

A New Start

Walter Bligh Westcott

online: 17.12.2022, updated: 17.12.2022

© SoundWords 2000–2022. All rights reserved.

All articles are for private use only. They can also be distributed privately without demand. Commercial reproductions of any kind are prohibited. Publications on other internet pages are only possible after consultation.

CONVERSION implies a radical change. Even in the case of a man who has always been steady, respectable, and religiously inclined, the change is no less real because less conspicuous to the outward observer. A man's inward springs and motives are touched and turned into new channels when he is *converted*, or turned to God.

So true and important is this, that if a man's ways are changed and his circumstances and associations altered without this inward work, he is reformed, but he is not converted.

On the other hand, a genuine work of God's Spirit within must, beyond all contradiction, produce a change without, more or less noticeable according to the "convert's" previous career.

How conversion is brought about I do not now intend to show, but it is my desire to help any who have started on the "path of life" by bringing before them some of the "new things" that are theirs.

1. A NEW MASTER.

"Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" (John 13: 13.)

You have been under the wrong control for the whole of your responsible unconverted life. In striving with might and main to be independent of God, you fell into the terrible bondage of slavery to sin and Satan. You were ignorant of it, perhaps, for many years, but God opened your eyes, and not only showed you your real position, but your Deliverer, Who is "stronger than the strong man armed."

And now – I need not remind you how it happened – you are free! But – and I want you to fully realise this great truth – you have been freed by sacrifice and purchase: sacrifice, because it is with a *price*; purchase, because you are *bought*, (1Cor 6: 20.)

There is therefore now laid upon you the double claim of love and ownership. The only and the natural response to the grace that sought and found you is complete and immediate surrender to the One Who is now not only your Saviour but your Lord.

Begin, therefore, by handing over to Him spirit, soul, and body, time, talents, money – lay all at His feet. He is worthy – you can trust Him. He has trodden the pathway – you can follow Him. He is wise and loving – you can obey Him. He is strong – you can lean upon Him.

There must be no reserve if you are to be happy and useful. Everything retained retards. The surrendered life is the successful life in the estimate of God.

On no account, moreover, allow cowardice or the fear of consequences to hinder you from confessing Jesus as your Lord. In the home, the office, the Exchange, the workshop, make a *bold stand* at once for Christ. You will rob Him of His glory and your own soul of its joy if you fail to do this, however you may naturally shrink from the ordeal.

Finally – "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

2. A NEW POWER.

“Ye shall receive power” (Acts 1: 8.)

The life above suggested would be impossible unless “power from on high” were given for it. And this has been provided, for the one who trusts in Him Who has been raised from the dead receives the Holy Spirit, Whose power is great enough to carry the believer triumphantly along in the face of every opposing influence. The Christian life is intended to be one of victory all along the line, and to this end the Holy Spirit must not be grieved. He comes to take up His abode in those who trust in Jesus, and He abides with them for ever. It is of the greatest importance that His presence and authority should be recognised, and that nothing inconsistent with His holiness should be allowed.

The moment a believer sins or tampers with evil his Divine Guest is grieved – not grieved away – and joy and power can only be restored after confession and self-judgment. This fact, proved over and over again by bitter experience in the lives of many Christians, cannot be too strongly emphasized.

Just as an electric car comes to a standstill and its lights immediately go out when the trolley slips from the wire, so there is no divine motion or light when communion is interrupted through the grieving of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand it seems impossible to overestimate what God could and would do through those who were “filled with the Spirit.” Pentecost stood at the threshold of Christian experience, but the *Power* of Pentecost is still on earth, and the wonderful blessing of recent times proves that God is prepared to work as of old through His holy Spirit if we are willing to let Him have His way with us. Will the reader of this paper lay it aside for a time and retire into the presence of God to ask, in downright earnest, that his or her whole life may be marked by the fulness of power that would result from surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit?

The children of God are in need of food, care, and counsel, and the multitudes of perishing souls all around us call for earnest and speedy efforts to reach them with the Gospel. May God raise up many devoted men and women who shall go forth in the activity and power of the Holy Ghost into the places where sin and need abound.

3. A NEW OBJECT.

“He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him ivhich died for them, and rose again” (2Cor 5: 15.)

Every man who is anxious to succeed must have an object before him. In business, athletics, study, civil, domestic, and social life the goal determines the conduct. What man would prosper in any walk of life who had not some end in view, and who did not keep it constantly before him?

Even Christ Himself “endured the cross, despising the shame, *for the joy that was set before Him*” (Heb 12: 2.) So, in his measure, the Christian needs an object sufficiently attractive and

powerful to divert him from the world and its pleasures that formerly engrossed him. The natural heart turns to the world as the needle in the compass to the north, but a strong magnet will divert the needle, and a stronger magnet still the heart!

Who can do this but Christ? and is He not sufficiently attractive? Was it not the greatest man of his day, the erstwhile Pharisee and zealous persecutor of the Church, who said with burning heart, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST"?

And so Christ risen and glorified becomes the new Object for the young believer, who is henceforth engaged with One "Whom, having not seen, he loves."

