

This Great Salvation

Session 4—Conversion (Faith and Repentance)

Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of our sins and place our trust (faith) in Jesus Christ only for our salvation.¹

Conversion is the conscious act of the whole person involving illumination of the mind, engagement of the emotions and a decision of the will.

The word itself means “turning.” It represents a spiritual turning *from sin to Christ*. “The turning from sin is called *repentance*, and the turning to Christ is called *faith*.”²

1. Repentance—a biblical command (a-e) and a gracious gift (f-i)
 - a. Ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist begin with a call to repent. Mark 1.14; Matthew 3.2
 - b. The New Testament ends with a call to repent. Revelation 3.19
 - c. The mission of the apostles was to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. Luke 24.47
 - d. “Repent” was the first word of instruction given by Peter to the convicted hearers of his Pentecostal sermon. Acts 2.38
 - e. Repentance is a universal imperative. Acts 17.30
 - f. “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” Acts 11.18
 - g. “God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth....” 2 Timothy 2.25

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, 1994, p. 709.

² *Ibid.*

- h. God's kindness is meant to lead to repentance. Romans 2.4
 - i. "Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." Lamentations 5.21
2. Repentance—a change of mind followed by a change of direction
- a. Parable of the Lost Son. Luke 15.17-20
 - b. Elements of repentance: Illumination of the mind including a knowledge of the holiness of God (Isaiah 6); sorrow of heart for sin (2 Corinthians 7.9-11); decision to turn to God (Proverbs 28.13).
 - c. If a person is going in the wrong direction, it really doesn't matter whether one makes a sharp U-turn or a gradual turning over the course of several blocks. What matters is the direction one is heading.
 - d. For some, the intellect may be the dominant faculty. For others it may be the will and for others their emotions. Repentance may look differently for different persons. What matters in the end is the direction one is heading.
 - e. "Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ."³
3. The Elements of Saving Faith
- a. Knowledge— (*notitia*—understanding the content of the Christian faith) we must know the facts of the gospel, but knowledge alone is not enough.
 - b. Agreement—(*assensus*) we must agree/believe/approve that those facts are true, but even this is not enough. The demons believe—and tremble! (James 2.19)

³ Ibid, p. 713.

- c. Trust—(*fiducia*) personal dependence upon Christ for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. “... whoever believes in him ...”
- d. 1 Thessalonians 2.13—“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God (*notitia*), which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men (*assensus*) but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (*fiducia*).”

4. Repentance and faith go together and continue together

- a. Isaiah 55.6-7 “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”
- b. 1 Thessalonians 1.9 “For they themselves report concerning us the kind reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”
- c. Acts 20.21 “... testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- d. It is true that initial repentance and faith constitute conversion. But the dynamic of turning from sin and toward God are to characterize our lives throughout this earthly journey. (Hebrews 12; Romans 12; Galatians 2.20)