

# Can Christians Convert Non-Christians?

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There is a belief among many who claim to be followers of Christ, that they have a responsibility to convert non-Christians. This belief is based on a misunderstanding of certain scriptures, combined with misinformation from leaders within their religious organizations.

Jesus Christ addressed this issue with the scribes and Pharisees who worked diligently to persuade non-Jews to embrace, or adopt, the Jewish belief system. Before examining what Christ said, it is important to clarify that a "convert" and a "proselyte" are very similar terms describing a person who has been persuaded to change their religious faith, opinion, political party, or other belief system.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won (or persuaded), you make him twice as much a son of *hell* (Gr. *Gehenna*; a garbage dump where waste, including the dead bodies of criminals would be burned) as yourselves (Mt. 23:15; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The main point Christ was making to the scribes and Pharisees was that they were not teaching God's truth correctly and, as a result, whoever believed what they said would be in danger of transgressing God's will. This is one of the biggest problems in Christianity today because leaders in many of these organizations teach their followers it is not necessary to obey the law and commandments of God. This position confirms their ignorance of scripture and places their followers in a dangerous position because they cannot inherit everlasting life as long as

believe this false doctrine, as confirmed by Jesus Christ.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the (teaching of) the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup>For assuredly, I say to you, **till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.** <sup>19</sup>Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:17-19; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me *in that day* (ref. *second resurrection*: Rev. 20:5-6), "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?" <sup>23</sup>And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; **depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!**" (Mt. 7:21-23; cf. 1Jn. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:19; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

So he (Christ) said to him (rich young ruler), "Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God (Almighty). But **if you want to enter into life** (everlasting), **keep the commandments.**" (Mt. 19:17; cf. Ps. 119:166; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The majority of Christianity today falls into the category of "the blind leading the blind" because those who believe it is not necessary to obey every word of God (Mt. 4:4) will end up in a period of fiery judgment following Christ's millennial rule over this planet.

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and **those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth** (Mt. 13:41-42; emphasis added).

Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" - and to not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (spiritually-speaking) - <sup>18</sup>I(Christ) counsel you to **buy from me gold refined in the fire**, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see (Rev. 3:17-18; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

In Revelation 3:18, those who were taught, or believed, that obedience to God's law and commandments is unnecessary, will be refined through a fiery trial associated with the second resurrection. At the conclusion of this period of refinement, everyone will be wearing "white garments" because these symbolize a deep desire to obey every word of God.



FOR ALL YOUR COMMANDMENTS ARE  
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

*Psalms 119:172b*

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready. <sup>8</sup>And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints** (Rev. 19:7-8; emphasis added).

Those who are "righteous" are those who willingly obey every word of God (Ps. 132:9).

For all Your commandments are righteousness (Ps. 119:172b).

**The entirety of Your word is truth**, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever (Ps. 119:160; emphasis added).

Religious leaders in many Christian organizations will use the apostle Paul's writings to claim that he taught against obedience to God's law (2Pet. 3:15b-16). Again, this is incorrect and misleading to those who blindly follow this false teaching. Instead, Paul was addressing the self-righteousness of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees who taught justification through the law of animal sacrifice, and the blood associated with circumcision; instead of Christ's shed blood to cover the sins of every repentant individual (Isa. 52:13-15; 53:1-12).

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law (of animal sacrifice to forgive sin); but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision (Rom. 2:25; cf. Rom.2:26-29; Ed. note in parenthesis).

For **the law** (associated with animal sacrifices), having a shadow of the good things to come (shed blood of Christ), and not the very image of the things, **can never with these same sacrifices**, which they offer continually year by year, **make those who approach perfect** (Heb. 10:1; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Going back to whether Christians should be trying to convert non-Christians, the answer in most cases is "no" because they are "the blind leading the blind". Christ said as much in the context of religious authorities who thought they had all the right answers.

Then his disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when

they heard this saying?" <sup>13</sup>But he answered and said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. <sup>14</sup>Let them alone. **They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.**" (Mt. 15:12-14; emphasis added).

