

True Conversion

By Steven Shepard

John 6:37-45 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." ⁴¹ The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." ⁴² And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?" ⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'-Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

I. Setting the stage (John 6:25-71)

A. A. Jesus feeds the multitudes (John 6:1-15).

B. Jesus crosses the sea and the people follow Him. (John 6:16-24)

C. Jesus rebukes the people for their self-centered motivation.

John 6:25 And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?"²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."²⁷ Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life...

D. The people ask for a sign

John 6:28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?"³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

II. Jesus declares the Gospel to the people and explains their unbelief

A. What is sin? Jesus declares that He is the true bread by which they can have eternal life. ("Coming" to Christ is the same as "believing".)

John 6:33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." ³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

B. The people complain and murmur

John 6:41 The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." ⁴² And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

C. Jesus explains the people's unbelief and how conversion takes place

John 6:36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.

John 6:43 Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

D. Again Jesus explains eternal life, the people murmur, and Jesus explains their unbelief

John 6:47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." ⁵² **The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"** ⁵³ Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day...." ⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" ⁶¹ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶² What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit

who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. ⁶⁴ **But there are some of you who do not believe.**” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that **no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.**” ⁶⁶ **From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.** ⁶⁷ **Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”** ⁶⁸ **But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.** ⁶⁹ Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

III. How are we converted? (How does anyone come to Christ?)

- A. What is conversion?** Our willing response to the Gospel call in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation... A turning from sin to Christ." (Grudem)
- B. We must be converted to be saved** – turn from our sins and put our faith in Jesus Christ. This means real repentance and faith. How does that happen?

Luke 13:3 ...but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

John 3:18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

C. Man by nature has no ability to come to Christ (“No one can come to me...” 6:44)

Rom 8:7 NLT For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. ⁸ That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

Rom 3: 10 As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹² ...they have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.”

1 Cor 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Eph 2:1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins....³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Rom 7:18a For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Mathew 7:17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.
¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

D. In order to come to Christ we must first be drawn by the Father. (6:44) "...unless the Father who sent me draws him." Coming to Christ and believing in Him is the same thing. Saving faith is a gift of God.

E. God draws us by teaching us. "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." God reveals Jesus to us. He convinces us and illuminates our hearts. (6:45)

Matt 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

F. God calls people to Himself – This is a special, inward, personal, and effectual call. Those who are called believe because God reveals Himself. They "willingly yield to the guidance of the Spirit" (Calvin) This is the miraculous work of God alone and cannot be brought about by any external act of man.

Rom 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Acts 2:39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.

Jude 1 To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ

1 Cor 1:2; To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...**26** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

1 Peter 2:9that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

John 5: 25 Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

John 8:47 He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

John 10: 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Acts 5: 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

G. God regenerates everyone He calls.

John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

IV. What is the result of true conversion

A. All those who have been truly converted will never be lost.

1. The ones that "come" to Christ, who are "given" by the Father to the Son (6:37), are the ones that are "drawn" (6:44), and are raised up on the last day. They are the ones who believe (v. 40).

John 6:37-44 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."....44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

2. True conversion cannot be undone – All who believe, come, are drawn, which have been given, and therefore have been truly converted will persevere in their faith and will never be lost.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...

1 Cor 1:8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

John 6:39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting

life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 10: 27-29 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.

1 Thess 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it*.

Eph 1:13 In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession

B. True conversion will always produce the fruits (evidences) of a changed life. Those who have been converted by God will have a new heart. Conversion always results in a holy life.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself..

Heb 12:14 NLT Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

1. Repentance

1 John 3:9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.

2. Faith

1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God

3. Obedience

1 John 2: 3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

1 John 2: 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

4. Love of the brethren

1 John 4: 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

5. Perseverance

Hebrews 3:14 NLT For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.

1 Cor 6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Matthew 7:21_NLT "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.

C. The knowledge of true conversion produces assurance.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Arthur Pink "A Scriptural assurance of Salvation is that knowledge which the Holy Spirit imparts to the heart through the Scriptures – that my faith is not a natural one, but 'the faith of God's elect' – that my love for Christ is sincere and not fictitious and that my daily walk is that of a regenerated man."

V. Effective missionary and evangelistic methods

A. If our understanding about how people are converted is wrong then our method of doing evangelism and missions will be wrong. We will be seeking to get people to do things that do not bring about real conversions. "False conversions" result when conversion is identified with man's outward decisions and works. Many make professions, yet without having a change of heart or experiencing real repentance or faith. They are then given "follow up", yet do not change.

B. Conversion is not

1. Asking Jesus to come into your heart
2. Coming forward at a church service or meeting
3. Attending church
4. Adopting a Christian lifestyle
5. Being baptized
6. Taking communion
7. Being confirmed

C. True conversion is not man's "decision" to convert himself, but a miraculous work of God that brings spiritual regeneration and a profound inward change, which is expressed through a sanctified life.

D. Biblical methods for missions and evangelism

1. Preach the pure gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected – Instead of telling people to "ask Jesus into your heart" call people to repentance and faith.

2 Thes 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James 1:18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures...**21** Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes

Acts 20:20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
³¹So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

2. Pray – Through prayer we avoid depending on ourselves and we put our trust in God who alone can do the work of converting the soul.

Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

John 15:5a ...for without Me you can do nothing.

3. Live a godly life – A consecrated life gives a visible demonstration of the Gospel. If we are poor examples our message will not be credible to unbelievers and hearts will be hardened.

2 Cor 4:2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

4. Trust in the Holy Spirit to do the work of true conversion – Our standard should be conversion by means of "a new creation". Conversions brought about by God will last.

Gal 6:15 (NLT) – It doesn't matter whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we have been transformed into a new creation. ¹⁶May God's peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the new people of God.