

## How to be Converted.

(The Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D., in  
'N. Y. Evangelist.')

'My reason and my conscience tell me that I ought to be a Christian, and I often wish that I were one. But the Bible tells me that "Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;" how shall I be converted? Conversion implies a new heart; but my heart is hard and stubborn; how can I change it?'

These questions may be agitated by very many of my readers; they are of such vital importance as to demand plain and direct answers. To shut Jesus Christ out of the heart means spiritual death; it shuts the soul out of heaven. I would say to this honest inquirer: If you use the means as diligently for the softening and converting of your heart as you have been using them for many years to harden your heart, you will soon become a sincere and useful Christian. The first one is honest and importunate prayer. Jesus Christ says that the regeneration of a sinful heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. Pray to the Holy Spirit that he will take away your stony heart and give you what the Bible calls 'the heart of flesh.' As you have sinned grievously, you may well pray for forgiveness; you may well pray for light, guidance, and help; but, chiefest of all, pray for the Holy Spirit's renewing and converting power on your wicked heart. Don't be satisfied with 'asking prayers' of other people. This may be only a snare if you rely on it. 'Pray for yourself.' Go at once to 'headquarters;' this momentous matter must be settled between you and your Saviour. Beseech the Holy Spirit to break down the door that shuts out Christ.

There is a great temptation to excuse your sins to yourself. None of your excuses are such as you would dare to offer on the day of judgment. Instead of excusing your sins and trying to palliate them, strive earnestly to break off from them. Make the resolute attempt upon the very first sin to which you are tempted. Set yourself against sin, and call for the Spirit's power to help you conquer it. Conversion means renouncing of sin, and no one has even begun to serve Jesus Christ until he has declared war upon his favorite appetites and lusts and his passions.

Unless you sincerely desire to become a Christian, you never will become one; if you do desire it, employ every means and influence that may change the current of your affections from selfish and sinful things toward Christ. Reading God's Word is one of these means; studying Christ's character and claims on you is another; turning away from sinful companionships is another; setting your face like a flint against all attempts to draw you back into old habits or entanglements which might tend to harden your heart the more. Above all, pray, and still more 'pray' for the Spirit's power.

As you are a free moral agent, you are to use every means for changing your heart. If a drunkard desires to be delivered from his bondage to the bottle, he is not content with simply willing to become a sober man. He takes certain steps. He puts the bottle out of his house; he avoids the society of those who would tempt him to drink; he makes a solemn pledge of en-

tire abstinence, and not only uses such wholesome physical tonics as may sustain him in his struggle with his old enemy, but he implores the help of Almighty God. These means faithfully employed may give him the victory, as they gave it to John B. Gough and other converted inebriates. Suppose that a young man had become intensely attached to a beautiful and fascinating woman, but had discovered that an alliance with her would be fraught with danger to his peace and his welfare; would it be enough for him simply to will a change in his affections? That might be a futile failure. But if he should destroy every keepsake that would recall her memory; if when he thought of her he kept before his mind only what was offensive and unworthy; and if he sought for himself purer and worthier associations, he might by these means overcome his former perilous passion. That would mean towards her a change of heart.

It is true, my friend, that the Holy Spirit alone can do the mighty work of regenerating your soul. Too deeply, too intensely you cannot hold to this solemn fact. It is, therefore, of infinite importance that you 'co-operate with the Holy Spirit.' Refusing to do this, you grieve the Spirit; you quench the Spirit. You will never be converted while working 'against' that blessed Spirit which points you to Christ, and strives to draw you to Christ. Whatever the Spirit presses you to do—whether in refusing a temptation or performing a right deed—do it promptly. Whatever you can do to please Jesus Christ, do it promptly. Shut your ears to the fatal foolishness that you are merely 'passive' in conversion. You are not so. Repentance of sin is an act of the mind, and faith is a hundred miles deeper than an intellectual belief in Jesus Christ; it is the act of clinging to him and joining your whole self to him. The very word 'conversion' signifies turning right around; it is your turning away from sin and self-seeking and self-living and turning to Jesus Christ, your atoning Saviour, with full purpose to obey him. There is no more passivity in all this than there is in eating, or breathing, or walking.

Perhaps too much has been said against 'feeling' in the process of conversion. Hatred is a feeling, and you must hate sin; love is a feeling, and I cannot conceive of a person's being thoroughly converted without feeling ashamed of his former wicked self and feeling love to his Redeemer and his fellow-creatures. The more squarely you face yourself, the more conviction of sin you will feel; the more you face your suffering, dying, atoning Saviour, the more will your hard heart be melted into penitence. Come close up to the Cross, my friend, and look at yourself there! Look onward to the day of judgment, and see how you feel there as a rejector of Jesus Christ who trampled on his redeeming love! Look at the good you may do as a faithful, earnest, useful, courageous Christian, and then fervently pray to the Holy Spirit to make you one. And work with Him! As Spurgeon used to say: 'The way to do a thing is—to do it.'

### Playing for Keeps.

(Boston 'Congregationalist'.)

A gentleman in one of the best residence neighborhoods of a New England city advised his little boy the other day not to

play marbles for keeps. He soon discovered that his boy, by accepting his advice, had shut himself out of the popular game of the season. Not another child in the neighborhood would play with him, except for keeps. Many of those children live in Christian homes, but they all put their pennies into marbles to win or lose. The master of the public school says that although gambling with marbles in the school yard is forbidden, one of his chief troubles arises from fights among the children over disagreements about this same game.

This instance is mentioned merely as a symptom. We believe it is a fact undisputed that the passion for gambling is increasing in intensity in this country and is spreading among all classes. Men and women grow more eager to get something for nothing, and to get it away from somebody, anybody. In the saloon the throw of the dice, in the parlor the turn of the cards, at the roulette table the roll of the ball, on the race track the book maker's numbers decide who will win and who will surrender his money to the winner.

No vice is more fatal than gambling, to the virtue of integrity, to high social relations, to a worthy estimate of the value of life. Those who earn what they possess prize their possessions, give thought to their use of them, enjoy the fruits of their use. Those who give to others what they have gained by honest labor give of their own lives to help mankind. Those who gain money by chance prize it little, risk it readily, give it away with little sense of service or of appreciation of those whom they serve. Life itself tends to become to them a game, with growing temptation to stake its treasures on the turn of trifling events. What men risk willingly they value lightly.

To the passion for gambling must be charged up a large proportion of business failures, broken families, losses of reputation, defalcations and suicides. Young men with bright prospects risk their own money, lose it, steal from their employers who trust them, expecting to get back what they have lost and to replace what they have taken, and realize too late that they have thrown themselves away. Society is feebly conscious that it is being defrauded, makes laws against certain kinds of gambling, enforces them irregularly, and all the time is raising up more gamblers. Marbles are treasures of the child. Property, reputation, honor, friendship, family, life are treasures of the man. When he is ready to stake any of these against chance he has cheapened them all. He has vitiated his own sense of the real value of things. He has weakened his usefulness to his family, the church, society, and the state. His success in the game is no less a failure than his loss would be. 'What doth it profit it a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?'

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