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DO YOU THINK  
YOU ARE  
CONVERTED?

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– Acts 3:19

J.C. Ryle  
1816-1900



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**T**HE subject which forms the title of this paper is one which touches all mankind. It ought to come home to all ranks and classes, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, gentle or simple. Any one may get to heaven without money, rank, or learning. No one, however wise, wealthy, noble, or beautiful, will ever get to heaven without CONVERSION.

There are six points of view in which I wish to consider the subject of this paper. I will try to show that conversion is

- I. A Scriptural thing;
- II. A real thing;
- III. A necessary thing;
- IV. A possible thing;
- V. A happy thing;
- VI. A thing that may be seen.

Let me show, in the first place, that

## **I. Conversion Is a Scriptural Thing**

I mean by this, that conversion is a thing plainly mentioned in the Bible. This is the first point we have to ascertain about anything in religion. It matters nothing who says a thing, and declares it to be religious truth; it matters nothing whether we like or dislike a doctrine. Is

it in the Bible? That is the only question. If it is, we have no right to refuse it. If we reject a Bible truth because we do not like it, we do so at the peril of our souls, and might as well become infidels at once. This is a principle which ought never to be forgotten.

Let us turn to the Bible. Hear what David says: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul”—”Sinners shall be converted unto Thee” (Psa 19:7, 51:13). Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 18:3). Hear what St. Peter says: “Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Act 3:19). Hear what St. James says: “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jam 5:20).

I could easily add to this Scriptural evidence. I could quote many passages in which the idea of conversion is contained, though the word itself is not used. To be renewed, to be transformed, to be created anew, to be raised from the dead, to be illuminated, to pass from death to life, to be born again, to put off the old man and put on the new man—all these are Scriptural expressions, which mean the same thing as conversion. They are all the same thing, seen from a different point of view. But enough is as good as a feast, in these matters. There can be no doubt of the truth of my first position: that conversion is a Scriptural thing. It is not a mere device of man’s invention: it is in the Bible.

You may tell me, perhaps, that you do not care for “texts.” You may say that you are not accustomed to make single texts decide questions in your religion. If this is your case, I am sorry for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles used to quote single texts frequently, and to make everything in their arguments hinge upon them. One plain text with them was sufficient to settle a point. Is it not a serious matter, that

while the Lord Jesus and His apostles made such use of single texts, you do not care for them?

I entreat every reader of these pages to beware of ignorant prejudices on religious subjects. I have known people to find fault with doctrines and opinions as enthusiastic, fanatical, and absurd, in perfect ignorance that they were finding fault with Scripture itself. They have given sad proof that they spoke of things which they did not understand, and that they knew nothing, comparatively, of the contents of the Bible. It is recorded that, in Somersetshire, one hundred years ago, a great preacher was summoned before the magistrates for swearing in the pulpit. He had used in his sermon the well-known text, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mar 16:16); and the constable who laid the information was so ignorant that he did not know the preacher was quoting God's Word. I myself remember a lady of rank being very indignant, because a speaker at a Missionary meeting described the heathen as "having no hope." And yet the speaker had only used the very expression used by St. Paul, in describing the state of the Ephesians before the Gospel came to them (Eph 2:12)! Beware of making a like mistake. Take care that you do not expose your own ignorance by talking against conversion. Search the Scriptures. CONVERSION IS A SCRIPTURAL THING.

Let me show, in the second place,

## **II. Conversion Is a Real Thing**

I feel it very needful to say something about this point. We live in an age of shams, cheats, deceptions, and impositions. It is an age of white-wash, varnish, lacquer, and veneer. It is an age of plaster, compo, plating, gilding, and electrotyping. It is an age of adulterated food, paste diamonds, false weights and measures, unsound timber, and shoddy clothing. It is an age of

wind-bags, and whitened sepulchers, and cymbals in religion. I can hardly wonder that many regard all Christian professors as suspicious characters, if not hypocrites, and deny the reality of any such thing as conversion.

