

MIME-Version: 1.0 Content-Type: multipart/related; boundary="-----_NextPart_01C7ADCA.BCA27170" This document is a Single File Web Page, also known as a Web Archive file. If you are seeing this message, your browser or editor doesn't support Web Archive files. Please download a browser that supports Web Archive, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer. -----_NextPart_01C7ADCA.BCA27170 Content-Location: file:///C:/728ADD04/Converted.htm Content-Transfer-Encoding: quoted-printable Content-Type: text/html; charset="us-ascii"

Converted – Acts= 26:18

I.&nbs= p; INTRODUCTION

A. Set Scene

1. Before we read our text, let's set the stage . . . <= o:p>
2. Paul is still being held a prisoner at Caesarea, the Roman Capital of Israel.
3. The new governor, Festus, asked Paul to return to Jerusa= lem to stand trial.
4. But Paul knew Festus had been put up to that request by the Jewish high council.
5. They had plans to murder Paul & wanted him in Jerusalem where t= hey could carry out their plot.
6. Paul was wise to them, so he refused, appealing instead to= Caesar, which was the right of every Roman citizen.
7. This put Festus in a difficult spot. He had no legal basis to either punish or hold Paul.
 - a. Festus didn't really care what happened to Paul; he just wanted to be rid of the guy.
 - b. But Paul's appeal to Rome meant he had to go, & Festus had no valid charge to send with him.=
 - c. When Paul appeared before Caesar, t= he first thing he'd want to know was the charges.
 - d. There weren't any! Nero would= be furious at the waste of his time & would= want to know why Festus couldn't handle something like this himself.
8. As Festus is trying to figure out what to do, he's visited by Herod Agrippa II & his wife Bernice.

- a. This Agrippa is the last of the Herods. His kingdom is confined = to a small portion of Galilee.
 - b. He's more a figurehead than r= eal ruler.
 - c. But he's a sharp guy & Fe= stus knew he was far more aware of the situation in Israel than he was.
 - d. So he explained his dilemma, & Agrippa offered to help him find a way out of his jam with Paul.=
9. Paul is brought before Festus, Agrippa & Bernice for an interview.
10. He knew Agrippa's reputation as a fair-minded judge who was well-educated in the Jewish faith.
- a. So he shared his entire testimony, = from his youth,
 - b. Right up through his role as a lead= er of the persecution of the Church.
 - c. Then he comes to his conversion - <= o:p>

B. Read vs. 12-18

II. TEXT

We're going to concentrate on this last verse, but before we do, I want to tell you about a man named

A. Augustine

1. He was born in 354 in North Africa<= /stl:place> to a Christian mother & pagan father.
2. Though his mother urged him to become a Christian, Augusti= ne was attracted to the Eastern religion of Manichaeism.
3. Being highly intelligent, even from a young age, Augustine= was drawn to philosophy & the life of the mind.
4. The only way to make a living at philosophy was to teach, so he took courses in rhetoric & debate.
 - a. But he fell into the wrong crowd &a= mp; got caught up in gross immorality.
 - b. He had a mistress with whom he had = a son but refused to marry her because he didn't want to be tied down.=
5. When he finished his education in North Africa, he went to= Rome which had

the best schools, & began to teach.

6. But the city was incredibly decadent & his drift into debauchery worsened.

7. When he turned 30, he was hired to be a professor of rhetoric for the Imperial court at Milan.

8. It was there, his life took a dramatic turn.

9. As Augustine studied philosophy, he realized the foolishness of Manichaeism & dumped it.

10. He became a skeptic, critical of religious faith altogether.

11. His slide into immorality grew worse.

12. His mother arranged a marriage for him that would elevate him to the highest ranks of nobility.

a. It looked like everything was turning out perfectly for Augustine.

b. He had a dream job in a plush position.

c. His future looked bright. His was a charmed life.

13. There was only 1 small hitch; his fiancée; was 2 years too young to marry. Augustine had to wait.

14. While he waited he read philosophy & attended the Church in Milan along with the rest of the royal court.

a. Each Sunday the Pastor, Bishop Ambrose gave a stirring message.

b. Augustine found himself looking forward to each Sunday's sermon.

15. Monday through Saturday became a torment as he grew increasingly distressed over his sin.

16. He tried to do better, to curb the immorality. But the harder he tried, the worst it got.

17. Then one day, as he sat in his garden, he heard a child's voice from somewhere nearby say over & over in some kind of game, "Take up & read. Take up & read."

18. There on the table was a Bible which Augustine had only recently begun to study.

a. He picked it up and at random flipped to Romans 13:13 –

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

b. His eyes could not have lit on no more perfect passage to address the torment of his soul.

c. In a moment of crystal clear revelation he realized his victory over sin would never come by his own strength; It would come only through surrender to Christ.

d. All of Ambrose's sermons came together in a single moment & Augustine was gloriously born again.

e. The burden of his guilt was released – He knew he was a changed man.

