

# How CONVERTED Are You?

*Many kid themselves that they are converted and safe in Jesus Christ when they are not. They go along complacently—hurtling toward the lake of fire. This could be your case!*

**H**AVE YOU ASSUMED that you are SAFE in Jesus Christ? You need to check up and see!

To be converted means to be CHANGED from the normal way you have always thought and acted to a NEW, spiritually led, way of life (Rom. 8:1-7). To continue in this new way is life; to depart, death.

Some, who once sought to be exalted in their community, now seek to be exalted among the Church brethren. This is not a REAL CHANGE of attitude. They have merely changed their environment. The same old vanity still rules their lives.

To be guided by the Holy Spirit means to be guided by the sound *wisdom and love of God*.

A man does not have this mind naturally. To come to have it requires a change which is truly a MIRACLE. You cannot accomplish it by yourself. Nevertheless the accomplishment of such a change is what TRUE CONVERSION means.

A holy and spiritual mind *must come from God* alone because only God has it to give.

As Paul said, in Romans 7:14, 18 and 24-25, "The law is spiritual; we know that. But then I am a creature of the flesh. . . . For in me (that is, in my flesh) no good dwells, I know; the wish is there, but not the power to do what is right. . . . miserable wretch that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? GOD WILL! Thanks to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Moffatt translation).

We all need to realize, as the Apostle Paul did, that in us dwells no *good* thing. We can often *will* to do good, but we cannot perform it of ourselves. There is a law which governs the human fleshly action in man—a law which wars against the converted spiritual mind (Verses 21-23).

Job was a perfect example of a man *who was proud of being upright*, fearing God and shunning evil. Job tried to obey God according to the ways of human righteousness (see Job 1:1; 29:1-25). This righteousness of man is as filthy rags before God (Isa. 64:6). Job had to repent of it bitterly (Job 42:5-6).

If you have tried to serve God in your own righteousness, and exalted

yourself in God's sight, then it is your time to *abhor* yourself and "repent in dust and ashes."

"When we are of the flesh (Romans 7:5) the passions of sin which are according to the law (of human nature) does work in our members and bring forth fruits unto death."

And as verse 14 states: "Truly the law (of God) is spiritual: but we of ourselves are carnal, sold under sin. . . . There is therefore (continuing in chapter 8) no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law (the spiritual law outlined in the Ten Commandments) could not do, in that it was weak (impotent) through the flesh (the flesh being unable to keep it through human frailty), God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . condemned sin in the flesh (proved that men do not have to sin when the Spirit of God leads them): that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Yet God gives His Spirit only to those who repent and are baptized.

## Baptism A Vow

When you were baptized you entered, in a sense, into a vow with God. You should have been baptized only after you had repented of your ways and were willing to turn from them. The act of baptism constituted a solemn vow to bury the old self (the desires of the flesh—carnal pleasure-seeking) in a watery grave. You were then raised, you did not raise yourself up, but *were* figuratively raised from that death to a new life dictated by the Spirit and will of God. This is all clearly explained in Romans 6, 7 and 8.

Yet some of you are trying to *raise yourselves* up out of the watery grave of death. You should be depending upon God to raise up the new person who no longer headstrongly follows the old desires, but is led by the Holy Spirit. (See Col. 3:1-6.)

The old self was only symbolically buried. Your part is to keep that old self buried. God's part is to impart the new life. You must continue to resist

your natural pulls or you break your vow of baptism. Remember, human nature is still very much alive within you. You must keep up your guard.

But how? "Pray always," Ephesians 6:18 tells you, "with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Satan would love to see your thoughts turn again to yourself, and your carnal desires begin secretly to rule your life again. Then your part of the baptismal vow would be neglected, maybe even forgotten, so that God's Spirit would no longer fill you. Satan hates you and is jealous of you because you are an heir to the Kingdom of God.

God's part in the agreement with you was to supply the Comforter (Acts 2:38) upon your repentance and baptism. God did not promise to take away your fleshly desires and nature. God promised only that when you resist Satan's temptation to live by your sensual urges, He will draw near unto you (James 4:7-8) and in so doing, give you His spiritual desires and nature. This is love in action. It is a Godly father-son relationship.

