

True and False Conversion

by Richard Owen Roberts

True conversion involves a genuine transformation of the heart, while false conversion is a superficial or emotional experience that does not lead to lasting change.

Duration: 1:13:40

Scripture: Matthew 6:24, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "True Conversion", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon delves into the theme of conversion, emphasizing the distinction between true and false conversion. It highlights the importance of genuine repentance and faith in experiencing a lasting and transformative conversion by God. Various real-life examples are shared to illustrate the visible, desirable, thorough, unique, and enduring nature of true conversion, emphasizing the need for a personal examination of one's own conversion experience.

Transcript

Our theme this morning is conversion, and the title in the bulletin inserts these words true and false conversion, clearly indicating that there is a possibility of either. I don't think the church in America is facing very realistically the problem of false conversion, but it definitely needs to. One of the major evangelistic ministries in this country did a study of the results of its own crusades and found that of the crusades in the United States of America, 92% of all of the reported converts were nowhere in the life of the church two years after their supposed conversion.

Another major ministry hired statisticians to study the results of a major campaign that they put on that covered the whole nation, and they found 97% of all of the reported converts were nowhere in the church two years after that huge campaign. Now those are shocking statistics. If in earlier years an evangelistic ministry had occurred and there were 3% of the so-called converts that had fallen away, they would have been beside themselves with concern and asking earnestly what did we do wrong that we had such awful results.

Now if you say anything to the leaders of these campaigns with these remarkably high fall-away rates, they say as they have said to me on a number of occasions, your problem is you are too negative. You should rejoice in the 3% that remain instead of being troubled by the 97% that have fallen away. And of course I am forced then to ask them was any harm done to the 97%? And most of us realize that when a person has been told that they are converted, when they are not, it is almost as if they have received an

immunization shot.

Anybody who tries to talk to them afterward will in some fashion say I tried that and there is nothing to it. Or I don't need it, I have already accepted Christ. So there is a very real problem of false conversion and the relatively minor portion of those who call themselves Christians have ever truly been converted.

So as yesterday when speaking about repentance I asked you to listen with both ears, I would make the same recommendation this morning. Let us listen to be certain that we ourselves have truly been converted. But also let us listen for the sake of multitudes around us who think they are Christians and don't really understand why they have so little evidence of Christ in their life.

In our own hometown I have been working now for several months with a man who thought he had become a Christian when he was in university. But for years and years he found himself addicted to pornography. And then some months back God really began to lay hold of his heart.

And he found himself miraculously delivered from what had held him in its grip for a very long time. And the question that he has put to me on a number of occasions, do you think I was converted when in the university or more recently when Christ brought about this wonderful deliverance in my life? Well I'm not in a position to answer that question. I think it's sufficient to be able to say, well this one thing I know, I was blind but now I see.

Isn't it wonderful to know that Christ has truly brought me into right relationship with himself. But if sin has power over me and Christ does not, if I'm still identified with the world and not with the family of God, then I have strong reason to question, have I truly been converted? Now most of you I trust understand that conversion is a part of a wonderful arrangement of divine truth that God has given us. Earlier this year I completed a series of 24 sermons on the doctrine of salvation, which was given the series title of the Gospel Umbrella.

And while I will not give any real details about that series, we had three sermons on the doctrines upon which true salvation has the character of God, the law of God, and the depravity of man. If a person does not understand the character of God, his holiness, if they have not been overwhelmed by the knowledge that God is totally without sin and God hates sin, what hope is there of a true conversion on their part? If they do not understand the place of the law of God, if they do not find themselves condemned by God's law, what hope is there of true conversion? If they do not at least in some fashion understand depravity, and after all in its simplest form, depravity merely indicates it is utterly impossible for a man to walk a straight line. He can set his heart a thousand times to do right, but depravity guarantees that he will not succeed, that he cannot walk day after day in a straight line pleasing to God.

