

Conversion – Notes and thoughts
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Are you converted?

◆ **Alma 5:14**

- ◆ I think we should all ask ourselves
 - ◆ Have I been born again?
 - ◆ Have I made this change?
 - ◆ Have I felt this baptism of fire?

◆ What is conversion?

- ◆ Use the story of Peter’s conversion to illustrate and for us to learn

- ◆ We will begin Peter’s story in the outer court of the high priests abode the night before Jesus is to be taken away and crucified. Picture yourself there.

◆ (Luke 22:31-34.)

“Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But [Jesus says] I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou are **converted, strengthen thy brethren.**

And he [that is, Peter] said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said,

I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”

- ◆ This is the occasion that Peter denies Christ
- ◆ This occurred near the end of Christ’s ministry – **yet** Christ speaks of some future time of conversion

- ◆ We could ask ourselves: How is Peter not converted?
 - ◆ He has been with Jesus for some 3.5 years
 - ◆ He has eaten, slept, lived, traveled with the Lord.
 - ◆ He is an Apostle, undoubtedly an Elder
 - ◆ He worked miracles
 - ◆ Stout defender, preacher and teacher.
 - ◆ Yet – Christ said “**When** thou art converted.....”
 - ◆ He was converted in the sense of joining the church
 - ◆ He had a testimony
 - ◆ **Matt. 16:13-17.**

"But whom say ye that I am?..Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God....Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."
- ◆ Peter knew, yet Christ had said “when thou art converted”
- ◆ Yet, not in the full and total sense that we all must be converted
- ◆ Can you project yourself into that situation?
 - ◆ Think -
 - ◆ I have borne testimony
 - ◆ I follow Christ
 - ◆ Christ was in effect telling Peter:
 - ◆ You have borne testimony
 - ◆ I have confirmed your testimony is of the Spirit
 - ◆ BUT you are not converted.

How does conversion differ from a testimony?

- ◆ Peter's story illustrates that there is a difference.
- ◆ *Essential* to the story of Peter that the Holy Spirit was not yet poured out on the people.
 - ◆ Spirit had been with them time to time
 - ◆ But they did not have the constant companionship
 - ◆ Full sanctifying power had not come into their lives
 - ◆ Bruce R McConkie's analogy relative to the Gift of the Holy Ghost before and after:
 - ◆ Before: walking in darkness with flashes of lightning
 - ◆ Gift of the Holy Ghost like walking in the full light of the sun all the time
 - ◆ In the future for the Apostles
 - ◆ Gift of the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ Right to constant companionship based on faithfulness
 - ◆ Peter didn't have that gift yet.
- ◆ After after the Crucifixion
 - ◆ The disciples, **that is the sheep**, were scattered.
- ◆ John 21:15 - 17

Two statements for us

- ◆ "When thou art converted *strengthen thy brethren*"
- ◆ "*Feed my sheep*"
 - ◆ These are two measures for degree of conversion
 - ◆ Are we strengthening our brethren and sisters?
 - ◆ Are we feeding the Lord's sheep?
 - ◆ Or are we seeking the "fish" of the world?
- ◆ What is our answer to "lovest thou me more than the things of the world?"
 - ◆ "where you spend your time is where your heart is"
 - ◆ Example of prophet
 - ◆ Example of Stake President
 - ◆ Don't need to be in High office
 - ◆ Dallin H Oaks: "Spirituality is not a function of occupation or calling. Spirituality is determined by personal outlook and priorities.

Day of Pentecost

- ◆ Peter and others were teaching

- ◆ Holy Ghost as promised came
 - ◆ Fell upon them
 - ◆ Gift of tongues
 - ◆ Cloven tongues of Fire rested upon them
 - ◆ Bruce R McConkie: "(this) is the language that is used to describe the miraculous things that transpired in their hearts. There really is no language that it is possible to use to tell what happened in the hearts of the disciples on that occasion, which is the one when they became fully converted. And so they did the best they could to get some language, and they said "cloven tongues like as of fire" rested upon them."
- ◆ This is the day of conversion
 - ◆ After this day total and complete change in Peter

Illustrate change with Acts 3:1-7

- ◆ "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).
- ◆ What a difference!
- ◆ Peter's conversion was a gradual one:
 - ◆ He heard the gospel from his brother Andrew
 - ◆ He came to Christ and joined the church
 - ◆ He had experience in the church and grew line upon line
 - ◆ He received the Priesthood and was called as an Apostle
 - ◆ He worked miracles
 - ◆ He received a witness from the Spirit
 - ◆ Then came the companionship of the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ That was the day of his conversion
 - ◆ When he had a testimony he said: " I do not know the man"
 - ◆ When he was converted: Faced down those who thirsted after his own blood.