This active love between you and your Creator must exist forever, but you must continue to resist evil throughout your natural life. "But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

## The Pitfall

Some have allowed themselves to fall into a spiritually weak condition. They have again allowed pride to swell up in themselves. Maybe you are doing the same thing without knowing it. Do you feel hurt if you are not exalted among the brethren or in the community in which you live?

Perhaps your spiritual weakness takes another common form. You may have allowed yourself to be constantly seeking the desires of the flesh. You may find yourself constantly struggling to get ahead. Do your problems weigh you down and, when you ask God's help, fail to receive the answer? If so, you have been overlooking James 4:1-10.

From the Moffatt Translation we read God's inspired word, "Where do conflicts, where do wrangles come from, in your society? Is it not from these

passions of your members?" Yes, here is the answer to your problem! "You crave, and miss what you want: you envy and covet, but you cannot acquire: you wrangle and fight—you miss what you want because you do not ask God for it; you do ask and you do not get it, because you ask with the wicked intention of spending it on your pleasures. (Wanton creatures! do you not know that the world's friendship means enmity to God? Whoever, then chooses to be the world's friend, turns enemy to God. . . .

"Well, then submit yourselves to God; resist the devil, and he will fly from you: draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

"Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded; lament and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to depression; humble yourselves before the Lord, and then He will raise you up."

This means real repentance—a keeping buried of the old self.

#### How To Become Humble

True humility will always be accompanied with *thankfulness to God*. In the first place, you should be thankful for what God has already done for you. Your eyes are open to God's truth. You have been called to be among the first-fruits to enter the kingdom of God. You should be rejoicing greatly because many *have* earnestly sought but not found what God has chosen to reveal to you.

Rejoice whether you are called in high estate or low. Rejoice whether given a chief seat or a minor one (study Romans 12:4-9 and Luke 14:8-9). Rejoice that *you* have been bidden to the marriage of the Lamb (Matthew 22:1-14 and Revelation 19:7-9 and 21:9-27). Rejoice also in the strength and love of your perfect, all powerful, merciful Creator who delivers you from your weakness.

Take pride in *His* strength and exalt the name of your wonderful champion—if God is your strength who can overthrow you?

Beware that *you* do not try to take credit for the good which God has accomplished through you, however. Do not sit down among God's elect in garments of self-righteousness. Before God such self-righteous claims are filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Repent of past mistakes you have made and seek God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting *all* your care upon Him;

for He careth for you" (I Pet. 5:5-7).

#### God Must Soften Our Hearts

When you draw near to God and He to you, He will put a new spirit and attitude within you. He will replace your stony heart with a heart of "flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19).

You need to quit resisting God and the way He has opened to you, to help you become as clay in God's hands through the Holy Spirit, otherwise you will have to suffer the same horrible tribulations that are poured out upon the disobedient, described in Ezekiel 11. *Lay down YOUR STIFF WILL* and do the *will of God!*

Why? God tells why, "That they may walk in *My* statutes and keep *Mine* ordinances and do *them*: and they shall be *My* people, and I will be their God" (verse 20). God's will is reflected in this law.

The Spirit of God softens the heart, and as we come to have the mind of God we come to be in complete harmony with Him. There is no more clashing of wills. We won't argue; we won't want to do *something else*. We will be of one mind saying, "Thy will be done, O God, not mine." We should then set out to seek and obey God with all the zeal we can muster.

#### Live By Faith

Faith is one of the most important assets we can receive through the Holy Spirit. We read in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it* [faith] *is the gift of God.*" "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

God has also caused circumstances in this world to try you—even strike out at you and fill you with fear and trembling—*unless your faith in Him remains firm.*

Your family and friends may turn against you and say evil things against you because of your obedience to God. Only through faith in God can you find the courage to endure their wrath and scorn. The trying of this faith works "steadfastness," as the translation of James 1:3 should be.