So three great biblical truths that underlie the whole issue of salvation. Then I spoke of four immensely consequential doctrines which describe God's part in our salvation, election, atonement, regeneration, and effectual calling. You see the problem with many is, as far as I know, all these different terms that are used in connection with salvation are all synonyms.

So I listen to people preach who use interchangeably justification and conversion and regeneration and salvation as if they all meant the same thing. No, no. Every term that the Holy Spirit uses has its own meaning and consequence.

May I simply say to you that all of us surely must realize that the Holy Spirit is more intelligent than we are. I don't say to Brother Kurt, I'm sure glad you wore a black suit today. Well, why don't I say that? Well, because you didn't wear a black suit today.

By the grace of God, I know the difference between black and brown or black and gray or black and green. Surely the Holy Spirit is much wiser than I am. And he wouldn't describe as green that which was red.

And he wouldn't speak of very separate and distinct matters as if they were all one and the same. But after God has done his part in salvation, then there are responsibilities that fall upon us. We are required to seek God.

We are required to be contrary, to be broken. We must take the character of God and the law of God and our inability to walk in a straight line and realize our hopelessness and feel the brokenness of our lostness. And if we don't do our part, it is not very wise to suppose that conversion can result.

So seeking God, brokenness and contrition, and of course repentance and faith. You can't leave any of those elements out if there is to be a true conversion. The false conversions result because the essential components of salvation are not included in the experience of the individual.

And most of us know when we have sought God, when we have experienced the brokenness and contrition, when we have laid hold of those two blessed gifts of repentance and faith, then God steps in again and does his part. God justifies us. God adopts us into his family.

God himself converts us. And then God moves us forward in sanctification. So the essence of what I've said is simply this.

False conversions occur because the essential components of true conversion are absent. Yesterday in speaking about repentance, I distinguished between fruits and roots. That when one comes to true repentance, they must not only repent of what they have done, but of what they are.

That indeed if one only repents of what they are, if they repent of the fruits of sin that appear on the branches of their lives, then with the roots of sin still in place, other fruits will appear. Now false conversions occur because there has been no true repentance and no true exercise of faith. And having said that, it's very urgent to again suggest that you be absolutely sure of your repentance, using the guidelines even suggested yesterday.

But we must do the same thing with faith. Multitudes of people believe that they are Christians because they acknowledge the validity of certain truths. But is faith mental assent? Is faith agreement with essential facts? No.

No, it is much more than that. So if there is to be true conversion, not false conversion, there must be true repentance and true faith. So a false repentance will result in a false conversion, and a false faith will result in a false conversion.

And perhaps the simplest way that I know to analyze my faith, for you to analyze your faith, is this simple procedure. There may be a better way that you know, but I don't know of anything more simple and straightforward than this. How many letters are there in the word faith? What a heavy question, no wonder you're looking so blank.

Obviously, five. But now, let each of the letters in the word faith represent an aspect of true faith. Let's think just for a moment now about Hebrews 11, that wonderful chapter on faith.

The letter F. Let that signify in your mind, facts in focus. Just dwell on that with me for a moment. Facts in focus.

How does Hebrews 11 begin? Now, faith gives substance to things that are hoped for. It provides the evidence of things not seen. A person who has received the gift of faith from God is not the person living in uncertainty concerning the future and the unseen.

No, indeed, they have been provided absolute evidence concerning the future and the unseen. Such evidence, in fact, that they are much more in the grip of the unseen and the future than they are in the here and the now, in the tasteable, in the touchable. Now, think seriously about that.

Could you say concerning yourself, you have such overwhelming evidence of eternity, such overwhelming evidence, such absolute clarity concerning the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that you are much more concerned about the eternal than you are about the temple? Instead, for multitudes of people who are trying to be Christians, it's more like an insurance matter. Now, let's suppose that just yesterday an insurance agent had gotten hold of one of the young people here in the fellowship. Let's think in terms of an 18-year-old, and the insurance agent has been after them, trying to get them interested in life insurance.

