel's past rebellion (Acts 7:51-53). Their shameful response confirmed their guilt: they summarily stoned him to death (Acts 7:54-60).

After his conversion, Paul preached in the synagogues, confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that Jesus is the Christ. Instead of being persuaded, i.e., drawn to the logical conclusion of faith in consideration of the evidence, Paul's countrymen plotted his death (Acts 9:19-25).

Filled with jealousy at the effectiveness of Paul's ministry, the Jews of Pisidian Antioch contradicted the things that were spoken and blasphemed. Opposing the word of God, they demonstrated an obstinate and argumentative spirit. Speaking in a disrespectful and denigrating manner, they slanderously reviled both the message and messenger (Acts 13:42-47). Similar reactions occurred at Iconium (Acts 14:1-7), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10), Corinth (Acts 18:1-6), and Rome (Acts 28:16-31).

**UNBELIEF AMONG THE GENTILES.** During his sojourn at Athens, Paul preached Jesus and the

resurrection. Among Greek philosophers, his evangelistic efforts were met by skepticism and scorn: "What would this idle babbling wish to say?" echoed at the commencement of his message; at the conclusion, some began to sneer (Acts 17:16-21, 30-33).

Demetrius, the shrine-making silversmith of Ephesus, typifies those who reject the truth for material gain. Couching his covetousness in expressions of concern over the reputation of the great goddess Artemis, his real distress was a potential loss of income (Acts 19:23-27).

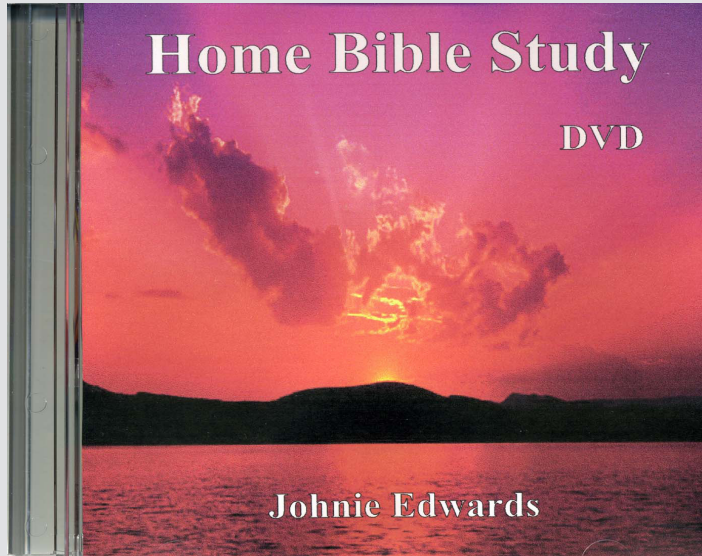
Felix exemplifies the spirit of neglectful worldly-mindedness. As Paul reasoned of righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened, and with good reason: this wicked, self-indulgent ruler was wholly unprepared to stand before God and give account of himself. Refusing heaven's invitation, Felix procrastinated saying, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."

Festus and Agrippa are examples of non-conversion and near-conversion: the former sneering and scornful, the latter halting and hesitant. With dismissive derision, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." With a tentative faith, Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." Yet, neither was willing to become such a one as the apostle: a faithful and fearless follower of Christ (Acts 26:24-29).

Have you obeyed the gospel, or does the word of God fall upon deaf ears? Seek the Lord while he may be found! Obey while there is time and opportunity.

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## Home Bible Study on DVD



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