Still, notwithstanding all that such people may say, I assert confidently, that there is such a thing as conversion. There are to be seen among men, every here and there, unmistakable cases of a complete turning round of heart, character, tastes, and life,—cases which deserve no other name than that of conversion. I say that when a man turns right round from sin to God,—from worldliness to holiness,—from self-righteousness to self-distrust,—from carelessness about religion to deep repentance,—from unbelief to faith,—from indifference to Christ to strong love to Christ,—from neglect of prayer, the Bible, and the Sabbath, to a diligent use of all means of grace,—I say boldly, that such a man is a converted man. When a man's heart is turned upside down in the way I have described, so that he loves what he once hated, and hates what he once loved, I say boldly, that it is a case of conversion. To deny it, is mere obstinacy and affectation. Such a change can be described in no other way. By far the most suitable name that can be given to it is the Scriptural name, "conversion."

Of such changes the Bible gives many unmistakable patterns. Let any one read attentively the histories of Manasseh king of Judah, of Matthew the apostle, of the woman of Samaria, of Zacchaeus the publican, of Mary Magdalene, of Saul of Tarsus, of the Philippian jailer, of Lydia the purple seller, of the Jews to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, of the Corinthians to whom St. Paul preached. (2Ch 33:1-19; Mat 9:9; Joh 4:1-29; Luk 19:1-10, 8:2; Act 9:1-22, 16:14-34, 2:37-41; 1Co 6:9-11). In every one of these cases there

was a mighty change. What can that change be called but conversion?

Of such changes the history of the Church in every age can supply many well-known examples. Let any one study the life of Augustine, of Martin Luther, of Hugh Latimer, of John Bunyan, of Colonel Gardiner, of John Newton, of Thomas Scott. In every one of these lives he will find a description of a mighty turning of heart, opinion, and conduct, towards God. What can that turning be called better than conversion?

Of such changes every man's own neighborhood and circle of acquaintances will furnish many specimens. Let any honest-minded person of observation look around him, and consider what I assert. Let him deny, if he can, that he can put his finger on men and women of his own age and standing, who are now utterly unlike what they once were in the matter of religion. About their own souls and the importance of being saved—about sin, and God, and Christ, and repentance, and faith, and holiness—about Bible-reading, and praying, and Sabbath-keeping—about all these things they are completely changed. I challenge any sensible man to deny that he knows such persons. They are to be met with here and there in every part of the kingdom. Once more I ask, what can such changes be called but conversions?

I feel almost ashamed to dwell so long on this point. It seems like spending time in proving that two and two make four, or that the sun rises in the east. But, alas, there are too many people who will allow nothing, and will dispute everything, in religion! They know that they are not yet converted themselves, and they therefore try hard to make out that nobody was ever converted at all! I trust I have given a sufficient answer to all such persons. I have shown you that **CONVERSION IS A REAL TRUE THING.**

Let me show, in the third place, that

### III. Conversion Is a Necessary Thing

This is a point of great importance. Some worthy people are ready enough to admit that conversion is a Scriptural truth and a reality, but not a thing which needs to be pressed on most English people. The heathen, they grant, need conversion. Even the thieves, and fallen characters, and inmates of jails, they allow, may require conversion. But to talk of conversion being necessary for Church-going people, is to talk of things which they cannot see at all. “Such people may, in some cases, need a little stirring up and amendment.<sup>1</sup> They may not be quite as good as they ought to be: it would be better if they attended more to religion; but you have no right to say they need conversion! It is uncharitable, harsh, narrow-minded, bitter, wrong, to tell them they require conversion!”

This sadly common notion is a complete delusion. It is a pure invention of man’s, without a scrap of foundation in God’s Word. The Bible teaches expressly that the change of heart, called conversion, is a thing absolutely needed by every one. It is needed because of the total corruption of human nature. It is needed because of the condition of every man’s natural heart. All people born into the world, of every rank and nation, must have their hearts changed between the cradle and the grave, before they can go to heaven. All, all men, without exception, must be converted.