Now, what does an 18-year-old care about life insurance? But, the insurance agent is putting the pressure on, don't you know one of these days you're going to die? Who's going to look after your offspring? I'm not even married, let alone offspring. Oh, but you've got to think in terms of the future. And so the agent begins to appeal, what you need is a 10 million dollar life insurance.

10 million dollars? Right, where? Whoever heard of such? So the pressure is on, but then finally the agent says, you can't go wrong, it's free. All you got to do is to sign on the dotted line, and you've got 10 million dollars worth of life insurance. Come on now, don't fool around.

How can it be free? Oh, it is, I assure you, it's free. Well, even if you don't think you need it, if it's free, and all you got to do is to sign on the dotted line, why not? But for multitudes of people, they're not persuaded that there is a God. They're not at all clear that they are going to face an angry God.

They've never been certain that there is a heaven or a hell, but some evangelistic agent has said, it's free, all you have to do is sign on the dotted line. And so millions of Americans have signed the eternal insurance prophecy, and are therefore nothing other than false converts, because they don't have faith. They don't have that element from God that makes the unseen absolute, and the future totally certain.

A person with faith finds himself more gripped by the eternal, by the future, than by the here and now. If you are not in the grip of the certainty of eternity, of the absoluteness of God, and his character, and his law, and of depravity, and of your own hopelessness, and of your absolute need of a savior, Christ will not be for you an insurance prophecy. Or take the letter F, facts and focus, active obedience.

Every person described in Hebrews 11 was given something to do, and they did it, without argument. And some of what they did seemed utterly preposterous. God appeared to Noah, and told him to get busy building an ark.

It took him 120 years to build that gigantic ship. I can't even figure out how he did it. We don't have even a hint that anybody helped him.

It's perfectly plain that he was the subject of taunt and persecution. How did he get the huge beams in place? I don't know how he did it. All I know is God told him to do it, and he did it.

And to say that you have faith, and yet you will not do what God tells you, is simply ridiculous. What you've got is not faith. Faith is active obedience.

And the third letter, I, is not one of the glorious aspects of Hebrews 11. The fact that mere men entered into such intimacy with God, that it can be said of persons like Enoch. Enoch walked with God for 300 years, and he was loved, because God took him.

And Abraham, my, my, my, my. And the cost of intimacy with God, illustrated both in the lives of Abraham, and in the life of Moses, and in the lives of all the others mentioned. So, facts in focus.

Active obedience. Intimacy with God. T-F-A-I-T.

Tenacious valor. Toward the end of Hebrews 11, it says, time would tell me to tell of, and then it gives a list of persons who suffered incredibly. Some were sawn asunder.

Some lived in dens in the earth. All of them faced some horrible cost, and yet they hung on tenaciously, with great valor or courage. And finally, H, with hope.

Hope that enables one to be so thoroughly committed to the eternal, to the all-wise God, that nothing deters them from their path. So, what I've simply said is, it's rather foolish to think that it's possible to have a true conversion and a false repentance, or a false faith. The two blessed gifts of repentance and faith, when laid hold of, and then vigorously exercised, result in conversion.

A wonderful and enduring, real and a blessed conversion. Now, let's turn to the scripture, and I'll read a chapter and focus upon a single verse. Second Corinthians, chapter 5. I'll give you a moment to turn to the passage.

Second Corinthians, chapter 5. We know that if the earthly tent, which is our home, is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. For indeed, in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven. Inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked.

For indeed, while we were in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life. Now, he who prepared for us this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Let me simply pause now, and make two very urgent and practical suggestions to you.

There are multitudes, of course, of passages that help us to recognize whether a conversion is true or false, but I would recommend two specifically to you at this time. Notice again these words in verse 5. He has prepared us for this very purpose, for God has given us the Spirit as a pledge. Sometime soon, sit down with Romans 8 and observe carefully the seven evidences of conversion that are offered in Romans 8 that are related directly to the Spirit given to us as a pledge.

