**“Are You *Converted,* or Just Baptized?”**

Intro: “It didn’t affect him much” story.

The title is a fair question. And there is a significant difference, although many may use the words synonymously.

Baptism *“washes away sins”* (Acts 22:16) and puts us *“into”* Christ (Gal.3:27). It requires that one *“believe”* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Mark 16:16) and is administered *“in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”* (Matt.28:19) for *“the remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38). Although it *“saves”* us (1Pet.3:21), it does not *“convert”* us, at least not completely…

The basic meaning of the word translated as **convert** is “to turn” or “turn around,” and *strepho* is so rendered in Matt.5:39; 7:6; 9:22; 16:23; John 20:14; *e.g.* But *strepho* also has a *spiritual* meaning and application, cf. Matt.18:3 and John 12:40. It can even be used as a noun, Rom.16:5 (*Epaenetus* is said to be the first *convert* to Christ from Asia) and 1Tim.3:6 (an elder must be a new *convert*). So what does this mean relative to our subject?

It means that although *baptism* is part of being *converted,* the two are not the same or synonymous. *Conversion* is a *turning away* from our “old self” and *turning to* or *into* a “new self,” Rom.6:17-18 (the word *strepho* is not found in these verses, but they do embody the idea of it). Certainly baptism is part of the process of becoming *dead to sin,* Rom.6:2-3, but we must also *rise/be resurrected* to *“walk in newness of life”* after baptism, Rom.6:4-7. This becoming *new* is the overall process becoming “converted,” or *turning from* the old and *turning to* or *changing into* something entirely *new* and different. Our introductory story well illustrates that the although town drunk was sincerely “baptized,” he did not *turn* or *change* into anything different than he was previously.

We know that to be *baptized* one must *believe* (Mark 16:16). So what does it take to be *converted?* What are the requirements of *conversion?*  While there may be others, let’s concentrate on **three *turns* that we must make to be *converted*:**

1. **We have to “turn/change” our *minds*- how we *think*.**

Part of the *mission* of John the Baptist was to *“to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and* (to *turn*) *the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous…”* Luke 1:17. Toward this purpose he preached *“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,”* Matt.3:2. *Repent* (*metanoeo*) literally means to *change one’s mind;* thus, for John’s audience (or us!) to be *turned/converted* from *disobedience* to *“the attitude of the righteous,”* they would have to *change their thinking!* In what way(s)?

Notice some specifics from Matt.3:5-12:

vv.5-6, Those being *baptized* also *“confessed their sins”-* they *mentally* and *verbally acknowledged their sins*, and thus their *need of turning/changing* to be saved. They were *baptized* because they were *converted/saved;* they were *baptized* in order to become *converted/saved.*

vv.7-9, In contrast (hence the *contrasting conjunction “But”* is used), the *Pharisees and Sadducees* came for baptism with *different “thinking,”* v.9a. They “thought” that *baptism* was just “something else” for them to do, but that they were *already saved* because of *familial relations,* v.9b. John makes it clear that this simply was not so, vv.7a,10,12. Thus, in order to *turn to Christ,* they would have to *turn* their “thinking” (v.9) and their “ways” (v.8).

So too must we. To be truly *converted,* we must “think” differently about: *who* determines what is “right” (God, not “me” or anyone else, Rom.3:4); *how* such determinations are made (with a *“It is written”* and *“thus says the Lord,”* Heb.5:12-14; Col.3:17); and *what* this means to me (that I *must do* what God says in His Word, John 12:48; 2Cor.5:10). Has you *mind been converted,* or were you just baptized?

1. **We have to “turn/change” our *hearts-* how we *feel.***

The biblical *heart* includes but is much more than just how we *feel.* Along with our *emotions,* our *desires, intentions,* and *passions* are also encompassed. For us to be *converted* rather than just *baptized,* our *hearts* (involving all of the above) must be *turned/changed* as well as our minds/thinking. Consider Simon in Acts 8 to illustrate this point:

vv.4-8, Philip *proclaimed Christ* to the city of Samaria, and *performed many miraculous “signs”* to prove that what he taught was from God.

vv.9-13, Simon, a *magician,* and like his fellow Samaritans, *believed* and was *baptized.*

vv.14-19, But Simon wanted to *buy* the ability to *pass on this miraculous power* to others from the Apostles (Peter and John in this instance).

Now notice carefully Peter’s words to him in these regards from vv.20-23. Though he had been rightfully *baptized,* Simon’s *thinking* was not *converted,* v.20. Why not? His *“heart was not right,”* v.21. But what does this mean? His *“the intentions”* of it were not *turned/converted,* v.22. He thought he could *buy “the gift of God,”* v.20b and then *sell it at a profit,* v.22b**.** The point? Though Simon’s *body* had been *baptized,* his *heart/desire/intention/emotion* was still set on *earthly things.* Paul’s *“heart’s desire and prayer”* for his fellow citizen was *“for their salvation,”* Rom.10:1; but Simon’s was to *profit* from them!

Unless our *hearts* (and minds, cf. Col.3:1ff) are *turned* away from the things of *this* life and *converted* to Christ and the things of heaven, our baptism will have little lasting effect, Col.3:12-16. Has your *heart been converted,* or were you just baptized?

1. **We have to “turn/change” our *purpose-* how we *act.***

We have the tendency to work on “the hind leg” of most problems- meaning we concentrate on *effects* rather than *causes.* We seek to modify *behavior* without endeavoring to understand let alone change the *thinking* and *desires* that produce it. Jesus addressed this problem to the Pharisee(s) in Luke 11:37-41. This man was concerned about *cleanliness* only from an *outward* activities and appearances point of view, vv.37-38; but Jesus made it clear that if the *inside* was *cleaned/turned* (or *converted*), the *outside* would take care of itself, vv.39-41!

We often fail to be *converted* by baptism because we don’t really *turn/change* our *minds* and *hearts!* Though *baptized,* we continue *thinking* and *feeling* the same way(s) about our lives and the things of *this* world. Unless we focus our *minds* on the *things that are pleasing to God* (Eph.5:10) rather than ourselves, and set our *heart’s desires, intentions,* and *passions* on heaven, all efforts to control our actions or behavior will surely come to naught! Has your *purpose in life been converted,* or were you just baptized?

**Conclusion: Believing and being baptized into Christ is vitally important. But unless we are truly *turned/changed* in *mind, heart,* and *purpose,* we are *baptized* but not *converted!*  Although we *submit* to baptism, it is mostly an act *performed by another on us.*  But *converting* your *mind, heart,* and *purpose* in life is something you must do yourself, Matt.18:3! Becoming *like little children* means *believing* (in mind), *trusting* (in heart), and *obeying* (in action). Are you *converted,* or just baptized?**