19. Within days he decided to devote his life to serving God as a priest.

a. He broke his engagement, resigned his role as professor, took leave of the royal court & returned to his home in North Africa.

b. Though he remained celibate, he took seriously his responsibility to provide for his son.

c. When he arrived home, his old mistress approached, thinking they would return to their former relationship.

d. When he paid her no heed, she said, “Augustine, Augustine, it is I.”

e. To which he replied, “Yes, but it is not I.”

20. Augustine spent the rest of his life building the theological & philosophical framework that would provide a foundation for the Christian faith to the present day.

21. His is an amazing story of **CONVERSION**; of being transformed from sinner into saint.

B. Conversion

1. Conversion is what happened to Paul outside Damascus.

2. He went there to persecute the followers of Christ but became one of their most important leaders – a man who went from there to lead tens of thousands of others to the Faith he at one time had tried to wipe out.

3. At the moment of his conversion, God gave him his life-mission.

4. In it we see what it means to be converted.

¹⁷ I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes,

C. Opened Eyes

1. Jesus meant spiritual awareness & understanding.
 2. As Paul preached the Gospel, the Holy Spirit would quicken hearts & people would be born again.
 3. Just like newborns, they'd awaken to the reality of a new life, with new values & priorities.
 4. You see, conversion begins with a crisis that leads to a process.
 - a. The crisis is that moment when it all clicks & we're born again.
 - 1) We're convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) We hear the Good News Jesus died for that sin & offers us forgiveness & new life.
 - 3) Our eyes open to the gift of salvation & by faith we take it. In that moment, we're born again.
 - b. But that's only the beginning of our life in Christ.
 - c. That crisis is a doorway ushering us into a process that includes the 3 things Jesus told Paul in v. 18.
 - 1) *[Our eyes are opened] in order to turn [us] from darkness to light,*
1. The word "turn" is better translated, "turned back, return."
 2. You remember when Adam & Eve were created they were naked but without shame because there was no sin.
 3. Most scholars believe as they walked with God in Eden, bearing His unmarred image, they were clothed with a glorious garment of light – just as Moses' face radiated the glory of God when he came down from Mt. Sinai.
 4. That light not only clothed them, it filled them, shining truth & life into every corner of their being.
 5. But when they turned from God to sin, the light went out & they plunged into darkness.
 6. Genesis 3 says when they sinned, their eyes were opened & they knew they

were naked. Their shining garment of light was gone, so they tried to replace it with leaves.

- a. It wasn't that their physical eyes had been closed up till then.
 - b. It's that their spiritual perception had taken precedence.
 - c. But when they turned from the God, = their spiritual perception dimmed & physical sight took over.
7. When we're born again God restores our spiritual sight.
- a. He turns us around, back to the reason & purpose for why we = were created in the first place –
 - b. To walk with Him; to have an intimate love relationship with Him.
8. But learning to see things from a spiritual perspective is a process that takes time & grows keener with practice.
9. We really are like newborn infants.
- a. As soon as a child is born, its eyes are open.
 - b. But it can only focus on objects within a few inches of their face.
 - c. As the weeks go by the range extends to several feet, then farther.
 - d. God's designed newborns that way so that they'll not be over stimulated before their brains can cope.
 - e. In the same way when we're first born-again, we know a real change has = taken place,
 - f. But all spiritual truth isn't immediately clear.
 - g. God wants us to stay focused on the basics, the most crucial truths of our relationship with Him.
 - h. But as time goes by, our spiritual perception grows.
10. Jesus told Paul conversion meant turning= people **BACK** to the light= 1; that would be the first light, the one Adam & Eve enjoyed before the Fall.
- a. Have you ever thought how cool it would be to have been there?
 - b. Well, Jesus said conversion means **getting back to Eden**.
 - c. While we'll only see the fullness of that in Heaven, we can enjoy a measure

of that right now as we walk in the Spirit.

2) *[Our eyes are opened = to turn us back] from the power of Satan to God, =*

1. Not only did Adam & Eve forfeit their garment of glory when they turned from God, they handed themselves over to Satan & became his slaves.

2. That word “power” means “authority.” It refers to legal right.

3. Think of it – God created Adam & Eve in His image.

a. They were perfect with full use of all their faculties.

b. God set them in a perfect home on a perfect Planet.

c. There’s no sin, no death, no sorrow, no tears, no illness, no disease. It’s bliss & harmony.

d. Then God says to Adam & Eve, “I give you **dominion** over all of it. Take good care of it.”

e. God gave them an opportunity to learn about His relationship with them through their relationship with the Creation.

f. As they exercised their authority with creation, they learned more about Him & how He exercised authority with them.

g. It brought experience & understanding that enhanced their intimacy with God.