I'll not tell you what those seven are. I'll give you an assignment to make a study of that and gain the blessing of the Spirit as a pledge, as the one who does bring true assurance of faith. And the second passage that I commend to you is the book of 1 John.

Sometime soon, carefully go through 1 John. Mark every occurrence of the word know, K-N-O-W. When you've got them all carefully noted, then compile them together.

What you'll discover is a list of 12 ways whereby we know that our conversion is valid, that we truly are sons and daughters of God. But let me read on with verse 6. Therefore, being always of good courage and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, I say, and we prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Therefore, also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God.

And I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. We are not again commending ourselves to you, but we're giving you an occasion to be proud of us, that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.

If we are of a sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ consoles us, controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him for whom he died.

And he rose again on their behalf. Therefore, from now on, we recognize no man according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer. Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.

The old things passed away. Behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ through God, as though God were entrusting through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made him who knew no sin to be sinned on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Now our focus is upon verse 17, although the chapter in its entirety would be worth hours of very careful consideration. This is obviously one of the regularly utilized texts on the subject of conversion. May I put the matter of conversion in this simple form? Suppose that on your kitchen table there is placed one evening a lovely little vat that is filled with buds, and you go to bed at night and you've got those buds on the table, but when you come back in the morning, one of those buds has opened up, and there is a beautiful flower, and throughout the day all of those buds open up.

Conversion is like the opening up of the bud into a beautiful flower. Is it possible to see justification occurring in a person's life? No, that's an inner work of God that is not visible to the naked eye. Is it possible to watch a person adopted into the family of God? No, that's an inner work that God is

performing, but conversion speaks about that glorious transformation.

And some of us have had the joy of watching a great many people brought into a glorious conversion. I'm thinking of a telephone call that I received as a young pastor in Portland, Oregon. An unusual kind of a call, really.

When I picked up the phone, these are the words I heard. Harry Mendenhall here. Dorothy and I wish to join your church.

Mendenhall? That's not a name that I'm familiar with. Have we ever met? No, never. And yet you wish to join the church? Yes.

Have you been in attendance? No, we have never come. And yet you wish to join? Yes. I said, would it be possible for us to sit down and talk? That's why I called.

I hoped you would come to our home. Well, yes. But when? Well, he said it would be wonderful if you could come now, but at least as soon as possible.

I said, give me directions. I'll be there shortly. I arrived in this lovely home on Willamette Boulevard.

If you know the city of Portland, Oregon, it's a beautiful boulevard that overlooks the river and the downtown section of Portland, Oregon. I was welcomed at the door and ushered in and given a seat. And then the request was repeated, we wish to join the church.

Well, I said, let me explain something to you. I've not been pastor very long. This is a church that has never been focused on the Bible.

But somehow they ended up with the constitution. You see, it's a congregational church. And somehow, although the church has never truly been a congregational church, it's got the documents.

And in the documents, it says, membership in this church is severely limited to those persons who can provide credible evidence of regeneration. Can you provide credible evidence of regeneration? He said to me, I'm an attorney. I know what the word credible means.

I certainly know what the word evidence means. I supposed even that I knew what the word regeneration means, but I don't have any idea what those words put together mean. Ah, then I said, that means you're not eligible to join the church.

I thought churches were looking for members. Oh, I said somehow, but we're looking to help people. Well, you might as well leave.

No, I said, I'm not ready to leave. Will you permit me to ask some questions? Well, yes, what? I said, I obviously don't know you. We've only just been chatting for a few minutes, but I don't get the impression that you're one of these reckless fellows that suddenly decides something and then changes his mind.

Well, no, he said, that's true. That's certainly true. Well, I said, would you mind telling me what led you to this decision to join the church? Yeah, she said, I'll tell you.

You see, I'm 50, my wife Dorothy is 40. We both were married and divorced. The truth is, we've lived a rotten life.