Without conversion of heart we cannot serve God on, earth. We have naturally neither faith, nor fear, nor love, toward God and His Son Jesus Christ. We have no delight in His Word. We take no pleasure in prayer or communion with Him. We have no enjoyment in His ordinances, His house, His people, or His day. We may

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<sup>1</sup> **amendment** – reformation; correction; removal of faults.



have a form of Christianity, and keep up a round of ceremonies and religious performances. But without conversion we have no more heart in our religion than a brick or a stone. Can a dead corpse serve God? We know it cannot. Well, without conversion we are dead toward God.

Look round the congregation with which you worship every Sunday. Mark how little interest the great majority of them take in what is going on. Observe how listless,<sup>2</sup> and apathetic,<sup>3</sup> and indifferent, they evidently are about the whole affair. It is clear their hearts are not there! They are thinking of something else, and not of religion. They are thinking of business, or money, or pleasure, or worldly plans, or bonnets, or gowns, or new dresses, or amusements. Their bodies are there, but not their hearts. And what is the reason? What is it they all need? They need *conversion*. Without it they only come to church for fashion and form's sake, and go away from church to serve the world or their sins.

But this is not all. Without conversion of heart we could not enjoy heaven, if we got there. Heaven is a place where holiness reigns supreme, and sin and the world have no place at all. The company will all be holy; the employments will all be holy; it will be an eternal Sabbath-day. Surely if we go to heaven, we must have a heart in tune and able to enjoy it, or else we shall not be happy. We must have a nature in harmony with the element we live in, and the place where we dwell. Can a fish be happy out of water? We know it cannot. Well, without conversion of heart we could not be happy in heaven.

Look round the neighborhood in which you live, and the persons with whom you are acquainted. Think what many of them would do if they were cut off for

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<sup>2</sup> **listless** – not inclined to exert effort.

<sup>3</sup> **apathetic** – showing a lack of interest or concern.

ever from money, and business, and newspapers, and cards, and balls, and races, and hunting, and shooting, and worldly amusements! Would they like it? Think what they would feel if they were shut up for ever with Jesus Christ, and saints, and angels! Would they be happy? Would the eternal company of Moses, and David, and St. Paul, be pleasant to those who never take the trouble to read what those holy men wrote? Would heaven's everlasting praise suit the taste of those who can hardly spare a few minutes in a week for private religion, even for prayer? There is but one answer to be given to all these questions. We *must be converted* before we can enjoy heaven. Heaven would be no heaven to any child of Adam without conversion.

Let no man deceive us. There are two things which are of absolute necessity to the salvation of every man and woman on earth. One of them is the mediatorial work of Christ for us: His atonement, satisfaction, and intercession. The other is the converting work of the Spirit in us: His guiding, renewing, and sanctifying grace. We must have both a title and a heart for heaven. Sacraments are only generally necessary to salvation: a man may be saved without them, like the penitent thief. An interest in Christ and conversion are absolutely necessary: without them no one can possibly be saved. All, all alike, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, gentle or simple, churchmen or dissenters, baptized or unbaptized, all must be converted or perish. There is no salvation without conversion. IT IS A NECESSARY THING.

Let me now show, in the fourth place, that

#### **IV. Conversion Is a Possible Thing**

I think I know the feelings which come across many people's minds, when they read the things which I am writing in this paper. They take refuge in the idea

that such a change as conversion is quite impossible, except for a favored few. "It is all very well," they argue, "for parsons to talk of conversion; but the thing cannot be done; we have work to mind, families to provide for, business to attend to. It is no use expecting miracles now. We cannot be converted." Such thoughts are very common. The devil loves to put them before us, and our own lazy hearts are only too ready to receive them: but they will not stand examination. I am not afraid to lay it down that conversion is a possible thing. If it were not so I would not say another word.

