

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 are 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!

Conversion is worth it!

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