A boy, sitting in the doorway of a cottage one evening, was seen to be holding a piece of string firmly in his grasp. On being asked why he held so tightly to it, the boy pointed skyward and tried to show his questioner a kite that he said was flying in the air. It was growing dark, however, and the kite could not be seen. "How do you know it is really there?" the boy was asked. "Well, sir," he said, "because, even if I can't see it, *I can feel it pull.*"

One day - and it may be very soon - the Christian, the eyes of whose heart are ever straining heavenward, will be liberated from the law that keeps him earth-bound and will rise "in a moment" to meet His descending Lord, and then love condescending and responsive will be mutually satisfied!

4. NEW DESIRES.

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5: 16.)

"I don't know what's come over Jack," says one who was once the boon companion of the man referred to; "I can't get him to do anything now that he used to do. He won't go to the theatre or the dance, and, as for a glass or a smoke, he tells me that he's burnt his pipe, and is not going to taste liquor any more! This is what he calls being converted, but what I call going mad. And yet he seems happy enough, which is more than I can understand."

What *has* "come over Jack" and all those who have been similarly "converted"? The simple fact is that the grace of God has so wrought in their hearts that they positively have no desire for the things that once they would have thought it impossible to live without.

No doubt the old desires assert themselves at times - very strongly too - but much prayer and study of the Word will tend to draw the heart and mind more and more away from things seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal.

One of the best ways to check the intrusion of evil thoughts is to act on the exhortation given by Paul to the Philippians (Phil 4: 5-8): "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest* (noble), whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are *of good report*, if there be *any virtue*, and if there be *any praise*,

think on THESE THINGS.”

Occupation with good is the best antidote against evil, and good works leave no room for evil deeds. Therefore let every young believer see to it that he make a habit of daily reading his Bible, and setting aside some definite time for meditation and prayer. In this way he will be fitted for active service, and no Christian's life is complete that does not embrace some special service for the Master. No doubt even one's daily work can and should be done “to the Lord,” but the test of our reality and devotedness is the use we make of our “spare time.” The secret of much of the prevailing unhappiness and discontent amongst young Christians is that they do not come into contact with other souls in need – if they did so they would be more thankful for their own mercies and more compassionate towards others.

If we do not grieve the Spirit of God He will fill our hearts with love and pity towards the unsaved, and we shall then delight to minister to their spiritual and temporal necessities. And here let it be suggested that there is a great danger of the latter being overlooked by ultra-spiritual people.

It is mere mockery to expect persons to listen to sermons about their souls when they are craving for food, and in deep distress through poverty and want. The Lord Himself set us a blessed example in this respect (as in every other), for He never disregarded the hunger and the need by which He was surrounded.

Let us imitate Him and let the young men who belong to Christ be ready to spend money and effort in relieving some of the appalling want so prevalent in our great cities, and let the young women visit the sick in home and Hospital, and use their *needles* for the benefit of those who are ill-clad.

Mary of Bethany is rightly upheld as a wise woman, whom the Lord Himself commends as having “chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her,” but let us not forget that Dorcas too was considered an invaluable woman, so much so that she was raised from the dead! The Holy Spirit's comment on her is very striking – “This woman *wasfull of good works and alms-deeds* which she did.” (Acts 9: 36.)

The great Apostle Peter too was asked to see “the *coats* and *garments* which Dorcas made” – no wonder such a woman was brought back to life to resume her very useful services!

5. NEW COMPANY.

“*And being let go they went to their own company.*” (Acts 4: 23.)

One of the earliest marks of a true Christian is separation from old associations. It is an old saying that “a man is known by the company he keeps,” and certainly this may be said of a Christian. However amiable and interesting our unconverted friends may be there is a barrier now set up between their spirits and ours, for *they do not love the One to Whom we owe our all.*

The mention of the Name so dear to the believer meets with no response from his old

companions, and if the young Christian is true to his Master his name will soon be left out of the list of invitations that would formerly have been considered incomplete without it. And he will prefer it so, for to be *willingly* found in company where the Saviour is despised is unworthy of a loyal heart. Marriage, business partnerships, and other undertakings should be considered in the light of the plain and most uncompromising statement of the Word of God –

“Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath

- Righteousness with unrighteousness?
- Light with darkness?
- Christ with Belial?
- He that believeth with an unbeliever?
- The temple of God with idols?”

The disregard of this solemn injunction has led to the most disastrous results, to say nothing of the dishonour done to the Name by which we are called.

How sweet, on the other hand, is fellowship and intercourse with the people of God! The church has been torn by division and dissension, but those who truly love the Lord also truly love one another, and they are all baptized by one Spirit into one body.

Hence they have common interests and expectations, and it is a happy thing when Christians speak one to another of the Lord Whom they love, and make much of what they are agreed upon rather than accentuate the points of difference.

Let us now summarize what has been written. The constant confession of Jesus as Lord – the surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit – the occupation of the heart with Christ Himself – and the cultivation of love for all God’s people – will ensure for all young Christians a holy, happy, and useful life. God grant that every reader of this paper may be greatly blessed for the glory of God, the joy of his own soul, and the help and refreshment of saints and sinners “till He come”!