



The Voice of Truth



August 2, 2009

“Saul’s Conversion”

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The conversion of Saul is one of the truly remarkable events set forth so ably by Luke the beloved physician in the book of Acts. Jesus made an appearance to Saul on his way to Damascus to bring back Christians bound to Jerusalem (**Acts 9:1-2**). Then “And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he (said), I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (**Acts 9:3-6**).

Some have obtained the idea that Saul was saved in a manner different than other cases of gospel conversion. **NOT SO!** Saul was saved precisely as others were in the book of Acts. God has but **ONE** plan of redemption; compare it with Saul’s conversion.

First, God’s Word teaches that one must hear the Word of God. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (**Rom. 10:17**). Saul **HEARD**. The Bible says, “And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (**Acts 9:4**). Again, he heard the instructions of Ananias, “and now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (**Acts 22:16**). “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard” (**Acts 22:15**). There is no doubt but that he heard the Word of the Lord!

Second, the scriptures teach that one must believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ. “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believed not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (**John 8:24**). Saul **BELIEVED**. This is evidenced by the fact he asked the Lord what he must do in **Acts 9:6**

and **22:10**. An unbeliever would not care what the Lord wanted him to do. Saul’s belief is further witnessed in the fact that he did what the Lord told him to do about entering the city and awaiting further instructions on how to be saved. Saul’s faith is seen by the fact he willingly did what Ananias told him to do relative to his being baptized.

Third, the Bible teaches one must repent. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (**Luke 13:3**). Saul **REPENTED**. His repentance is strongly implied in **Acts 9:9**, “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” He did not manifest behavior of a man reported by many to have already been saved. He was filled with remorse; the awful crime of fighting against God and Christ was pressing upon his soul. This is the reason for his total abstinence from food and drink. Also, we must remember that Ananias would not immerse an impenitent man, for the great commission demanded repentance prior to baptism (**Luke 24:47**).

Fourth, the New Testament teaches one must confess his faith in Jesus Christ. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (**Matt. 10:32-33**). Also read **Acts 8:36-37**. Saul **CONFESSED**. He confessed his faith in Jesus Christ when he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? . . .” (**Acts 9:6; 22:10**). Later Paul (Saul) wrote “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” He surely confessed the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Fifth, the last, the Bible teaches one must be immersed. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . .” (**Mark 16:16**).

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“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (**John 3:5**). “. . . even baptism doth also now save us . . .” (**1 Pet. 3:20-21**). Saul was **IMMERSED**. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (**Acts 22:16**). He “arose, and was baptized” (**Acts 9:18**).

We can see from this study that God has but **ONE** plan of redemption for all people. In the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, we see what man must do in order to be saved.

“He Is Supposed To Be A Christian?”

By Jarrod Jacobs

A young boy sees the actions of another young person at play and makes the observation, “He is supposed to be a *Christian*?” A young lady hears the words of an older lady in a check-out line and thinks, “She is supposed to be a *Christian*?” The actions and words of a congregation in town are observed by their neighbors. Those watching collectively wonder, “Is this group supposed to be made up of *Christians*?”

What do the above situations have in common? **1)** The people above recognize that there is behavior which is fitting for those claiming to be Christians, and behavior which is not fitting. **2)** Those claiming to be Christians seemed deficient in the eyes of those beholding them. While it is true some can be ultra-critical toward Christians, my observation has been that more than likely, those “Christians” in question were observed acting like the world instead of like Christ.

A Higher Standard

Those who are Christians need to remember that Christians are held to a higher standard than the world. This is evident in Scripture (**Col. 3:17**; **Jn. 13:34-35**), and men recognize it as well. If we are God’s people as we say we are, then let’s act like it! **Ephesians 5:3** says we need to act “as *becometh saints*” (KJV) or “as is proper among saints” (ESV)! Yes, we are held to a higher standard, and the world knows it. Therefore, when we claim to be a Christian, but act like

the world, the world responds, “He claims to be a *Christian*? How can this be? He is acting like us!” Shame on us when the world cannot tell that we are a “*peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (**Titus 2:14**); the very character that Christ wants Christians to be! We are called to a higher standard.

A Righteous Example

When Christians are around, we ought to see righteous examples. Timothy was told, “... be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (**1 Tim. 4:12**). This statement covers all aspects of one’s life. Whether in word or deed, our example ought to shine forth as righteous. Jesus said it this way: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (**Matt. 5:16**).

In thinking about “lights”, the apostle Paul adds to our study. He wrote, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (**Phil. 2:14-15**).

A Genuine Example

We are aware that some people act one way while in public and another way at home. Folks who see this “transformation” no doubt ask, “Are they supposed to be *Christians*?” A Christian is genuine. He does not act one way when among certain people, and another way when around a different group of people. Peter was confronted for such behavior (**Gal. 2:11-13**). It must not be in our lives, either.

Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (**Matt. 23:4**). In other words, they said the right thing, but would not do it. In like manner, when people see us, may they see people who are striving to do and say the right things. May our hearts be in it. May we be genuine people who are following the Lord with pure mo-

tives. Believe it or not, while no one can “read minds,” pure motives still shine through in our actions and words. Your children, your spouse, your close friends, etc., know whether or not you are sincere! What kind of an example are we setting before them?

Conclusion

Be mindful of your example. When people look at you, will they walk away asking, “Is he/she supposed to be a *Christian* with that mouth?” Or, “Why is he/she acting like that, he/she is supposed to be a *Christian*?” Our influence is felt in untold ways. It is even felt after we have left this earth (**I Tim. 5:24-25; Rev. 14:13**). Therefore, let us be mindful of not only how we live, but how we leave this earth! Some have had a good name (**Prov. 22:1**) for years, but then ruined and wrecked their reputation as they neared the end of life’s journey. Our example is important. May people see us and know we are Christians!

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com

Communication

By Jonathan L. Perz

Effective, selfless communication in any relationship is absolutely essential, especially for a Christian. We are taught, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (**Ephesians 4:29**). Unfortunately, this level of communication often evades us.

Many are better talkers than they are listeners. Others rarely say anything. Some speak because they have to say something, rather than because they have something worthwhile to say. Some are extremely eloquent speakers, yet the content of their speech manifests a heart full of selfishness, pride and arrogance. Others are clumsy with their tongue, with no desire to improve.

The greater issue is that we often excuse our inability to gracefully communicate rather than putting forth the effort to rise to our Lord’s expectation for our speech. How many of us are guilty of rationalizing (i.e., telling rational—lies) our poor communication skills rather than correcting them? Do we

deceive ourselves into believing we are better communicators than we actually are? The truth is, communication is more than just the ability to speak eloquently, it includes the skills of listening and empathizing.

Poor communication becomes painfully obvious when conflict or disagreement arises in any relationship. It seems that when effective communication skills are most critical, they are most wanting. Good communication may have avoided a conflict altogether, nevertheless it can certainly resolve a conflict all-the-sooner.

While reading the book *Boy Meets Girl* (by Joshua Harris), I came across 10 of the most profound tips I have ever read to improve communication skills. Joshua Harris found these tips in the book *Love That Lasts* (by Gary and Betsy Ricucci). I was so impressed by the clarity and applicability of these tips, that I wanted to include them for your consideration. They are geared towards handling conflict in relationships, but are general enough to help in all forms of communication.

1. Learn to express your feelings and frustrations honestly, but without accusing or attacking the other person (**Proverbs 11:9**).
2. Choose words, expressions, and a tone of voice that are kind and gentle. Don’t use speech that could easily offend or spark an argument (**Proverbs 15:1**).
3. Don’t exaggerate, distort, or stretch the truth. Avoid extreme words like never and always (**Ephesians 4:25**).
4. Give actual and specific examples. If necessary, make notes before you communicate. Stay away from generalities.
5. Commit yourself to seeking solutions instead of airing your grievances. Getting even isn’t the goal—you want to get things resolved (**Romans 12:17-21**).
6. Listen to what the other person is saying, feeling and needing. Try to detect his or her underlying concerns (**James 1:19**).
7. Refuse to indulge bitterness, anger, withdrawal or argument. Though these emotions are normal, indulging them is sin (**Ephesians 4:26**).
8. Don’t hesitate to acknowledge your own failure and be quick to forgive the other

person. Make sure you don't hold a grudge (Luke 17:3-4).

9. Keep talking and asking questions until you are sure that you both understand clearly what the other is saying and feeling. Encourage each other as you press toward a solution (Romans 14:9).

10. Train your mouth and heart until you can say the right thing at the right time in the right way for the right reasons!

The Bible is replete with information regarding the effects of poor communication and the benefits of good communication. For example, "A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart" (Proverbs 18:2). "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows" (Proverbs 18:6). "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (Proverbs 18:7). On the other hand, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness" (Proverbs 15:1-2).

Indeed, with so much spiritual wisdom on the good and bad of communication, what excuse for not improving in this critical element of life will stand? Would God have supplied so much if He expected so little? James

reminds us, "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things" (James 3:5).

Let us purpose to become effective communicators in every relationship in our lives. Rather than a simple "Hello" on the Lord's day, let brethren learn to genuinely edify one another in their communication. Let the lips of husbands impart more than a tender kiss for their wives, but the wisdom that descends from above, imparting the blessing of grace always. Let the law of kindness depart from the lips of his wife. Let fathers (and mothers) provoke their children to love and good works with their speech, not to wrath and bitterness. Let praise be perfected in the mouths of babes, rather than be corrupted by the mouths of fools. Let all Christians learn to share the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ, for there is no greater calling on this earth than to lead a soul from the darkness of sin and death to the light and life of Jesus Christ.

While no man will ever fully tame the tongue (James 3:8), the exercise and discipline of trying will certainly help to make us greater servants in the kingdom of our dear Lord (cf. James 3:2).

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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