What Does Conversion to the Lord Mean?

Matthew 16:21-24

Intro:

1. You went through the right forms - you did what the preacher said - but did you ever change your heart?

2. You wanted to be saved - you wanted to go to heaven - but did you realize conversion means commitment?

3. Receiving Jesus as Savior implies committing yourself to Him as Lord!

4. What does real conversion mean?

# I. It Means Denying Yourself - Dying!

A. v21 - Lord Jesus denied Himself when He submitted His will completely to the Father’s plan.

1. In Gethsemane He said, not my will, but yours be done. - Lk 22:42.

2. Then - He practically jumped into the arms of the enemy! (Lk 22:49-54)

3. He could have summoned 10,000 angels to rescue Him - but He didn’t (Matt 26:53).

B. Then - He says to you, Deny yourself! - v24

1. Conversion means a complete break with the old life.

a. Rom 6:2 - We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

b. Now you are to focus on pleasing the Lord out of gratitude for the cross.

2. v23 - The Lord said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan! Why? He was trying to direct things according to Peter’s plans - the way of the world!

a. ILL: The Temptations - (Matt 4:1-11 - stones - jump - worship)

b. v3-4 - Man’s Way: miraculously feed the poor to reduce temporary physical suffering - God’s Way: feed them the Word to increase their spiritual understanding & save them for eternity!

c. v6-7 - Man’s Way: spend all of your time doing miracles & astonishing spectators - God’s Way: Teach them the Way of Life so they may come to faith.

d. v8-10 - Man’s Way: accomplish your ministry anyway that works as long as you get results - God’s Way: do things the way God does them to honor Him!

3. So - the Lord told Peter to get where a disciple belongs - behind his master!

a. Are you guilty of trying to live your life your own way?

b. ILL: “Listen to the Architect”

c. If God is the boss - let Him run your life!

4. v25 - So you need to lose your life in Christ by crucifying your own desires & replacing them with the Lord’s!

a. ILL: Michelangelo's Candle.

b. Don’t work within your own shadow - get out of the way!

c. The Lord told you that you needed to die to bear fruit (Jn 12:24) - then He died! What happened?

d. Fifty days later 3000 responded to the gospel - then 5000!

e. You can’t bear fruit until you die to yourself first! Then - Jesus can take control.

# II. It Means Taking Up Your Cross - Sacrifice!

A. v21 - The Lord became our example of sacrifice when He went to the cross.

1. He volunteered.

2. He denied Himself His life so that you could have yours!

B. v24 - Then - the Lord tells you to take up your cross!

1. Many who are handicapped say, “This is the cross I have to bear”.

2. That is not the cross the Lord is talking about here because those situations are usually thrust upon you against your will.

3. Rom 12:1 - I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

a. The cross is not something you experience - but something you take up!

b. Conversion means responsibility - sacrifice - being a good steward of God’s blessings.

4. Rom 6:4 - We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death . . .

a. You die to the old life when you are baptized.

b. You supposed to leave the old life behind!

5. This is the way you prepare for eternal life forever with God & abundant life now.

# III. It Means Following Jesus - Imitating!

A. In the Old Testament the Jews had the Law to give direction - in Christ you have a Savior to lead the way!

1. Follow (ἀκολουθέω) = come behind, imitate.

2. ILL: Kids playing “Follow the Leader”.

3. In the Christian life - it’s the same way.

B. What does the world mean when it says, “Follow me?”

1. “Eat, drink & be merry, for tomorrow we die!” (Lk 12:19)

2. ILL: Parable of the Rich Farmer (Lk 12:16-21).

3. But - James tells us that life is like a vapor that quickly vanishes away (Jam 4:14).

a. The world says, “Follow me & I will give you pleasure!”

b. The Lord says, Follow Me & I will give you life! - v25

C. Conversion really means obeying Lord Jesus & following after His example!

1. Rom 6:4 - . . . just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

2. One of the reasons for baptism is to impress upon you the idea that you are entering a whole new way of life - a Christ controlled life!

# When you make a full commitment to Lord Jesus

# He will give you heaven when you die

# and

# Meaning & purpose to your life right now!

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# Conversion is worth it!

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