In saying this, however, I should be sorry to be mistaken. I do not for a moment mean that any one can convert himself, change his own heart, take away his own corrupt nature, put in himself a new spirit. I mean nothing of the kind. I should as soon expect the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision to give themselves life (Eze 37:3). I only mean that there is nothing in Scripture, nothing in God, nothing in man's condition, which warrants any one in saying, "I can never be converted." There lives not the man or woman on earth of whom it could be said, "their conversion is an impossibility." Any one, however sinful and hardened, any one may be converted.

Why do I speak so confidently? How is it that I can look round the world, and see the desperate wickedness that is in it, and yet despair of no living man's soul? How is it that I can say to any one, however hard, fallen, and bad, "Your case is not hopeless: you, even you, may be converted?" I can do it because of the things contained in Christ's Gospel. It is the glory of that Gospel that under it nothing is impossible.

Conversion is a possible thing, because of the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him is life. In His hand are the keys of death and hell. He has all power in heaven and earth. He quickeneth whom He will (Joh 1:4; Rev. 1:18; Mat 28:18; Joh 5:21). It is as

easy to Him to create new hearts out of nothing, as it was to create the world out of nothing. It is as easy to Him to breathe spiritual life into a stony, dead heart, as it was to breathe natural life into the clay of which Adam was formed, and make him a living man. There was nothing He could not do on earth. Wind, sea, disease, death, the devil, all were obedient to His word. There is nothing that He cannot do in heaven at God's right hand. His hand is as strong as ever: His love is as great as ever. The Lord Jesus Christ lives, and therefore conversion is not impossible.

But beside this, conversion is a possible thing, because of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, whom Christ sends into the hearts of all whom He undertakes to save. The same divine Spirit who co-operated with the Father and Son in the work of creation, co-operates specially in the work of conversion. It is He who conveys life from Christ, the great Fountain of Life, into the hearts of sinners. He who moved on the face of the waters before those wonderful words were spoken, "Let there be light," is He who moves over sinners' souls, and takes their natural darkness away. Great indeed is the invisible power of the Holy Ghost! He can soften that which is hard. He can bend that which is stiff and stubborn. He can give eyes to the spiritually blind, ears to the spiritually deaf, tongues to the spiritually dumb, feet to the spiritually lame, warmth to the spiritually cold, knowledge to the spiritually ignorant, and life to the spiritually dead. "Who teacheth like Him?" (Job 36:22). He has taught thousands of ignorant sinners, and never failed to make them "wise unto salvation." The Holy Ghost lives, and therefore conversion is never impossible.

What can you say to these things? Away with the idea for ever that conversion is not possible. Cast it behind you: it is a temptation of the devil. Look not at yourself, and your own weak heart;—for then you may

well despair. Look upward at Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and learn that with them nothing is impossible. Yes! the age of spiritual miracles is not yet past! Dead souls in our congregations can yet be raised; blind eyes can yet be made to see; dumb prayerless tongues can yet be taught to pray. No one ought ever to despair. When Christ has left heaven, and laid down His office as the Savior of sinners, when the Holy Ghost has ceased to dwell in hearts and is no longer God, then and not till then, men and women may say, "We cannot be converted." Till then, I say boldly: conversion is a possible thing. If men are not converted, it is because they will not come to Christ for life (Joh 5:40). **CONVERSION IS POSSIBLE.**

Let me show, in the fifth place, that

## **V. Conversion Is a Happy Thing**

I shall have written in vain if I leave this point untouched. There are thousands, I firmly believe, who are ready to admit the truth of all I have said hitherto. Scriptural, real, necessary, possible,—all this they willingly allow conversion to be. "Of course," they say, "we know it is all true. People ought to be converted." But will it increase a man's happiness to be converted? Will it add to a man's joys, and lessen his sorrows, to be converted? Here alas, is a point at which many stick fast. They have a secret, lurking fear that if they are converted, they must become melancholy, miserable, and low-spirited. Conversion and a sour face, conversion and a gloomy brow, conversion and an ill-natured readiness to snub young people and put down all mirth, conversion and a sorrowful countenance, conversion and sighing and groaning—all these are things which they seem to think must go together! No wonder that such people shrink from the idea of conversion!