It is important to note what Christ just said about his heavenly Father in Matthew 15:13. This is a key to answering whether or not any human being has the ability to convert someone else. The answer is in the following scriptures.

No one can come to me (Christ) unless the Father who sent me draws him... (Jn. 6:44a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

And he (Christ) said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father." (Mt. 6:65; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Because Almighty God knew the end of all things from the beginning of his plan to reconcile all sinners to Himself, he foreknew who He would call to repentance, and when he would take the necessary action (Isa. 46:10). Therefore, He does not rely on any human being to convert someone else.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he (Christ) might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In fact, God the Father can already see His finished work, even though it may not be completed at the present time.

Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified (through the shed blood of His Son); and whom He justified, these He also glorified (through receipt of His Holy Spirit, and future

resurrection; cf. Rom. 8:11; Jn. 12:16, 23) (Rom. 8:30; cf. Eph. 1:5, 11; Ed. notes in parentheses).

As enthusiastic as the apostle Paul was to see many people believe God's truth, he was aware that it could only happen according to the Father's will, and certainly would not be due to Paul's efforts, as sincere and convincing as he might be.

For the king (Festus), before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe. <sup>28</sup>Then Agrippa said to Paul, **"You almost persuade me to become a Christian."** (Ac. 26:26-28; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).



**NO ONE CAN COME TO ME (CHRIST)  
UNLESS THE FATHER WHO SENT ME  
DRAWS HIM...**

*John 6:44a; Ed. note in parenthesis*

So Paul's strongest arguments, and reasoning, did not change the mind of either Festus or Agrippa because it was not the Father's will at that time. Christ explained this principle and truth.

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup>Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, **lest they should believe and be saved** (Lk. 8:11-12; emphasis added).

But although he (Christ) had done so many signs before them, **they did not believe in him** (Jn. 12:37; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: <sup>40</sup>*"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their heart, lest they should turn (repent of their sins), so that I should heal them."* (Jn. 12:39-40; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In the case of Festus and Agrippa, the following scripture confirms that not many academics, not many politicians, or leaders of industry are being called to understand God's truth and repent during this present evil age (Gal. 1:4).

For you see your calling, brethren, that **not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called** (1Cor. 1:26).

When a eunuch was looking for someone to answer questions regarding prophecies that appeared to be describing Jesus Christ, he received assistance from Philip. However, it is important to note that God the Father was already working with this eunuch because he was obeying God's law pertaining to the observance of God's appointed festivals (Ac. 8:27).

And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. <sup>29</sup>Then the (Holy) Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"<sup>31</sup>And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him (Ac. 8:28b-31; Ed. note in parenthesis).

So Philip was dispatched to assist someone who God was already working with. This is a principle that is lost on the majority of Christianity today, even though it is clearly seen in scripture. The apostle Paul reminded those in the early church

that his job was simply to assist those that God has already called.

Not that **we** (the apostles) have dominion over your faith, but **are fellow workers for your joy**; for by faith you stand (2Cor. 1:24; cf. Rom. 16:2; Ed. note in parenthesis).

A similar experience happened to the Apostle Peter when God's Holy Spirit inspired him to cooperate with some Gentiles, even though he would not have been closely associated with them previously.

While Peter thought about the vision, the (Holy) Spirit said to him, "Behold three men are seeking you. <sup>20</sup>Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." <sup>21</sup>Then Peter went down to the men and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" <sup>22</sup>And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." (Ac. 10:19-22; Ed. note in parenthesis)

Paul and Barnabas were directed by God's Holy Spirit to travel to Cyprus and teach in some synagogues there. It was during this time that a Jew called Bar-Jesus requested an audience with them.

.... a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup>who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. **This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God** (Ac. 13:6b-7; emphasis added).

While in Rome, some Jews asked Paul to explain more about the doctrines of the early church, which they referred to as a "sect".

But we (Jews) desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.”<sup>23</sup> So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the prophets, from morning till evening (Ac. 28:22-23; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This is why Christ pointed out that our conduct is very important. Hopefully, it is by our righteous conduct that people might ask questions about God’s truth (1Pet. 3:15). This is confirmed by Christ’s following statement because a lamp, or light, does not produce much sound, if any at all.



