

**EXCEPT YE BE CONVERTED**  
**(Matthew 18:3)**

**I. The meaning of conversion.**

- A. We talk about conversion in many areas of life.
  - 1. We convert coal into energy or water into steam.
  - 2. When I went to Russia I had to convert my American dollars into Russian rubles.
- B. We mean by this a turning or changing from one state, condition, use or purpose into another.
- C. The various forms of the word convert come from a basic meaning of “to turn.”
  - 1. Turn is used in some older translations.
  - 2. When Jesus told Peter “when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” it is found “when once thou hast turned again, establish they brethren” (Luke 22:31-32).
  - 3. In Acts 3:19 we see “repent and be converted” where in another it has “repent and turn again.”
- D. Conversion, biblically, is the process by which the inner man becomes a Christian.
- E. One thing that is important to notice is that it is a turning from but also a turning to.
  - 1. If we simply turn from sin, we will turn to something else of our imagination.
  - 2. Eventually, we will be worse than at the beginning (Matthew 12:43-45).
- F. The Thessalonians did this ( 1 Thessalonians 1:9).
  - 1. These people had been idolaters.
  - 2. They turned from that to serve the living God.
  - 3. They could have turned from idols for any reason.
  - 4. Instead they turned from idols to God.
- G. A sinner must go from darkness to light (Acts 26:18).

**II. The method of conversion.**

- A. There are two answers given for how men are converted.
- B. The first answer that some give is that conversion is brought about by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on man’s heart.
  - 1. There is no passage in the New Testament where this can be found.
  - 2. Three other objections need to be noted.
    - a. Why preach the gospel if the Holy Spirit comes directly to the saved?
    - b. Why send missionaries to the lost - we should just pray that the Holy Spirit will save the lost.
    - c. Who is responsible when sinners are not converted?
      - (1) We could simply blame God.
      - (2) This causes a sinner to wait for some miraculous happening.

3. The world has never been able to receive the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17).
- C. The second, and biblical answer is that conversion is brought about by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.
  1. Someone once put it this way: "God is the efficient Cause, the Holy Spirit is the divine Agent and divine truth is the means or instrument."
  2. Jesus told us to preach the gospel to everyone.
  3. Paul told Timothy to preach the word.
  4. God chose the foolishness of preaching to save man (1 Corinthians 1:21).
  5. Paul and Barnabas declared the conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 15:3).
    - a. How were they converted?
    - b. By the preaching of the gospel.
  6. You and I are God's instruments in converting the erring Christian (James 5:19-20).
  7. Man is not passive in conversion but active.
    - a. The sinner must turn from darkness to light.
    - b. He must turn from idols to God.
    - c. Isaiah knew this long ago (55:6-7).
- D. A squad of soldiers is marching and the squad leader wants them to turn the other way.
  1. Does he grab each soldier and turn them?
  2. No, he issues the order to about face.
- E. This is the same process for a sinner who is headed to destruction.
  1. He hears the commands of God.
  2. If he decided to obey, he turns toward God in obedience.

### III. **The manifestation of conversion.**

- A. Martin Luther declared that in conversion there was to be a change in head, heart and purse.
- B. The Bible uses convert to describe the whole process of a sinner's turning to Christ and the gospel.
- C. It is shown in a change of the intellect from unbelief to belief.
- D. It is manifested in a change of affections.
  1. Colossians 3:1-2.
  2. Matthew 5:6.
- E. It is manifested in a change of the will - we now live for Christ and not for sin.
  1. Galatians 2:20.
  2. Matthew 5:5.
- F. It is manifested in a change of state, from being outside of Christ to being in Christ.
  1. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
  2. Galatians 3:26-27.
- G. Paul told the Colossians that they had been translated, moved from one

place to another, into the kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

H. Anything less than these manifestations of conversion is not enough and one is not truly converted if these are not shown.

**IV. The motive for conversion.**

A. What did Christ mean by “as little children?”

1. He didn’t mean you could become a little child again.

2. There is no return to youth.

B. It means to be like little children in certain ways.

C. We are motivated to convert to be like a little child in certain ways.

D. We want to be pure.

1. Children have no sin, else Jesus would not tell us to be like them.

2. There has been a cleansing in the convert’s life.

E. The child is teachable, always wanting to know more.

F. The little child is trusting.

G. The little child is obedient to authority.

H. A desire to have these qualities is motivation for conversion.