

Subject: *God's Work of Conversion*

Scripture: *1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

Today has been designated as a special Sunday when thousands of pastors are preaching on the biblical truth of conversion, and here is the reason. In the past few weeks churches and pastors in Canada have come under threat of being imprisoned and fined if they attempt to convert people who are involved in the LGBTQ lifestyle. Today we are taking our stand with others in support of the Canadian churches and pastors. We stand together with them on the truth of God's Word and the mission of the church to preach the truth of conversion to all people regardless of their lifestyle. One prominent pastor suggested that we call it "Conversion Sunday." This is a good opportunity to preach on what it means to be converted.

The message of conversion is at the heart of the gospel. All people need to be converted from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness, and from Satan to Christ. God has spoken and we must speak with clarity and authority. We must also speak with compassion and concern for the lost. This is who we are and this is where we stand. We are looking at a classic text that describes real conversion. There are two main thoughts here in the text: 1) the behavior of unconverted people; 2) the blessings of converted people.

1. Behavior of the Unconverted (vs. 9-10)

Verse 9 begins with a question and a warning. The question is: "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Paul asks this question as something they should all know. This is basic truth. The question implies that all believers should know this. The "unrighteous" refers to lost people who live in a sinful way.

Paul also gives a warning: "Be not deceived." Don't be deceived or misled by your own thinking. Don't be deceived or misled by the world's value system. Don't be deceived or misled by false teaching.

Paul lists 10 kinds of sinners who are typical of unsaved people. These are not unforgivable sins. There is only one unforgivable sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. These are not sins that indicate a person has lost his salvation. There are no sins like that. These are people who continue to live in these sinful ways and prove they do not belong to God by their lifestyle.

- A. Fornicators – refers to sexual immorality in general and specifically to unmarried people. It is widely accepted by society, but it is abomination to God. Genuine believers may fall into it, but deep within they know it is evil, and will not continue to live this way.
- B. Idolaters – refers to those who worship false gods and are involved in false religion. The Old Testament required the death penalty for the sin of idolatry (Deut. 13:6-11).
- C. Adulterers – refers to married people who indulge in sexual immorality. The Old Testament also required the death penalty for the sin of adultery.
- D. Effeminate and homosexuals – both of these refer to people who corrupt the normal male-female roles and relations. This would refer to all people who identify as LGBTQ including lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders. These are all perversions of God's unique creation of male and female (Gen. 1:27). The Lord

separated the two and they are not to be confused or exchanged. Homosexuality is clearly condemned by God in Scripture. The sin of “sodomy” got its name from the city of Sodom where the men burned with lust for other men, and we know how God destroyed that city with fire and brimstone from heaven. All kinds of perversion are attacks against the sanctity of marriage and the home which are ordained by God. See **Romans 1:21-32**.

Whenever churches and pastors defend and condone this kind of behavior, all in the name of love, they are proving that they don't love God or people at all.

John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

1 John 5:2-3 ² *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

- E. **Thieves and covetous** – both refer to the basic sin of greed. The covetous want what belongs to others and the thief actually takes it.
- F. **Drunkards** – we understand what that means. It's sad to see the damage alcohol does to people and families. There is probably more beer and wine than soft drinks in the average grocery store.
- G. **Revilers** – those who destroy people with their words
- H. **Extortioners** – people who steal indirectly by taking advantage of others or situations for personal gain

That brings us to verse 11 and what is a shocking statement: “and such were some of you.” Paul declares that some members of the church at Corinth used to live that way, but God changed all that when He saved them.

2. Blessings of the Converted

Paul uses the word “but” three times to describe their conversion. What they were before and after their salvation was like night and day. God made all the difference in their conversion. Conversion means to turn around. Three profound things happened to them in conversion:

- A. **Converted people are washed (new life)** – this refers to the washing of regeneration or new birth. Christians are not just nice people, they are new creatures.

Titus 3:5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

- B. **Converted people are sanctified (new behavior)** – to be sanctified means to be holy or set apart for God and His purpose. Christians are set apart to live a righteous life. Before a person is saved he has no ability for holy living. When a person is saved he is no longer dominated by sin, but is now able to live for God. This can only be done

by God's grace and power. Corinth was a wicked place to live. In Paul's day people used the word "Corinthianize" to describe a life of immorality and perversion because it was known for that. These believers were now set apart from that way of life.

- C. Converted people are justified (new standing) – to be justified means that God declares we are righteous in His sight. It means that God no longer sees us as guilty sinners, but He sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

And all of this happens in conversion "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Conversion is all God's work from start to finish. God planned it. Christ purchased it. And the Holy Spirit applies it to our heart by faith. Only God can turn our life around. It's only by the love and grace of God.

Here's what happens when a person is converted. God shines the light of regeneration into the heart to open a person's spiritual eyes. He begins to see the awfulness of his sin and the worthiness of Christ. Once he is able to see his sin for what it is and see Christ for who He is, the regenerated heart turns from sin and unbelief and turns to Christ in repentance and faith.

2 Corinthians 4:6 *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Acts 26:18 *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

The turning away from sin and unbelief is repentance, and the turning to Christ as Savior and Lord is faith. Repentance and faith go together to make up real conversion.

Acts 20:21 *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 1:9 *For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*

Conversion is a work of God in the heart. God gives us a heart with genuine love for Him and a desire to obey Him. Conversion is a change of our affections. We love God and we love what He loves, and we hate what God hates.

When we preach the gospel and share the gospel to sinners that's not hate speech. It's love speech. For a Christian or a church to tell a sinner that he's ok and agree that God just made him that way, that's hate speech because it condones his sin and gives him a false sense of peace and a false hope that he is right with God. Sinners need to hear the gospel that Christ died for our sins and He will save them when they repent and believe in Him.

Have you been converted? Has Christ turned your life around and made you fit for heaven? Are you sure? If not, turn from your sins and turn to Him now in faith.