He said, we have two little girls. For the last several weeks, I've been bringing them to the Sunday school at your church. Yesterday, or Sunday, he said, I brought the girls and you have that area where the children meet.

I don't know who the lady is, but she was moaning because the piano player had called in sick and she didn't know how they were going to do the music. So I said to her, look lady, I play the piano a little. Mind you, not anything you'd be apt to use in Sunday school, but if you have a book, maybe I could help you.

Oh, she said, wonderful. Sit right down. We're ready to start.

Here's the book and here's the song. And he said, I looked at it and I began to play and suddenly I realized I went to Sunday school once in my entire life. And the song they sang was the song she wanted me to play.

Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so. I came home and I said to my wife, I'm ready for a change.

And she said, I am too. He said, let's join that church. So I said to them, now I understand what's happening.

I have a little book in my pocket. Before I hand it to you, will you promise to master the book? Now listen here, he said, I'm not ready to make any false promises. What's that book? I said, it's a little off print of the gospel of John.

And what do you mean by master it? I said to go over it and over it and over it until you can honestly say, I believe everything it says. And I'm doing everything it calls upon me to do. He said, give me that book.

I like the way you do things. So I stood and I headed toward the door. And he said, you'll be hearing from us in a very short time.

The phone rang again, Harry Mendenhall here. Could you come straight away? And they met me at the door with a glorious glow upon their faces. And they said, we are prepared to provide credible evidence of regeneration.

And they were. I found out he was the vice president of a large shipbuilding company in Portland, a man with very wide influence. And on many occasions thereafter, someone who worked with him in the shipbuilding industry would say to me, something happened to Harry that is very, very real.

He was, you see, both born of the spirit, justified, adopted into the family of God, and gloriously converted. And for all the years of his life that followed, there was overwhelming evidence that God had truly done a glorious work in him. Some weeks after they became members of the church, they invited me to their home for dinner after the Sunday morning service.

And he said, I don't want you to sit down yet. He said, I want you to come with me. He took me around this lovely home, and looking out every window on the main floor, he would point out, now look at that bush.

Isn't that absolutely beautiful? Before I was converted, I never in my life saw a flower. He took me to the front of the house, overlooking the Willamette River, and he described all that could be seen. And he talked about sunsets and sunrises.

He said, I loved your sermon this morning, but you omitted one tremendously important thing. When one becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, they receive new eyes. He said, all I saw for years was money and women.

Now I see what God has created, and it is absolutely glorious. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. All things have passed away.

All things have become new. Now that verse makes it crystal clear that the change that occurs in conversion is visible. Why would you say, behold, did you ask someone to step into a dark closet, shut the door so it's absolutely black, and say, now behold the clothes that are hanging there? No, of course not.

When it says, behold, it's an invitation, have a look now. And what a lovely thing to see a person who lived 50 years in the blackness of the night of their soul, who suddenly is able to see all that God has done, and is filled with joy and rejoicing. This text is an invitation for all to have a look.

When there's a new convert who is a true convert, not a false convert, the whole world that knows that person is beckoned, behold. Come now, have a look at this Mary, or this Harry, this Jack, or this Jane. See what God himself has done.

So it's an invitation to others, and it's an invitation to us personally. Every single person here should be able to look in the mirror and say, why it's incredibly glorious. This is what I want.

This is what I am. Oh God, thank you for the change that you have brought about in my life. When a person can discover no change in their life, then indeed they must be suspicious that anything wonderful has happened.

When I say to someone, step up now and behold, it's like an invitation to them to evaluate what they see. They ought to be able to study the new convert and say, I don't think it's legitimate. I don't see any evidence of anything real.

Or they ought to say, I can hardly believe the transformation that has occurred in this person's life. And every one of us should be a glorious living example of the power of Christ to transform the life. Our thoughts should be transformed.

Our attitudes should be transformed. Our motives should be transformed. Our actions should be transformed.

