

## THE ELEMENTS OF “CONVERSION”

Jesus said: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 18:3, KJV). It is thus imperative that we comprehend and fulfill the requirements of conversion.

*Convert* is from a Greek word that means to change, to turn from one way to another. It involves acting rather than passive waiting to be acted upon. The New Testament reveals three distinct areas of change and three distinct behaviors that produce them in Gospel conversion:

1. **Faith changes conviction.** Consider an unbeliever who has given little or no thought to the existence of God or claims of Christ. He knows that his car, house, watch, and computer are all products of careful and intelligent design, engineering, and production. He thinks of his own body and the universe and applies the same reasoning concerning them. He begins reading the Bible and sees it saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). He reads in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ amazing miracles and is convinced that He is the Son of God (John 20:30–31). His faith takes deep root as he continues to read (Rom. 10:17); his conviction has turned from unbelief to faith. This step is the necessary beginning of conversion, for it is not possible to please God apart from faith (Heb. 11:6). However, there is no real conversion apart from a change of life: “even so faith apart from works is dead” (Jam. 2:26b).
2. **Repentance changes the mind and life.** *Repentance* refers to a change of mind and will—a decision to turn from one way to another. This life-change is the natural result of sincere mind/will change. Real faith produces real repentance. The aforesaid

believer reads of God's goodness and weeps over his godless life (Rom. 2:5; 2 Cor. 7:10). This stirs his determination to cease all sinful behavior and live so as to please God. He begins to "Bring forth...fruit worthy of repentance" (Mat. 3:8). Repentance is essential in conversion, for without it one will perish (Luke 13:3). However, one's past sins still separate him from God at this point.

**3. Baptism changes the relationship with God.** Peter commanded believers on Pentecost, "repent ye and be baptized ...unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2: 37–38). Until they did so the guilt of their sins still separated them from God. Baptism is necessary because Christ ordained it as the act in which His sin-cleansing blood cleanses the sinner of his guilt (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3; Heb. 9:22; Rev. 7:14). Only **after** baptism is one saved, fully converted (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 22:16).

These are the elements of conversion.

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