**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**4/17/2022**

**What Genuine Conversion Requires**

Baptism is essential to being saved from sin. It is a command of God for salvation. The apostle Peter said to Jews who asked, “what shall we do?” *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 2:38) Saul of Tarsus was told by Ananias, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* (Acts 22:16) And yet it is possible, and it occurs that one be baptized and he not be saved. Why? It is because for one’s baptism to be unto salvation he must be a genuine penitent believer. Jesus said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* (Mark 16:16) As we just read in Acts 2:38 Peter told the Jews to *“repent, and let ever one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins…”* Baptism alone does not save. It is possible for one to be baptized and he not truly be converted to Jesus Christ. We use the term “convert” or “conversion” so loosely today in our society. For example, a person may say, “I converted from Christianity to Judaism.” Or one may say, “I converted from Islam to Christianity.” And it may not be the conversion was because of a change in conviction, but that the change suited their conditions at the moment. One of the Islamic faith married one who is of the “Christian faith” and so the Muslim changes so there will be unity in the family. Or one changes to another faith because most of his friends are of that faith. They may call this conversion, but it really is not conversion. Today on our program we want to talk about what genuine conversion to Christ requires.

We are glad you are with us.

First of all, genuine conversion to Christ involves a change of conviction. Look with me again in Acts 2. Peter had said to the Jews in verse 36, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."* These Jews needed to “know assuredly” that Jesus is Lord and Christ. The reason one chooses to become a Christian is because he is assured, he is convicted that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. He is convicted that Jesus is the Savior of the world, and he cannot be saved without obeying Christ. As Peter said concerning Jesus in Acts 4:12, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* When one is converted he is acting on what he is convinced is the truth. Now, God has provided evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. For one to be converted to Jesus Christ to be saved from his sins he needs to be convinced by this evidence and come to Christ with the full assurance of who Jesus is.

Secondly, genuine conversion to Christ involves a change in attitude. I am particularly talking here about a change in one’s attitude toward the word of God. You know, there are some people who are not that concerned about what the Bible teaches. One can read it or hear it preached and it doesn’t do much for him. He closes his eyes to it. He hears the word, but does not take it seriously. But he then comes to see the evidence that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and he sees the evidence that the Bible is the word of God. He then begins to change his attitude toward the Bible. He begins to open his eyes and ears to what it says. Saul of Tarsus did not believe that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God. He thought Jesus was an impostor, and therefore, he persecuted Christians. But when the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he was convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and it says in Acts 9:6, *“So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’”* Saul’s attitude toward the words of Jesus changed. He was ready to listen and obey. That change in attitude toward the words of Christ is essential for one to be converted to Christ. When the Jews on the day of Pentecost became convinced that the Jesus they had crucified was both Lord and Christ, they asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) You see, their attitude toward the words of Jesus had changed. They were now ready to listen and obey.

Thirdly, genuine conversion involves a change in one’s focus. When one is converted to Christ his focus is no longer on himself, but on Jesus Christ. A good example of this is Paul. Look with me in Philippians 3:4-6. Paul is the writer of this letter. Paul talks about what he was as a Jew before he became a Christian. He talks about what he had accomplished as a Jew. He says, *“though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* Paul’s focus as a Jew before he became a Christian was on himself and what he had accomplished as a Jew -- “circumcised the eighth day, a Hebrew of Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning the righteousness of the law, blameless.” But in verse seven the focus changes. He says, *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* Do you see the change of focus from himself to Jesus Christ? Paul said in Gal. 6:14, *“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”* Paul would not be found now boasting of himself, but rather of what Christ had accomplished in him.

“*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Rom. 3:23), and as a result all are headed to eternal death. Paul says *“the wages of sin is death.”* (Rom. 6:23). Is there any hope for us? Yes! Jesus died so that we all can be forgiven of our sins. When we come to Christ for salvation we must understand that none of us have anything of which to boast, and our focus must cease being on self, on what we have done, but rather we must come to focus on what Jesus did in dying for us, and that our righteousness is what God has provided through Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, genuine conversion involves a change in trust. Before a person is converted to Christ he is confident that he can make it through life on his own. Whatever comes along he will handle it. He doesn’t need God. Have you ever heard a child say, “me do it myself?” That is the spirit of one before conversion, “me do it myself.” But as the person is genuinely converted to Christ, he is acknowledging before God that he cannot do it by himself. He needs help. He needs God’s help.

Now the first thing he trusts God for is forgiveness of sin. Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, *“‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord’”* (Acts 22:16) The phrase “calling on the name of the Lord” indicates that his trust is in the Lord. When Saul was baptized he would not be putting his trust in the water, nor in Ananias who told him to do it, and not even in his own actions, but in being baptized he would be calling on the name of the Lord. His trust is in the Lord who will wash his sins away. Conversion involves trusting that the Lord will save me from my sins when I obey the gospel.

But also in true conversion, one is showing his trust in God by giving his life over to God and is saying to God, “You control my life now. Whatever your will is for my life, I will do. You take charge.” We come to understand what Jeremiah understood when he said, *“O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”* (Jerem. 10:23) We realize that we need God’s guidance in our lives. We cannot direct our own steps. Therefore we trust Him to guide us, and show our trust by reading and studying His word, the Bible, believing it to be truth. We don’t read it and then place judgment on it, whether or not we will accept it. Trusting God means that whatever His word says we accept without question and we put it into practice in our lives.

We show our trust in God by the way we pray. We then can pray the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,”* and mean it. We can pray as Jesus prayed in the garden, *“not My will, but Yours, be done.”* (Luke 22:42) We accept God’s decisions in our lives. We trust Him completely.

Genuine conversion also involves a change of conduct. That is what repentance is all about. As we mentioned earlier baptism without repentance means one has not be converted, and therefore, is not saved. Repentance is a change of heart, a change of mind resulting in a change of conduct. After Paul’s conversion he went out preaching the gospel. It says in Acts 26:20 that he *“declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”* In conversion there has to be “works befitting repentance.” One’s manner of life changes when he is converted to Christ. Before, my language may have been filled with cursing, profanity and vulgarity, but in conversion I change the way I talk. Before, I may have been jealous, vengeful, and hateful toward others, but in conversion I change the way I relate to others and become loving, patient and kind toward them. Before I may have spent the first day of the week just for myself, doing what I wanted to do on that day, but after conversion I realize that the first day of the week is the “Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10), and I assemble with my fellow saints to worship and to remember my Lord in partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Genuine conversion means a change of conduct.

Also, genuine conversion involves a change in outlook. In conversion a person faces up to the fact that this world is no longer his home. Christians are just sojourners and pilgrims on this earth (1 Peter 2:11). Our home is in heaven. Paul says *“our citizenship is in heaven”* (Phil. 3:20). Peter says that God *“has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”* (1 Peter 1:3-4) Our goal changes. No longer is our goal to live life here for our own pleasure, but it is to serve and glorify God so we can live with Him for all eternity in heaven.

Dear listener, have you been converted to Jesus Christ, I mean genuinely converted to Christ? Why not come to Christ and obey Him today.

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