Our words should be transformed. Our feelings should be transformed. And transformed to such a degree, as I've already suggested, that people are convinced.

You see the big problem in America is most people don't believe in Christ because they don't believe in the converts that they know. And how could you believe the profession of a false convert? It's the true converts, gloriously transformed by the power of Christ that causes the world to sit up and take notice and ask, as the executives I met in that shipbuilding asked me, what happened to Harry Mendenhall? What I see is glorious. And for a pastor, what is more wonderful than to preside at the funeral of a true convert? For people who've known them as they were in their sin and as they became in Christ.

For hundreds of them to gather and to stand in awe. And for multitudes of them to say, whatever happened to Harry was real. There's no question about it.

It's what I needed to have happen to me. So the change is visible, but it must also be said it's desirable. It provokes wonder and amazement and admiration.

And because God is the author of conversion, then obviously it's going to be good. Everything that God does is good. And just as at the time of the creation, he was able to step back at the end of each day and overlook what he had done and say, it is good.

So every true convert bears the testimony, this is God's doings and it is good. But no false convert ever brings glory to God or ever inspires people with wonder and amazement. And because conversion is the work of God, it is unique.

God doesn't run a foundry in which he stamps out thousands of identical converts. Isn't it amazing how God himself loves variety. We've all grown used to the idea that every individual having their own fingerprints.

But it's harder for me to recognize what is a demonstrated fact that every snowflake, now maybe you don't get much snow here, but believe me, where we live, this last winter, I mean we had snow six foot deep. And to think that every single snowflake is different from every other snowflake. Why should we even want every convert to look like every other convert? No, no, as I said, conversion is the work of God.

It is glorious to behold thousands and thousands of believers, every one of them in love for Christ and bringing joy to God. And yet every one of them different from every other one. There is something truly unique and wonderful about conversions.

And God himself uses the most remarkable circumstances in bringing people to true conversion. Quite some time ago, I was involved in starting a church in Western City. And it was organized along historic congregational lines, and it had the same clause in the constitution that I've already mentioned.

Membership is severely limited to those who can provide credible evidence of regeneration. And in a series of Sunday night meetings, we were giving the opportunity for those who wish to become charter members to provide credible evidence of regeneration. And dozens of people did so.

But on the final Sunday that had been appointed, an older woman passed by me at the door after the morning service. And I looked at her lovingly, and I said to her, Betty, is it your intention to become a charter member of this church? Tears just fluttered down her cheeks. She said, Mr. Roberts, you know perfectly well I'm not a Christian.

Oh, I said, Betty, I know that. But what I don't understand is why. She said, it's impossible.

I can't become a Christian. You can't? No, she said, I can't. Why do you say that? She said, I don't feel what you have to feel to be converted.

I said, what's that? Oh, she said, you know my husband Eddie, he's just full of feeling. I don't feel the way Eddie feels. So suddenly, this is what the Lord gave me to say.

Betty, did you ever make an onion sandwich? She looked at me in astonishment. She said, I despise onion sandwiches. But Eddie likes them.

Yes, I have made onion sandwiches for him. Then would it be correct for me to say, you don't feel about onion sandwiches the way Eddie does? She said, that's certainly so. Now I said, let me get personal.

Do you believe that Eddie feels about you the way you feel about him? Oh, she said, Eddie's a good man. I know in his own way he loves me. But I know he doesn't love me the way I love him.

So then, Betty, you don't feel about onion sandwiches the way he does? You don't feel about him the way he feels about you? Why are you so sure that you have to feel what he feels in order to become a Christian? She said, what are you saying? Are you telling me I don't have to feel anything? I said, tell me, Betty, did you ever feel shame over your sin? Oh, she said, it's gotten so awful. I can't even sing the songs. I'm so ashamed of myself.

I wish I were not the awful sinner I am. And I said, tell me this also, Betty. Did you ever feel the love of Christ? Do you feel that Christ loves you? Oh, she said, I don't understand it.