**AND HE (PETER) COMMANDED THEM  
TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE  
LORD...**

Acts 8:16-17; Ed. notes in parenthesis; emphasis added

You are the light (symbol of God’s law and commandments; cf. Prov. 6:23) of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.<sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.<sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may **see your good works** and glorify your Father in heaven (Mt. 5:14-16; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Following is another scripture confirming that God’s true servants are to be a “light”, or example, to others as they go about their normal activities. Unfortunately, most translations of the Bible misquote the original Greek version of these verses.

Go and make disciples/pupils of all nations, as you walk, in my name; teaching them everything I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you

always, even to the end of the age (Mt. 28:19-20).

It is very important to note that anyone who repents of sin should be baptized in the name, and by the authority, of Jesus Christ because it was through his sacrifice that every repentant sinner can be forgiven (Heb. 9:22). Unfortunately, most translations of Matthew 28:19-20 falsely insert “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, which is clearly contradicted by many other scriptures.

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission (forgiveness) of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:38; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

For as yet it (God’s Holy Spirit) had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus**.<sup>17</sup> **Then they (Peter and John) laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit** (Ac. 8:16-17; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

And he (Peter) commanded them to be baptized **in the name of the Lord...** (Ac. 10:48a; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”<sup>5</sup> When they heard this, they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus**.<sup>6</sup> **And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them...** (Ac. 19:4-6a; emphasis added).

The following is a “direct translation approach” of Matthew 28:19-20 that maintains as much as possible from the original Greek text with the

goal of preserving the original intent of Christ's instruction.

Therefore, as you go, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into \*my name, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to keep everything, all I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all the days, until the full completion of this age (Mt. 28:19-20; RNT. \* See appendix, at the conclusion of this document, for further information on the translation of verse 19).

Note: Christ's instructions are to "disciple" the nations. The word he used in Greek (Strong's 3100, *matheteusate*) is a verb meaning, "to pupil"; to make a learner. It does not mean, "to convert." A pupil, student, or disciple is a voluntary learner; someone who, from his/her own desire, wishes to learn and has not been coerced, unduly influenced, pressured by feelings of guilt, or forced.



DO WE THEN MAKE VOID THE LAW  
THROUGH FAITH? CERTAINLY NOT! ON  
THE CONTRARY, WE ESTABLISH THE  
LAW.

Romans 3:31

Obviously, there are occasions when people are discussing religious topics and there is nothing wrong with weighing in, but it is not by our power or ability that anyone is going to be convinced to obey God. As proven previously, it is only by the power of God the Father that anyone can be lead to repentance (Rom. 2:4b).

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:14)

When anyone is teaching or preaching, they need to be clear that Christ died in order to cover

our sins, and therefore "repentance of sin" is central to the commission that the Father gave to Christ.

So they (the twelve disciples) went out and **preached that people should repent** (Mk. 6:12; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added). Once past sins are covered, the repentant individual is to live a new life of obedience to the law and commandments of God, as Paul confirmed.

Therefore we were buried with him (Christ) through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life** (Rom. 6:4; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Knowing this, that **our old man** (old disobedient way of living) was crucified with him (Christ), that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (Rom. 6:6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law (Rom. 3:31).

What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin that grace** (unmerited forgiveness of sin) **may abound?** <sup>2</sup>**Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?** (Rom. 6:1-2; cf. Rom. 6:15-23; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

In conclusion, it is not by any amount of human effort that a Christian can "convert" a non-Christian. It is only God the Father who determines who He is going to lead to repentance, and when He will do this (Rom. 2:4b; Jn. 6:44, 65). In fact, Almighty God made this determination long before each person was

born (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:5, 11). Nonetheless, God has chosen to use certain individuals in this process to act as "helpers" and "teachers" (Heb. 5:12). These helpers and teachers must be very circumspect about what they are teaching other people because they could become a stumbling block, especially if they are teaching against God's law and commandments **in even the slightest manner** (Mt. 5:18-19; cf. Mt. 18:6; Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:1-2).

\*Appendix follows:

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