What is Conversion?

- ◆ Means simply to change
- ◆ Alma 5:14 "Have you experienced this mighty change of heart?"
- ◆ We must be born again
 - ◆ Apostle Paul describes it by saying that we crucify the old man (Rom. 6:6).

- ◆ Only happens when we get the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost in our lives
- ◆ Bruce R McConkie: The Holy Ghost does two things in particular. On the one hand he is a witness to truth, and so he bears the testimony of the truth, and that is how we get a testimony, by revelation from the Holy Ghost. But on the other hand the Holy Spirit is a sanctifier, and he has the power to cleanse and perfect the human soul, to wash evil and iniquity out, and to replace it with righteousness. And that is the occasion when we are converted.
- ◆ We are cleansed from sin and are born again and become converted to the truth when:
 - ◆ We get the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead, that is, get the right to the constant companionship.
 - ◆ Nobody actually has companionship all the time
 - ◆ Nobody is perfect
 - ◆ We do best we can
 - ◆ We get enough of companionship of the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ Sins burned out by fire
 - ◆ Meaning of Baptism by fire
 - ◆ Symbolizes the burning or purification process
 - ◆ Creation of a new creature in Christ
 - ◆ This is change, this is conversion
 - ◆ Marion G Romney: “Conversion .. is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience. Conversion is effected by divine forgiveness, which remits sins.”(Conference Report, Oct 1963, pg 23-26)

Sudden Conversion – Alma the Younger

- ◆ He was undoubtedly baptized as a youth and promised the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ He never received it
 - ◆ He went off to destroy the church
- ◆ He was in this state when his conversion occurred

Most people it is step by step – that is OK!

- ◆ Loren C Dunn: “The witness, the change, the cleansing that comes gradually is no less powerful to the person with the right heart, and he or she is impelled to action whether the experience was a sudden, miraculous manifestation or the quite workings of the Spirit.” (Ensign, June 95, pg 24)

- ◆ President Kimball: “The gift of the Holy Ghost grows with worthiness. If you are baptized when you are eight years old, of course you are a child, and there is much you would not be expected to know. But the Holy Ghost comes to you as you grow and learn and make yourselves worthy. It comes a little at a time as you merit it. And as your life is in harmony, you gradually receive the Holy Ghost in great measure.” (Ensign, May 82, pp 4-5)

It is not enough to have a testimony

- ◆ D&C 76:71-80
 - ◆ Describes those who are not valiant in their testimony – receive Celestial glory
 - ◆ These are members of the church who are lukewarm
 - ◆ Know in heart are true, but are not valiant
- ◆ It takes work:
 - ◆ President Hunter: “Developing spirituality... will not happen by chance, but is accomplished only through deliberate effort and by calling upon God and keeping his commandments.” (Ensign, May 79, pg 25)

How does a person know when he or she is truly converted?

- ◆ Alma 5:14, 26 “Have you been spiritually born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts...” ***“Can ye feel so know?”***
 - ◆ Know by how we feel.
 - ◆ The spirit touches us and we are no longer passive but become a witness.
 - ◆ Alma chapter 5 is wonderful in helping us understand this conversion – Baptism of fire.
 - ◆ Marion G Romney: “No person whose soul is illuminated by the burning Spirit of god can ... remain passive. He is driven by an irresistible urge to fit himself to be an active agent of God in furthering righteousness and in freeing the lives and minds of men from the bondage of Sin” (Ensign, Nov 79, pg 16)
 - ◆ Loren C Dunn: “there is .. a sense of unity that comes with the outpouring of the Spirit. As one becomes united with the Spirit, he or she also becomes united with fellow members and leaders.” (Ensign, June 95, pg 26)