Why should he love someone wicked like me? But, Betty, do you feel that he does? Oh, I do feel that. Yes, I know, but I don't understand why. I said, Betty, that's all the feeling you need, shame for your sin and love of Christ for you.

Oh, she slipped out. But when the meeting was called to order that evening, she came running down the aisle, and she said to the gathered congregation, let me tell you what happened to me this afternoon. And she was gloriously converted.

It was very different from anybody else in the congregation, but it was very real and wonderful. The change is visible. The change is desirable.

The change is thorough. It's open to all those who believe. Notice again what verse 17 says, therefore, if any man or any woman or any youth is in Christ, he is a new creature.

But the great focus is that all things become new. All the wickedness of the past is dealt with by Christ. Everything is changed.

So as I reported earlier, even a man like Harry Mendenhall, who lived for 50 years in sin and in complete rejection of Christ, never ever having been to church, only once as a child in Sunday school, and yet the Spirit of God totally transformed both he and his wife. So a new center of attraction, a new heart, a new mind, new desires, new commandments, even a new song. All things become new.

A new agenda, new ears, new eyes, new hands. And the glorious thing is the change wrought by Christ is permanent. It's not a few days of glorious joy.

And then back to what you were. After all, conversion is the work of God. And God doesn't do anything haphazardly or carelessly or indifferently.

Now, I haven't denied that there are loads of false converts, but I've made it clear a false convert is a result of false repentance and false faith. And isn't it lovely that I can stand here this morning and say to all, oh, God extends as free gifts repentance and faith. And as you reach out and receive and act upon these precious gifts, you will be justified.

You will be adopted into the family of God and you will be converted. And that conversion is valid and enduring because it is the work of God himself. I ask you to listen for yourself and to listen for others.

Soul winning does not require that we follow certain formulas. It really requires that we heed the leadership of the Holy Spirit. And I've told you of two incidences of conversion that were absolutely real

and valid and lasted the lifetime of those persons.

And what I did by way of reaching them sounds perfectly stupid, can you imagine asking a person if they like onion sandwiches and knowing deep in your heart that that's going to lead to the glorious change of conversion? I close with a third story. I was preaching in Colorado and late one evening, long after the sermon I had been dealing with a great many people, the pastor of the church came down the aisle alone and he waited until I was free and he stepped up to me and said, Mr. Roberts, there's a woman in the back who I've been trying to help and I have been a total failure. She wishes to speak with you.

I know it's late, but would you be willing to speak with her? Yes, bring her down. So he went back and as he was coming down the aisle with this woman, I said, Lord, this dear pastor has been unable to help her. I can't help her.

Unless you help me. So when she was introduced to me and we sat down on the front row, I said to her, tell me, where do you disagree with God? She looked at me in astonishment. She said, that's an awful thing to say.

I don't disagree with God. I said, I understood from the pastor that you needed help, but I cannot help a dishonest person. Where do you disagree with God? She said, I told you, I don't disagree with God.

She said, I've been the organist in my church, not this church, but in my church for 40 years. I don't disagree with God. Well, then I said, I'm sorry.

I'm very tired. You'll have to excuse me. I can't help you unless you're honest.

Oh, she said, please, I need help. Then I said, tell the truth. She said, it's not really a disagreement with God, but I love the world.

You see, when I breathe that prayer, Lord, if you don't help me, I can't help her immediately. I realized this woman loved the world. It was written all over her countenance.

Everything about her demonstrated the fact that she loved the world. And when she admitted it, but insisted that, I love God too. I turned her to the gospel of Matthew chapter six.

You cannot love both God and man. And I made it clear to her, you've got to choose. And she sat weeping for a long time.

And then she said, Lord, I'm done with the world. I need you. And she was gloriously converted.

Is your conversion true? And are you being used by God to bring others into a right relationship with Christ?

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