The notion I have just described is very common and very mischievous. I desire to protest against it with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. I assert without hesitation, that the conversion described in Scripture is a happy thing and not a miserable one, and that if converted persons are not happy, the fault must be in themselves. The happiness of a true Christian, no doubt, is not quite of the same sort as that of a worldly man. It is a calm, solid, deep flowing, substantial joy. It is not made up of excitement, levity, and boisterous spasmodic mirth.<sup>4</sup> It is the sober, quiet joy of one who does not forget death, judgment, eternity, and a world to come, even in his chief mirth. But in the main I am confident the converted man is the happiest man.

What says the Scripture? How does it describe the feelings and experience of persons who have been converted? Does it give any countenance to the idea that conversion is a sorrowful and melancholy thing? Let us hear what Levi felt, when he had left the receipt of custom to follow Christ. We read that he made “a great feast in his own house,” as if it was an occasion of gladness (Luk 5:29). Let us hear what Zacchaeus the publican felt, when Jesus offered to come to his house. We read that he “received Him joyfully” (Luk 19:6). Let us hear what the Samaritans felt, when they were converted through Philip’s preaching. We read that “there was great joy in that city” (Act 8:8). Let us hear what the Ethiopian eunuch felt in the day of his conversion. We read that “he went on his way rejoicing” (Act 8:39). Let us hear what the Philippian jailer felt in the hour of his conversion. We read that he “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house” (Act 16:34). In fact, the testimony of Scripture on this subject is always one and the

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<sup>4</sup> **boisterous, spasmodic mirth** – loud, noisy, outbursts of laughter and merriment.

same. Conversion is always described as the cause of joy and not of sorrow, of happiness and not of misery.

The plain truth, is that people speak ill of conversion because they know nothing really about it. They run down converted men and women as unhappy, because they judge them by their outward appearance of calmness, gravity, and quietness, and know nothing of their inward peace. They forget that it is not those who boast most of their own performances who do most, and it is not those who talk most of their happiness who are in reality the happiest people.

A converted man is happy, because he has peace with God. His sins are forgiven; his conscience is free from the sense of guilt: he can look forward to death, judgment, and eternity, and not feel afraid. What an immense blessing to feel forgiven and free!—He is happy because he finds order in his heart. His passions are controlled, his affections are rightly directed. Everything in his inner man, however weak and feeble, is in its right place, and not in confusion. What an immense blessing order is! He is happy, because he feels independent of circumstances. Come what will, he is provided for: sickness and losses and death can never touch his treasure in heaven, or rob him of Christ. What a blessing to feel independent! He is happy because he feels ready. Whatever happens he is somewhat prepared: the great business is settled; the great concern of life is arranged. What a blessing to feel ready. These are indeed true springs of happiness. They are springs which are utterly shut up and sealed to an unconverted man. Without forgiveness of sins, without hope for the world to come, dependent on this world for comfort, unprepared to meet God, he cannot be really happy. Conversion is an essential part of true happiness.

Settle it in your mind today that the friend who labors for your conversion to God is the best friend that you have. He is a friend not merely for the life to come,

but for the life that now is. He is a friend to your present comfort as well as to your future deliverance from hell. He is a friend for time as well as for eternity. CONVERSION IS A HAPPY THING.

