

A Study On The Nature of Conversion

By Pastor Harry Richardson

True repentance results in a turning from sin and an inner renewal which can only be brought about by God, who draws people to himself and who, through Jesus Christ, gives forgiveness and new life.

Conversion as turning to God

Turning back to God

[Dt 4:30–31](#); [Lk 1:16–17](#)

Deuteronomy 4:30–31 (NASB95) — 30 “When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. **31** “For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Luke 1:16–17 (NASB95) — 16 “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. **17** “It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

See also [Dt 30:2–3](#); [Dt 30:10](#); [Lk 22:32](#); [Jas 5:19–20](#)

Deuteronomy 30:2–3 (NASB95) — 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, **3** then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

Deuteronomy 30:10 (NASB95) — 10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

Luke 22:32 (NASB95) — 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

James 5:19–20 (NASB95) — 19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, **20** let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Turning from idolatry

[Ac 14:15](#)

Acts 14:15 (NASB95) — **15** and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.

See also [1 Sa 7:3](#); [Je 3:12–13](#); [Je 4:1–2](#); [1 Th 1:9–10](#)

1 Samuel 7:3 (NASB95) — **3** Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”

Jeremiah 3:12–13 (NASB95) — **12** “Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, ‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the LORD; ‘I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious,’ declares the LORD; ‘I will not be angry forever. **13** ‘Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 4:1–2 (NASB95) — **1** “If you will return, O Israel,” declares the LORD, “Then you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, And will not waver, **2** And you will swear, ‘As the LORD lives,’ In truth, in justice and in righteousness; Then the nations will bless themselves in Him, And in Him they will glory.”

1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 (NASB95) — **9** For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, **10** and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Turning from sinful ways

[2 Ki 17:13–14](#); [Is 55:6–7](#)

2 Kings 17:13–14 (NASB95) — **13** Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” **14** However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.

Isaiah 55:6–7 (NASB95) — **6** Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. **7** Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

See also [2 Ki 13:11](#); [2 Ki 14:24](#); [2 Ki 15:9](#); [Je 18:11](#); [Je 25:5](#); [Eze 18:23](#); [Da 9:13](#)

2 Kings 13:11 (NASB95) — **11** He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin, but he walked in them.

2 Kings 14:24 (NASB95) — **24** He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.

2 Kings 15:9 (NASB95) — **9** He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.

Jeremiah 18:11 (NASB95) — **11** “So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.” ’

Jeremiah 25:5 (NASB95) — **5** saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever;

Ezekiel 18:23 (NASB95) — **23** “Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?”

Daniel 9:13 (NASB95) — **13** “As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.

Conversion as a turning away from unbelief to faith

It is linked to repentance

[Ac 3:19](#)

Acts 3:19 (NASB95) — **19** “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

See also [Eze 14:6](#); [Eze 18:30](#); [Ac 26:20](#)

Ezekiel 14:6 (NASB95) — 6 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

Ezekiel 18:30 (NASB95) — 30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,” declares the Lord GOD. “Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you.

Acts 26:20 (NASB95) — 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

It is linked to coming to faith

[Ac 11:21](#)

Acts 11:21 (NASB95) — 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

Conversion brings new life

It results in a transformed life

[2 Co 5:17](#)

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB95) — 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

See also [Ro 12:2](#); [2 Co 3:18](#); [Ga 6:14–15](#)

Romans 12:2 (NASB95) — 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NASB95) — 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Galatians 6:14–15 (NASB95) — 14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **15** For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

It is symbolised in baptism

[Ro 6:3–4](#)

Romans 6:3–4 (NASB95) — **3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

See also [Col 2:12](#); [Col 3:1–3](#)

Colossians 2:12 (NASB95) — **12** having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Colossians 3:1–3 (NASB95) — **1** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. **3** For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

It demands a new lifestyle

[Ho 12:6](#); [Mt 18:3–4](#)

Hosea 12:6 (NASB95) — **6** Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

Matthew 18:3–4 (NASB95) — **3** and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. **4** “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

See also [Ga 5:22–24](#); [Eph 4:1](#); [Eph 5:8–11](#); [1 Pe 2:11–12](#)

Galatians 5:22–24 (NASB95) — **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Ephesians 4:1 (NASB95) — **1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Ephesians 5:8–11 (NASB95) — **8** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light **9** (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **10** trying to learn what is pleasing to the

Lord. **11** Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

1 Peter 2:11–12 (NASB95) — **11** Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. **12** Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Conversion brings a new relationship with God

It brings a new status

[Ga 4:7](#)

Galatians 4:7 (NASB95) — **7** Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

See also [Ga 3:26–29](#); [1 Jn 3:1](#); [1 Pe 2:9–10](#)

Galatians 3:26–29 (NASB95) — **26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. **27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

1 John 3:1 (NASB95) — **1** See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

1 Peter 2:9–10 (NASB95) — **9** But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD'S OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; **10** for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

It brings a new understanding

[2 Co 3:15–16](#)

2 Corinthians 3:15–16 (NASB95) — **15** But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; **16** but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

See also [Je 31:34](#); [Heb 8:11](#)

Jeremiah 31:34 (NASB95) — 34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Hebrews 8:11 (NASB95) — 11 “AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

Conversion is a work of God

God turns people to himself

[Je 24:7](#); [La 5:21](#)

Jeremiah 24:7 (NASB95) — 7 ‘I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

Lamentations 5:21 (NASB95) — 21 Restore us to You, O LORD, that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old,

See also [1 Ki 8:58](#); [Je 31:18](#); [Eze 36:26–27](#); [Jn 6:44](#); [Jn 15:16](#); [Eph 2:12–13](#)

1 Kings 8:58 (NASB95) — 58 that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.

Jeremiah 31:18 (NASB95) — 18 “I have surely heard Ephraim grieving, ‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised, Like an untrained calf; Bring me back that I may be restored, For You are the LORD my God.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 (NASB95) — 26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

John 6:44 (NASB95) — 44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 15:16 (NASB95) — 16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

Ephesians 2:12–13 (NASB95) — 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the

covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

God gives new birth

[Jas 1:17-18](#)

James 1:17-18 (NASB95) — **17** Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. **18** In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

See also [Jn 3:3-6](#); [Tt 3:4-5](#); [1 Pe 1:23](#)

John 3:3-6 (NASB95) — **3** Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” **4** Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” **5** Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. **6** “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Titus 3:4-5 (NASB95) — **4** But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, **5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

1 Peter 1:23 (NASB95) — **23** for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.