

Misconceptions of Conversion

Introduction. Spiritual conversion, often associated with religious or spiritual transformation, can be subject to various misconceptions. Not only is this unfortunate, but it's extremely dangerous as well.

Perspectives on spiritual conversion can differ widely based on individual beliefs, cultures, and traditions. We respect them and don't seek to criticize and mock them. But we do turn to the Bible because it's the best perspective of all.

So to help correct some modern conversion misconceptions, I want to study the New Testament conversion record of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40.

I. "Some Great Conversion Experience Must Occur"

- A. People have a lot of beliefs when it comes to conversion experiences:
 - 1. An angel must appear and/or speak to me as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:3-7, 22, 30-33).
 - 2. The Holy Spirit must speak to my heart as in the case of Philip (Acts 8:29).
 - 3. Baptism of the Holy Spirit as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18).
 - 4. A "bright light" vision as in the case of Paul (Acts 9:3-6; 22:10-16).
- B. The "experience" contention misses the point of all the conversions in the book of Acts. Notice the pattern in the examples provided for us in Acts:
 - 1. The Jews at Pentecost repented and were baptized (Acts 2:37-41).
 - 2. The Samaritans believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12-13).
 - 3. The eunuch believed, confessed, and was baptized (Acts 8:36-38).
 - 4. Saul was baptized (Acts 9:17-18).
 - 5. Cornelius believed and was baptized (Acts 10:43, 48).
 - 6. Lydia believed and was baptized (Acts 16:13-15).
 - 7. The jailer believed and was baptized (Acts 16:31-33).
 - 8. The Corinthians believed and were baptized (Acts 18:7-8).
 - 9. The Ephesians believed, repented and were baptized (Acts 19:1-5).

II. "Good and Moral People Don't Need Converting"

- A. Consider the character and morality of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:
 - 1. Powerful: Man of authority among the Ethiopians (v. 27).
 - 2. Prominent and trustworthy: Ethiopian secretary of the treasury (v. 27).
 - 3. Devout: Came to Jerusalem to worship, was returning (vv. 27-28).
 - 4. Scripture reader: Reading Isaiah aloud (vv. 28, 30).
 - 5. Meek: Unoffended at being questioned (v. 30).
 - 6. Humble: Recognized his own need for guidance (v. 31).
 - 7. Yearning: Sought additional help (vv. 31, 34).
- B. Most people would've never imagined that such a person would need salvation. It would be a given that he was already saved because of his righteous demeanor. There's a great contrast in concepts about such a person:
 - 1. The world would have considered him as "churched" and therefore saved.
 - 2. God considers him as lost and in need of salvation.

- C. Man needs salvation when he has transgressed God's laws (1 John 3:4). It's not a matter of comparative "goodness" for there's none righteous with God (Romans 3:9-12). If someone transgresses even one of God's laws, they become guilty of the whole law and in need of salvation (James 2:10-11).

III. "Just Preach 'Christ and Him Crucified'"

- A. Some want us to stick with "Christcentric" preaching and avoid subjects which might drive away those who could obey the gospel. The idea is, "Let's not be so doctrinal and emphasize more of God's grace and mercy."
- B. However, notice what Philip preached in Acts 8:5-6, 35:
 - 1. He preached about the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12).
 - 2. He preached about Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12).
 - 3. He preached about faith and baptism (Acts 8:12-13, 36-38).
- C. Paul, who preached "Christ and Him crucified" at Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:1-2), also used this as the basis for correcting many of their problems:
 - 1. He taught them about the person of Christ as the Savior of the world (1 Corinthians 2:8; 4:5; 15:1-4).
 - 2. He taught them about baptism (1 Corinthians 1:12-13; 6:9-11).
 - 3. He taught them about the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 18; 3:16-17; 4:17).
 - 4. He taught them about scriptural worship (1 Corinthians 14:15; 11:17-34; 16:1-2; 14:24-25).
 - 5. He taught them about moral purity in their lives (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
- D. Preaching "Christ and Him crucified" and all of its inclusive subjects is truly preaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

IV. "Baptism Isn't Important"

- A. Some of the various views include that it's unnecessary to salvation, or that it's a public testimony of your salvation, or that it simply identifies local church membership.
- B. Consider what the eunuch learned about baptism:
 - 1. Baptism gave him a connection to Christ (Acts 8:35-36; Romans 6:3-4).
 - 2. He needed to do some proper self-evaluation before baptism as to its form, purpose, and motivation (Acts 8:36-37). This shows it isn't for infants.
 - 3. The real purpose of baptism is plainly taught to be the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).
- C. This harmonizes fully with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47).

Conclusion. God isn't the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). Luke's record in Acts is understandable and able to be imitated. To comply with what Jesus stated in the Great Commission, we have to follow such examples.

Spirituality is a deeply personal aspect of the human experience. Nevertheless, it has to be guided by God's Word. It's crucial to approach discussions about spiritual conversion with an open mind, respecting the diversity of individual journeys but kindly showing the will of God in all things.