

## Conversaion:Steps to Conversion

Are we witnessing a spiritual awakening? Dare we hope so? There is a surge of evangelistic fervor. Wonderful things are happening in some churches. The church around the world is growing But some pertinent questions must he asked, as gold is not the only metal that glitters.

Simplistic "Jesus saves" and "Heaven is yours now" messages adorn automobile or jeepney bumpers. Aren't these messages superficial? What does Jesus save from? How do we get to heaven? We are told that Christ will give us more abundant life. How is the word "abundant" understood in our age of rampant materialism? Does it say, "Come to Christ and you will he blessed materially?"

What impression do we give of the Gospel in our word and deed proclamation? In the desire to win converts, some evangelists neglect to preach the element of repentance. Richard Lovelace of Gordon-Conwell Seminary says that we lack in our time the deep conviction of sin and repentance. This element of the Gospel was not missing in the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles (Mark 1:15, Acts 3:19)

The Gospel contains the element of sin and repentance. Sin is that awful disease that plagues man and the world. Sin is not just a wrong committed against a neighbour, the breaking of an edict, or the causing of someone to lose face. Sin is at the deepest roots of our existence. The whole of man is corrupted by sin. The whole world is under the curse of sin. "Sin," says the Westminster Catechism, "is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." All the tears, sorrow, the suffering, and despair of mankind can be traced back to the disobedience of our first parents. "Through one man sin entered into the world." (Romans 5:12) In Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, we can see the awful trail of the serpent Satan, "the father" of lies (John 5:99). At the heart of all mankind's trouble is sin.. And "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:2 3 a)

How can we be delivered from the bondage of sin? Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3) We cannot turn to God without repentance. All, who refuse to obey God's call to turn to Him and have not repented of their sin, shall perish. Wherever the great missionary, the apostle Paul, went, he preached "repentance to God and faith toward Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21) We must turn to the God before Whom we tremble, but Who is also the God of hope. We need to recognize our profound spiritual bankruptcy and confess. "I've failed and I am sorry" What happens when we repent before God? The scripture gives us this wonderful promise, "Repent therefore, and turn again, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT." (Acts 3:10) When Satan came to the Reformer Martin Luther and reminded him of his sins, Luther told the devil to make a catalogue of them all and then write on this black and horrible list, "The blood cleanseth from all sins. " That blood was sufficient because it was the blood of the Son of God. (Col. 2:14)

What happens to the forgiven sinner? Repentance with tears leads to genuine joy. Through the Liberator Jesus Christ, we have been freed from sin. If you know what you are saved from, you are able to rejoice. True joy can only be found in the shadow of the cross and in the light of the open grave. In the midst of the sin and death of the world, we can rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 9:9) The key to joy is "in the Lord."

John Bunyan's classic *Pilgrim's Progress* describes the dramatic journey from sin to salvation and joy in Jesus Christ. Weighed down by the heavy burden of sin, which he cannot untie and let go on his own, Christian comes, in the course of his pilgrimage, to a highway "fenced on either side with a Wall . . . called Salvation." Running upwards, "burdened Christian" reaches a place "where stood a Cross, and a little below in the bottom, a Sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, writes Bunyan, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest', by His sorrow; and life, by His death." Then Christian gave three leaps from joy, and went on singing.

"Thus far did I come loaden with my sin,  
Nor could ought ease the grief that I was in,  
Till I came hither.. .  
Blest Cross! blest sepulchre!  
Blest rather be  
The Man that there was put to shame for me."

In our evangelistic fervor, we must not neglect to spell out in realistic and Scriptural terms the steps that lead to conversion and joy in Christ.

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