4. But what did Adam & Eve do with the authority God gave them?

a. We don’t know how long it was, but eventually they turned it over to Satan in the Fall.

b. And what a Fall it was, for they went from being glorious children to wretched slaves.

5. Jesus came to turn us back from being under the devil’s dominion, to God.

6. Now, I know talk like this upsets some.

a. They don’t like hearing that apart from Christ they’re under Satan’s power.

b. They see themselves as fine, moral people.

c. They haven’t murdered anyone & aren’t a member of the Hell’s Angels, so they think they’re doing okay.

d. They aren't serving God, but = they certainly aren't serving satan—they're serving themselves!

7. What they don't realize is that the devil prefers it when they think they're serving themselves.

a. Because he already has authority over them by virtue of the fall, they're his by default.

b. So if they want to live under the delusion they're spiritually neutral, that serves his purpose just fine.

c. Because they'll end up in exactly the same place as if they'd knowingly served him.

8. Jesus defeated Satan at the cross. His authority has been broken.

9. And now we can be free to return to our rightful place as God's sons & daughters.

10. Conversion is a crisis that leads to a process in which we grow in our awareness of who we are as God's children.

a. A prince/princess grows in his/her awareness of who he/she is as the years go by.

b. As they grow, they become increasingly aware of the privileges that come with being royal.

c. In their teens years, they visit the reaches of the kingdom & discover how vast their domain is.

d. As they near adulthood, the reality of the throne begins to dawn on them.

e. They realize their being groomed to reign.

11. This is precisely what happens to us as we are turned from the power of Satan to God.

12. We realize the lies the world told us about who & what we are have to be laid aside as we embrace the truth about who & what we are in Christ & the greatness He's created us for & called us to.

13. Listen to what Peter says about all this – 1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ You *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

14. May I say, if believers would just apprehend this – if they had a grasp of what conversion means, they wouldn't need psychotherapy.

a. Why bother with some patchwork new identity a therapist wants to program you with

b. When you already have this? This is already **WHO = YOU ARE IN CHRIST!**

3) [Our eyes are opened] = that [we] may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in [Christ].

1. The Gospel is a message of forgiveness – we all know that.

a. In fact, we know it so well, maybe it's lost its potency. It's power to move us to celebration.

b. It's become almost trite, a cliché.

2. Do we really understand the greatness of the gift God offers us in forgiving our sin?

3. If we bump into each other in the aisle, we turn & say a quick "Excuse me." We apologize & pardon because it's no big deal.

4. But if I go over to your house & knock over a priceless family heirloom that shatters in a hundred pieces, I'm not going to just say, "Oops, sorry."

a. No – I'm going to be devastated I ruined something so precious to you.

b. Of course I'm going to accept the blame, express my sincerest apologies, & offer to compensate you.

c. I'm expecting you to be upset, distraught; with huge grief over the loss of so important = an antique.

d. But let's say instead of all I'm expecting, you slough it off, sweep up the pieces, dump them in the trash,

e. Then come to me, look me in the eye & say, "Lance, forget it! You're forgiven! Yes, it was a treasured possession, but in the end, it was just a thing. You're far more important to me = than some thing. So, forget it now. Let's have dinner."

f. Then you sit me down at your table & serve a gourmet meal, & the broken heirloom is never mentioned again.

g. Let me tell you—I'm never going to forget the greatness of your forgiveness.

h. = For the rest of my life, I'm going to hold the deepest sense of appreciation = for the mercy & grace you've bestowed on me.

5. Maybe the reason our sense of appreciation to God for His forgiveness isn't more intense is because we don't really see our sin as = all that bad.

a. We consider it a "bump in the= aisle"

b. Rather than the ruining of a pricel= ess treasure..

6. Oh that we would see our sin for what it is – <= /o:p>

a. A hideous black spot on the holines= s of God.

b. A shattering of the divine image in= us.

c. A ragged claw across the face of be= auty.

d. Sin is all that's wrong splashed across all that's right.

7. Then Jesus comes – & His blood erases all that's wrong & returns it to the way it was meant to be.

8. Look – that's what Paul says here:<= /span>

a. Not only did Jesus forgive our sins, relieving us of guilt & the demand for punishment.

b. He goes further – He restores our inheritance as the Children of God.

c. "Those who are sanctified by = faith in Christ" means those who've been converted – who've turned from the hell-bent path of the human race to return to God.