Let me now show you, in the last place, that

## VI. Conversion May Be Seen

This is a part of my subject which ought never to be overlooked. Well would it be for the Church and the world, if in every age it had received more attention. Thousands have turned away in disgust from religion, because of the wickedness of many who profess it. Hundreds have caused the very name of conversion to stink; by the lives they have lived after declaring themselves converted. They have fancied that a few spasmodic sensations, and convictions were the true grace of God. They have imagined themselves converted, because their animal<sup>5</sup> feelings were excited. They have called themselves “converts” without the slightest right or title to that honored name. All this has done immense harm, and it is doing peculiar harm in the present day. The times demand a very clear assertion of the great principle, that true conversion is a thing that can always be seen.

I admit fully that the manner of the Spirit’s working is invisible. It is like the wind. It is like the attractive power of the magnet. It is like the influence of the moon upon the tides. There is something about it far beyond the reach of man’s eyes or understanding. But while I admit this decidedly, I maintain no less decidedly that the effects of the Spirit’s work in conversion will always be seen. Those effects may be weak and feeble at first: to the natural man they may hardly be visible, and

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<sup>5</sup> **animal** – carnal; fleshly; relating to the physical nature as opposed to the spiritual.



not understood. But effects there always will be: some fruit will always be seen where there is true conversion. Where no effect can be seen, there you may be sure there is no grace. Where no visible fruit can be found, there you may be sure is no conversion.

Does any one ask me what we may expect to see in a true conversion? I reply, There will always be something seen in a converted man's character, and feelings, and conduct, and opinions, and daily life. You will not see in him perfection; but you will see in him something peculiar, distinct, and different from other people. You will see him hating sin, loving Christ, following after holiness, taking pleasure in his Bible, persevering in prayer. You will see him penitent, humble, believing, temperate, charitable, truthful, good-tempered, patient, upright, honorable, kind. These, at any rate, will be his aims: these are the things which he will follow after, however short he may come of perfection. In some converted persons you will see these things more distinctly, in others less. This only I say, wherever there is conversion, something of this kind will be seen.

I care nothing for a conversion which has neither marks nor evidences to show. I shall always say, "Give me some marks if I am to think you are converted. Show me thy conversion without any marks, if thou canst." I do not believe in it. It is worth nothing at all. You may call such doctrine legal if you please. It is far better to be called legal than to be an Antinomian.<sup>6</sup> Never, never, will I allow that the blessed Spirit can be in a man's heart, when no fruit of the Spirit can be seen in his life. A conversion which allows a man to live in sin, to lie, and drink, and swear, is not the conversion of the Bible. It is a counterfeit conversion, which can only

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<sup>6</sup> **Antinomian** – from the Greek *anti*, against, and *nomos*, law, antinomianism basically means "against law." It generally means one who holds the theological view that God's Law has no place in the life of a believer.

please the devil, and will lead the man who is satisfied with it, not to heaven, but to hell.

Let this last point sink down into your heart and never be forgotten. Conversion is not only a scriptural thing, a real thing, a necessary thing, a possible thing, and a happy thing: there remains one more grand characteristic about it: it is A THING THAT WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN.

## **Appeals to Your Conscience**

And now let me wind up this paper by a few plain appeals to the consciences of all who read it. I have tried to the best of my power to unfold and explain the nature of conversion. I have endeavored to set it forth in every point of view. Nothing remains but to try to bring it home to the heart of every one into whose hands this book may fall.

### *Find out whether you are converted*

First of all, I urge every reader of this paper to find out whether he is converted. I am not asking about other people. The heathen no doubt need conversion. The unhappy inmates of jails and reformatories need conversion. There may be people living near your own house who are open sinners and unbelievers, and need conversion. But all this is beside the question. I ask, Are you converted yourself?

Are you converted? It is no reply to tell me that many people are hypocrites and false professors. It is no argument to say that there are many sham revivals, and mock conversions. All this may be very true: but the abuse of a thing does not destroy the use of it. The circulation of bad money is no reason why there should not be good coin. Whatever others may be, Are you converted yourself?

