

What is involved in conversion to Christ?

The word “conversion” as used in the Scripture means “to turn about, turn towards.” We sometimes use the expression: “he did a 180,” meaning the person made a complete change in his life. “He was a drunkard and violent toward his family, but now he loves and provides for them as best he can.”

The important thing to remember about conversion to Christ is that everyone, no matter how “good” or “evil” they become, must repent and turn to Him to have their sins blotted out and times of refreshing from His presence (Acts 3:19). Salvation accompanies every true conversion if a person remains true to Christ.

Everyone must do “a 180.” Some will need to turn from the use mind altering chemicals that lead to unholy and erratic behavior. While others, who may not do such things, will need to turn from carelessness and unconcern for their souls. Still others will find it necessary to go against their family’s traditional religious practices to follow the word and will of Christ.

Luke records three accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul the apostle) in the book of Acts. Jesus appeared to Saul in order to qualify him as an apostle. For the apostles to be true witnesses, they had to have seen Jesus after His resurrection. Jesus said to Saul, “...I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you” (Acts 26:16). To the church in Corinth Paul said, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time” (1 Cor 15:8). The phrase “last of all,” indicates that Saul was the last one to whom Jesus appeared for appointing an apostle. Therefore, we have no living apostles today except through their “living” word in the Scripture (Heb 4:12).

Paul, by his own admission, “was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” (1 Tim 1:13). He persecuted the church, while in unbelief, and thus persecuted Jesus Christ (Acts 9:5). He told Agrippa, “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9). To Timothy he said, “I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13). After being a Christian for many years, he told an angry mob that he had always lived before God in a good conscience (Acts 23:1). We bring this up to point out that how a person feels about their life is not a safe indicator of their soul’s true condition. Saul needed converting, but for a long time he didn’t know it.

When Jesus appeared to Saul He said, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (Acts 9:5). It was difficult for Saul to remain in unbelief with all the evidence circulating about the absolute power of Jesus. His appearance to Saul broke down the last stronghold of unbelief in his heart. Saul responded to Jesus, “Lord, what do you want me to do.” Jesus said, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:6). The word “must” carries the meaning of that which is mandatory or required. In Damascus, Saul was told that “he must do something.”

Ananias was the Lord's messenger to Saul. We learn, from the accounts in Acts 9 and 22, that Saul was blind, and had been fasting and praying for three days while waiting to be told what "he must do." When Ananias arrived, the only command he gave Saul was to "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). This then was what Saul "must do." This is what Saul did. It was the turning point in his life. It was the moment of his conversion to Jesus Christ, the time of his salvation.

Saul was not converted by his religious zeal. His good conscience alone did not make him acceptable to God. He was not saved at the moment he believed Jesus to be Lord and Christ. Prayer and fasting could not make up for the sins in his life. He had to follow the commands of the gospel to believe, repent and be baptized.

Paul admonishes us with these words, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil 4:9). You can see how Saul was converted; have you followed this pattern? We'd like to help you.

Study your Bible and search the Truth. Bible Correspondence Course available upon request. Thanks for reading.