9. Let me return to the heirloom story again.

a. Let's say after I've br= oken your priceless family antique, & you've forgiven me, you say, "Okay, well, it's time for you to go."<= /p>

b. I'd still be eternally grateful for your mercy & forgiveness, but I'd be concerned about your present feelings = for me & our relationship.

c. You sent me away with the last event between us being my goof. Our relationship halts at that point.=

10. Okay, let's go back again: the heirloom is busted, you've forgiven me, but instead of telling me to leave, you say, "Come here, there's something I want to show you."

a. You take me down a hallway to a locked room, take out a key, open the door & we step inside.

b. It's a treasury filled with even more incredible heirlooms & antiques.

c. When I show my nervousness & thrust my hands deep into my pockets so that I don't ruin anything else, you say, "No, no – don't worry. This is all yours! I'm giving it to you."

e. Then you say this - "Lance, **HOW** you responded to breaking the first piece has proven all this is safe with you."

11. This is what Paul means when he says conversion means receiving forgiveness & an inheritance.

a. We're not only turned away from the guilt of sin,

b. We're turned TO the riches of belonging to God.

c. He is our Heavenly Father who hands over to us as His sons & daughters all that He has.

III. CONCLUSION

I want to end this morning with a powerful story of conversion.

A. John Newton

1. John Newton was only 11 when he began his life as a sailor.

2. In 1743, his father arranged for him to take a position on a sugar plantation in Jamaica, but the Royal Navy pressed him into service.

a. When he tried to desert, he was arrested & put in irons.

b. He asked to be exchanged with a slave ship – actually a step DOWN from being in chains on a naval vessel.

3. When the slave ship landed in Sierra Leone on the West Coast of Africa, Newton jumped ship again & was captured by a slave trader who made him his servant.

a. He was so badly beaten & starved, his health was broken.

b. In 1748, a friend of his father's found & rescued him.

4. Returning to England aboard another slave ship, they ran into a storm that threatened to sink the ship.

a. For the first time in his life, Newton prayed, asking God for protection & deliverance.

b. The storm abated and the ship limped home.

c. During what was left of the voyage, Newton read the Bible & a few other pieces of Christian literature.

d. Years later, he wrote that this was the first stirrings of faith.

e. On May 12, when the ship arrived in England, Newton made sure his faith in Christ as Savior – a date he ever after celebrated as the anniversary of his conversion.

5. But that conversion had a long way yet to go – because though now born again, Newton continued in the slave trade.

a. He put away the drinking, gambling, & profanity that had marked his life to that time,

b. But it took a while for him to realize the other areas of his life God wanted to deliver him from.

6. 4 voyages shipping slaves from Africa to the New World broke what was left of Newton's strength.

7. He hung up his captain's hat in 1754 & became a tide surveyor in Liverpool.

8. For the next 10 years he studied the Scriptures, along with Hebrew & Greek.

9. In 1764, he was made a priest in the Anglican church at Olney.

a. His ministry was so effective they had to enlarge the church.

b. 15 years went by when he was invited to become pastor of a large church in London.

c. He was one of only 2 evangelical pastors in the entire city.

d. He was on good terms with everyone, refusing to get pulled into meaningless debates over minor issues.

e. His obvious love for God & charity toward others endeared him to all.

10. So much so, that many of England's most powerful & influential sought him out for advice & counsel.

a. Including a young member of Parliament who'd recently had his own dramatic conversion to Christ & was considering resigning his political office to

train for the ministry.

b. Newton convinced him to stay in politics—and to use his position to effect an important change in English society – the end of slavery.

11. You see, Newton now considered his years as a slave with loathing.

a. He even questioned the legitimacy of his faith in during that time.

b. Looking back – Newton could see how his growth in Christ had altered his perception & changed his opinion on many things.

c. For him, conversion was a crisis that began on May 12, 1748 but continued in a process that lasted the rest of his life.

12. The former slaver became one of the key players in the British Abolitionist movement.

a. That young member of Parliament Newton convinced to stay in government was William Wilberforce,

b. Whose tireless 50 year crusade ultimately ended slavery in the British Empire.

13. But you & I know John Newton for another reason – as the Author of Amazing Grace.

14. Listen to the words in light of this idea of conversion -

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound - That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be, As long as life endures.

-----= NextPart_01C7ADCA.BCA27170 Content-Location:
file:///C:/728ADD04/Converted_files/header.htm Content-Transfer-Encoding:
quoted-printable Content-Type: text/html; charset="us-ascii"

☐

☐

converted.doc • Page - 11

Fee= d My Sheep

-

Fee= d My Sheep

-----= NextPart_01C7ADCA.BCA27170 Content-Location:
file:///C:/728ADD04/Converted_files/filelist.xml Content-Transfer-Encoding:
quoted-printable Content-Type: text/xml; charset="utf-8" -----
= NextPart_01C7ADCA.BCA27170--