Are you converted? It is no answer to tell me that you go to church or chapel, and have been baptized and

admitted to the Table of the Lord. All this proves little: I could say as much for Judas Iscariot, Demas, Simon Magus, Ananias, and Sapphira. The question is still not answered. Is your heart changed? Are you really converted to God?

*If you are not converted, never rest till you are*

In the next place, I urge every reader of this book who is not converted, never to rest till he is. Make haste: awake to know your danger. Escape for your life: flee from the wrath to come. Time is short: eternity is near. Life is uncertain: judgment is sure. Arise and call upon God. The throne of grace is yet standing: the Lord Jesus Christ is yet waiting to be gracious. The promises of the Gospel are wide, broad, full, and free: lay hold upon them this day. Repent, and believe the Gospel: repent, and be converted. Rest not, rest not, rest not, till you know and feel that you are a converted man.

*If you believe you are converted*

In the last-place, I offer a word of exhortation to every reader who has reason to think that he has gone through that blessed change of which I have been speaking in this paper. You can remember the time when you were not what you are now. You can remember a time in your life when old things passed away, and all things became new. To you also I have something to say. Suffer the word of friendly counsel, and lay it to heart.

(a) Do you think that you are converted? Then give all diligence to make your calling and conversion sure. Leave nothing uncertain that concerns your immortal soul. Labor to have the witness of the Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God. Assurance is to be had in this world, and assurance is worth the seeking. It is good to have hope: it is far better to feel sure.

(b) Do you think that you are converted? Then do not expect impossibilities in this world. Do not suppose the day will ever come when you will find no weak

point in your heart, no wanderings in private prayer, no distraction in Bible-reading, no cold desires in the public worship of God, no flesh to mortify, no devil to tempt, no worldly snares to make you fall. Expect nothing of the kind. Conversion is not perfection! Conversion is not heaven! The old man within you is yet alive; the world around you is yet full of danger; the devil is not dead. Remember at your best, that a converted sinner is still a poor weak sinner, needing Christ every day. Remember this, and you will not be disappointed.

(c) Do you think that you are converted? Then labor and desire to grow in grace every year that you live. Look not to the things behind; be not content with old experience, old grace, old attainments in religion. Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby (1Pe 2:2). Entreat the Lord to carry on the work of conversion more and more in your soul, and to deepen spiritual impressions within you. Read your Bible more carefully every year: watch over your prayers more jealously every year. Beware of becoming sleepy and lazy in your religion. There is a vast difference between the lowest and the highest forms in the school of Christ. Strive to get on in knowledge, faith, hope, charity, and patience. Let your yearly motto be, "Onward, Forward, Upward! "to the last hour of your life.

(d) Do you think you are converted? Then show the value you place on conversion by your diligence in trying to do good to others. Do you really believe it is an awful thing to be an unconverted man? Do you really think that conversion is an unspeakable blessing? Then prove it, prove it, prove it, by constant zealous efforts to promote the conversion of others. Look round the neighborhood in which you live: have compassion on the multitudes who are yet unconverted. Be not content with getting them to come to your church or chapel; aim at nothing less than their entire conversion to God. Speak to them, read to them, pray for them, stir up oth-

ers to help them. But never, never, if you are a converted man, never be content to go to heaven alone!

From "Conversion" in *Old Paths* by J. C. Ryle.





**John Charles Ryle** (1816-1900) began his service to the Lord as a minister of the gospel in parish churches within the Church of England, for almost forty years. He then became Bishop of Liverpool in 1880, and came to international prominence as preacher, Bible expositor, and author. Today he is best known for his plain and lively writings on practical and spiritual themes, in a style deliberately used to reach ordinary people. His great aim in all his ministry was to encourage strong and serious Christian living. His tracts and books sold in the millions in the late 1800s, and many have been republished in modern times. Ryle's successor as Bishop of Liverpool commented, "The words of such a man acquire new force as we read them. Ryle lived near God, and God lived through him."