Exercising faith doesn't end here. Even church brethren may sometimes seem to view you with suspicion and treat you coldly. It can try your *faith in God*. In the face of this you must not allow faults of His servants to cause you to doubt Him—you must still diligently seek to draw near unto Him. We are all human, all striving to overcome, but not all perfect—for only Christ is perfect. What will it take to separate

YOU from the love of God? Paul asked this question in Romans 8:35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Paul's faith persuaded him, "That neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."

Is your faith this strong? If not, you *must* take steps to strengthen it. There are two things you can do. The first is to ask God in prayer for more faith. As the apostles did in Luke 17:5. The second thing you can do is to *read and study* the words of God and to listen to them being proclaimed by His true servants. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

God has never told Christians that this life would be easy. Rather, in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter ye in at the strait [difficult, perilous] gate: For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Are you spiritually wise enough to choose the way to life?

#### Wisdom a Gift From God

You cannot *begin* to have God's *spirit of WISDOM* until you FEAR God and keep His commandments (Pr. 1:7). This keeping of the commandments is also love (see I John 5:3).

This simply means that God gives you His Divine Love and Wisdom through His gift of the Holy Spirit.

In Proverbs 4:7 God shows us that this wisdom (of God) is the principle thing. "Therefore get wisdom along with understanding."

How do you get wisdom? James 1:5 tells us: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and *it shall be given him*. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. . . ."

Again in James 4:8, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

If, then, we seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit by asking God, how shall we do it? Timidly? Passively? Just when we happen to think of it?

Hebrews 4:15-16 gives us part of the answer. "We have not an high priest

which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore *come boldly unto the throne* of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Notice further the conditions under which God will give wisdom: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine heart to understanding [it takes energy to listen and to remember and to concentrate]; yea, if thou *criest* after knowledge, and *liftest up thy voice for understanding*; if thou *seekest* her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasure (men don't seek treasure of silver and gold passively—the California gold rush is a good example of how frantically and untiringly men seek after such treasures). Then (if you seek the wisdom of God as frantically as men seek gold and silver) you shall understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path" (Prov. 2:1-4, 9).

Is this how you are seeking God's Holy Spirit, His wisdom, His faith, His laws of love? Do you pray often and, on your knees, cry out to God in desperate earnestness? Do you search energetically through the scriptures for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16)? Do you trust God, in complete faith and confidence, to lead you through the tests and trials and temptations of this life?

Perhaps the 23rd Psalm is personally applicable to you. Is Christ your Shepherd? And as you walk through this life with the threat of dishonor, ridicule and death ever before you, do you refuse to fear them because you know that God is with YOU. Is His rod and His staff, by which He chastizes and corrects you, a comfort to you? Do you thank God that, even in the presence of your enemies, He sustains and keeps you? And do you realize that you are greatly blessed in this truth?

If you have not grown in these things as much as you should (*and who among us has*), there is something you can do about it.

Dedicate your heart to overcoming and growing in the Spirit and character of God.

You need not be worried about position, honor or material necessities. God has promised to take care of those things in His time if you put your heart on the important things which He has already given you to do.

The most important thing He has given you to do is to seek His Holy Spirit, His wisdom, His faith, and His love with a zeal which proves YOU REALLY WANT IT. This is more precious than anything physical you can receive. If you do not value it more highly than the vain things in this life, you insult your Creator, you are still carnally motivated, and you are hurtling toward the lake of fire!

Here then is the easy-to-understand formula for salvation. *Repent* of your past transgressions and accept Christ's sacrifice which He made in your stead. Begin to obey God. **BE BAPTIZED** and **SEEK TO BELONG TO GOD**

Lay down your life of self-centered competitive striving and seek to live a life filled with and led by the Spirit of God. **RESIST** the desires of your human nature and draw near to God so that He will draw near to you. He will give you a mind which will enable you to live by the perfect, holy laws of God. *Christ will live His life within you*, bringing you into the grace and knowledge of spiritual things and guiding you in action characterized by love toward God and love toward neighbor.

Be zealous that you *do not neglect* the things that God has given you to do. Serve God, not with highmindedness, but with meekness so that you are pliable in the hands of your Creator.