



The Must of Conversion

Text: Isaiah 55:6-7 ⁶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous ^b man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. [\[1\]](#)

If somebody is to be saved, they must turn from their sinful lifestyle. This is not an option to salvation. In fact, salvation has no options, there is only one right way to be saved and that is to be born again through Jesus Christ. Repentance, water baptism, and the Holy Ghost is still God's way.

But if the sinner does not turn from their lifestyle, then their hope is gone. You see, God would not be consistent with His own word and His holiness character if He were to put aside our past sin and then allow us to continue sinning as though nothing ever changed in our lives.

How could our Creator be looked at as a Just Savior if he just forgave without any determination on our part to abstain?

Jesus Christ came to save sinners, but He never came to spare the sin itself. God hates sin and he wants it destroyed. Ultimately it will be destroyed. God never wanted sin to enter the world in the first place, but it came because of pride and rebellion.

God did not robe himself in flesh to become the messenger of sin, yet that is what He would have been if he had said, "You can continue in you sin, and even then I will forgive you." There is forgiveness available, but it is with the understanding that He will have our hearts with full commitment, having forsaken sin.

The scripture does not teach forgiveness to the person who refuses to forsake their sin. Their record is still loaded as long as they are clinging to it.

The good news of the gospel promises forgiveness to the sinner who will forsake their lifestyle and evil thoughts in humility. When we seek to live as new creatures in Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost, God sees that effort and gives us more strength to endure.

There is no use in a person trying to be saved without a change of heart and lifestyle. God's gospel demands changing from sinner to saint if people are to be saved.

Zaccheus was a rich tax collector who had not always been honest in his dealings with people, but he offered to pay back anybody that he had short-changed. How often do you see that kind of repentance today? There may be some old-timers here who remember hearing repentance and restitution preached together. Why? Because the two go together. Repentance is made stronger and backed up by restitution. If a person cannot humble themselves before their fellow man whom they can see, how on earth can they humble themselves before an Almighty God whom they cannot see?

When Jesus saves a sinner from the punishment of sin, he also saves him from the love of sin. Jesus makes us holy, happy, and safe. He gives us the complete package. I was looking at my computer keyboard and noticed a bunch of buttons that I rarely use. I forgot they were there. That is true with some people's walk with God. They have forgotten many of the benefits of living for God and much of their spiritual wealth goes untapped.

This is consistent with what Jesus taught: There was no rejoicing over the lost sheep while it was still wandering away from the flock. The joy began when that lost sheep was found and was brought home on the shepherd's shoulder.

There was no joy over the prodigal son while he was yet in the far country, and there was no kiss from his father while he was feeding the swine. He had to come back and say, "Father, I have sinned." There must be the forsaking of the former evil ways. This is the only way the prodigal could enjoy his father's forgiveness.

Anyone who refuses to part with their sins will suffer the consequences of spending eternity in the lake of fire. If we want to spend eternity in Heaven, then we must forsake all sinful lifestyle, along with the appearance of evil as well. We must not allow sin to have any footing in our lives whatsoever. This is the **must** of conversion.

To be married to Christ requires that we divorce sin.

There is no possible way to walk in the way of the Lord and at the same time to tread in the pathway of evil. The two are diabolically opposed to each other. It is impossible to be the servant of the Savior and a servant of Satan at the same time.

Think about the extreme danger it would impose on society if people were pardoned of their sins and yet were not renewed in character. Can you imagine Jesus saying to somebody, "I forgive you because of my precious blood that I shed at Calvary, so now you can go and remain a liar, thief, and a drunkard, it's ok, I now accept sin."

Just the very thought is ludicrous and ridiculous, and yet that is where much of our justice system has fallen today. I am glad that God operates on a much higher plane! He not only forgives, but he changes that inward man so that we can all be healed from the inside out!

Thomas Johannes Bach, well-known missionary-statesman, pioneer missionary in South America, and for almost twenty years the general director of The Evangelical Alliance Mission, whose godly life profoundly influenced thousands around the world, often recalled that first "chance" encounter on the streets of Copenhagen, Denmark.

How irritated he was at the nerve of the slightly-built Danish lad who offered him a gospel tract.

"Will you please take this little leaflet? It has a message for you."

"Message indeed! Why do you bother other people with your religion? I'm quite able to take care of myself."

Such a show of temper from this fiery, red-headed engineering student did not deter the young lad who continued to hold the piece of paper before him.

Johannes snatched the gospel tract, deliberately ripped it, crumpled it up, and put it in his pocket. Bach, still angry and yet surprised that the young man said nothing, could not help watching him to see what he would do. He saw something he would never forget. The young Danish lad stepped into a nearby doorway, folded his hands, closed his eyes, and began to pray. Johannes was astonished to see tears on his cheek.

Fifty-nine years later in Copenhagen, the seventy-six-year-old missionary, author, and teacher stood on the very spot where he had received that piece of paper and thanked God for the young Danish lad who had cared about his soul. [\[2\]](#)

[b](#) the unrighteous...: Heb. the man of iniquity

[\[1\]](#) The Holy Bible : King James Version. 1995 . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

[\[2\]](#) Tan, P. L. 1996, c1979. Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : [a treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers]. Bible Communications: Garland TX