

LIFE CHANGING STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

“CHRISTIAN CONVERSION”

The word conversion, in the bible means to turn, turn from going one direction and turning to the opposite direction. To become a true Christian the turning must be in the heart. False conversion is only outward, usually with an ulterior motive, or forced upon a person without their consent.

I remember seeing on TV a story about how a Spanish Conquistador, or conqueror, in the 16th century, who challenged a South American Indian to convert to Christianity and be baptized or be put to death. That’s not the way to get genuine conversions. The Indian, who was a chief replied, “I would rather die and go to hell than convert and go to heaven and be with you.” I doubt if the Spanish Conquistador knew what it was to be a heart Christian himself.

A young man can profess to be converted, get baptized, join the church, pray, sing hymns, and read the bible all with the ulterior motive of getting a girl attending the church. Once they are married he loses interest in the church and living as a Christian and draws the girl away from God. He gives every evidence of a false conversion.

The experience of the Apostle Paul gives us a vivid picture of what true heart conversion is. Listen to his testimony. Acts 26:9-11. “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints (Christians) in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many times I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.”

We see from this Paul or Saul as he was known then, opposed Jesus of Nazareth. He wanted to stamp out His name. He did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, deliverer of the Nation of Israel, the King of Israel, the Saviour of the world.

To him Christianity was a heresy to destroy forever. He hated Jesus and he hated Christians. Acts 9:1 describes him as someone, “Breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.” Then suddenly, he totally changes direction, he has an experience with Jesus, the one who died for him and rose again for him. Paul had a “ Heart conversion. “

Acts 9:20-21 describes the immediate change in his life that amazed everyone, “At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them prisoners to the chief priests?”

Paul had an instant change of heart when he met Jesus Christ face to face. Listen to Paul's testimony now, Philippians 3:7,8 NKJ version, "What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Philippians 1:21 "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Jesus now became the most important person in his life and to die would be to live with Jesus forever. Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." What Paul means here is that he has died to his old life of hate and murder which has been forgiven by Christ by His dying on the cross and now Paul lives the new life of love and appreciation for what Christ has done for him. Not only that he has the reality of Christ living in his heart by the Holy Spirit.

Paul used to hate Christians but now he loves them. Writing to the Christians in Rome he says, "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong." Romans 1:11. He longed to see them that he might bless and strengthen them in their faith. Before he wanted to stamp out and destroy Christianity but now he wanted through the Lord to make as many Christians as possible that they might live for God on earth and be eternally saved. 1Corinthians 9:22 "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."

Paul is an example to us of true Christian conversion. It might not be a dramatic conversion like Paul had but there will be a change in the life, God will become real to us in our hearts and we will want to live for Him and serve Him.

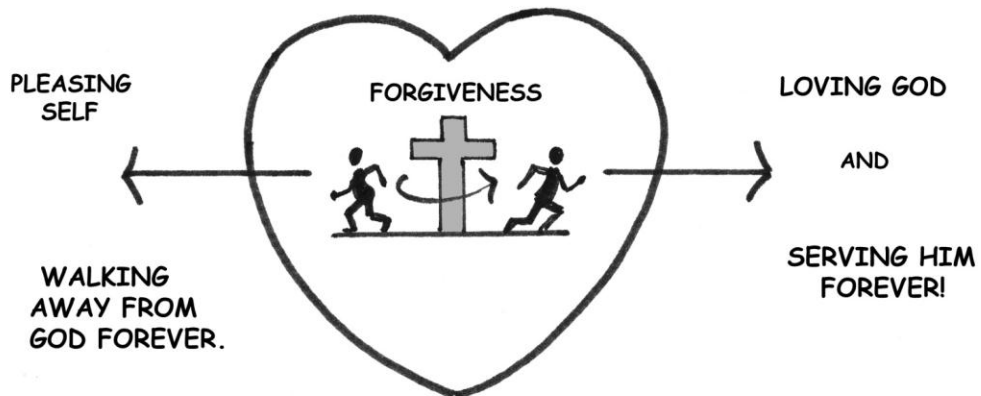
Let me close with the testimony of one man out of the large number of true Christian conversions during the last 2000 years since Christ died and rose again. In the year 1877 in England there lived a rich sporting man named Edward Studd. His great passion in life was horse racing. He lived and breathed horse racing. He was persuaded by a friend who had just been converted to go and hear an evangelist preaching the gospel. He went grudgingly but it resulted in his heart conversion.

His son said, "Father had been full of a thing that takes more possession of a man's heart and head than anything else, the passion for horse racing; and in the evening he came home a changed man." Before he was converted his life was made up of racing, hunting and shooting and dancing at balls etc but now his new great passion was to win souls for Jesus Christ. One of his servants said, "It's the same skin but there is a new man inside." He cleared out the large dance hall in his mansion and filled it with chairs and then he would get the best Christian speakers to come and speak to the people he invited from the surrounding area. No doubt many came to the Lord. He only lived for two more years after his conversion but he accomplished more than many Christians do in a lifetime.

THE APOSTLE PAUL



CHRISTIAN CONVERSION



YOUR CHOICE.

FRANK HUTCHINSON

