

True Conversion - A Work of God

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Date: 16 June 2013

Preacher: Dick Lucas

[0 : 00] Well, this morning we were looking at the prophet Elijah, and this evening we're going to read a story that involves the prophet Elisha.

You'll find it in 2 Kings 5, and again, a well-known story, perhaps to many of us, but all the more important that we read carefully.

I think if you have one of our church Bibles, it's page 311, and we're going to read 2 Kings 5 and the first 14 verses.

And to make sense of this, you have to know that Syria was very frequently at odds with and at war with the land of Israel in these days.

So Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria.

[1 : 13] He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife.

So Naaman went in and told his lord, thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel.

And the king of Syria said, go now, and I'll send a letter to the king of Israel. So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothes.

And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman, my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.

The king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, Am I God to kill and to make alive that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider and see how he is seeking to quarrel with me.

[2 : 35] But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, Why have you torn your clothes? Let him now come to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.

But Naaman was angry. And he went away, saying, Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.

Are not Abana and Phapa, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

But his servants came near him and said to him, My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you. Will you not do it?

[3 : 48] Has he actually said to you, Wash and be clean? So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God.

And his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Our text, we're going on from where we left off. 2 Kings chapter 5, verses 15 to 19a.

That's our text, 2 Kings 5, 15. And our theme, true conversion. The whole strength of the church must depend upon that.

Strong conversions mean strong churches. Weak and wobbly conversions mean weak and wobbly churches. So that's the source, that's the meaning of our theme tonight.

[5 : 00] True conversion, text 2 Kings 5. Well, as it was read to us just now, the story of General, I imagine he was a general, unless I promoted him.

The story of General Nehrman is an unforgettable story. 2 Kings tails off badly. I find the last chapters of 2 Kings some of the most dismal reading in the whole Bible, as the exile gets nearer and nearer.

It's a really sad reading. But there's a ray of light here at the beginning of 2 Kings, though it's not a ray of light for Israel, but for a foreign soldier.

Now, there's no time, I'm afraid, to go into that familiar story. I love it. I would like to do so. Because I want to direct your attention to the climax, which I'm now going to read, which shows that Nehrman, the soldier, had become a converted man.

Verse 15. Then Nehrman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.

[6 : 21] Please now accept a gift from your servant, to which the prophet answered, As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing, even though Nehrman urged him, he refused.

If you will not, said Nehrman, please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other God but the Lord.

But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing. When my master enters the temple of Roman to bow down, and he is leaning on my arm, and I bow down there also, when I bow down in the temple of Roman, and may the Lord forgive your servant for this.

No, you are certainly not to do it, said Elijah. On the contrary, go in peace, said Elijah. I can't quite resist part of the story before we come to this great confession of faith.

So in my imagination, we will go with the soldier, the general down for that dip in the muddy waters of the Jordan. It's all in my imagination, because the Bible doesn't tell us what it looked like, but it must have been a strange picture, with all the attendants watching as the great man went down into the water.

[7 : 42] Down he goes for the first time. Ach! Literally cold. Down he goes the second time. Dirty, too. More likely to catch a disease in this water than get cured.

Down he goes the third time. It's a matter of great humility. What will they think at home, he wonders to himself. I'm making a fool of myself. Down he goes a fourth time, and as he comes up, he thinks, could this be a hoax from the enemy?

They don't like me around here. Down he goes for the fifth time. Well, I've begun this, and I'm going to finish it, whatever happens. Down he goes for the sixth time.

His heart is beating, I think, by now, don't you? It's his very last hope. So down he goes for the seventh and final time. Comes up.

Feels his face. Looks at his hands. Looks down at his body. Amazing. The skin, clean, fresh, like a young boy.

[8 : 47] So, Naaman is a cured man at last, and that's a great miracle. But Naaman is also a converted man, and that's a greater miracle.

Now, you may question that. The old teaching manuals on this story, especially for Sunday school, would treat this story as a parable or an analogy. They would say that leprosy was a picture of sin that spoiled your life and spread everywhere and separated you from other people.

They would look to the waters of Jordan as though it was the blood of Christ, the place where you get cleansing. And they would see the cure as a picture of perfect forgiveness, everything made clean.

Now, there's some help in that. But it may keep us from what is so truly wonderful in this story that Naaman became not just a cured leper, but a new man altogether.

And that's what I want to underscore this evening. I want to show you that this conversion of Naaman was a marvelous act of God. Very different from nominal church membership, this is Christian reality today, the work of God in the soul of man.

[10 : 05] So we have in the very few verses that I read, and we're going to have these open in front of us this evening, we have three hallmarks of true conversion.

I take it that many of you here will recognize these things in your own experience. They're what God does to make a person a new person altogether, a new person in Christ.

A whole change of mindset, light instead of darkness, sight instead of blindness. So here's the first. New convictions. Totally new convictions.

Listen as he stands. It's quite formal, isn't it? He comes with all his attendants back to the man of God, and he stands in front of him. It's obvious he wants to make a statement of great importance. It's only a dozen words or so, but it's like a confession of faith. And this is what he says. Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.

[11:10] Now that is a very dogmatic statement. He's saying, outside of Israel, I have come to realize there is no knowledge of God in all the world. Outside of Israel, he is confessing before Elisha, there is no true religion.

I don't suppose that was politically correct language then. It certainly isn't now. People hate exclusive claims like this. But the question is not whether it's exclusive or not, but is it true? And there is no doubt, as I keep a finger if you will in 2 Kings, there is no doubt that this is what the early apostles taught, and if we're going to be true to them, we must teach it too. Just one verse to make absolutely certain of this.

It will be familiar to most of you. Acts chapter 4 verse 8. I'll start at verse 8.

The verse I want is verse 12, of course, which some of you may have learned by heart long ago. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers and elders of the people, if we are being called to account today for the act of kindness shown to a cripple and of being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

[12:35] He is the stone you build as rejected, which has become the capstone. They're very blunt, weren't they, these early preachers? They didn't pull their punches. They didn't cover it in difficult language.

It was very open. And now comes the great verse, which shows that the apostolic teaching was exclusive with regard to Christ and salvation. Salvation is found in no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Notice, no one else, no other name. Salvation is found in no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

And that's really what Naaman is confessing. And this is offensive because we live in a very, very religious world. Let's get this absolutely plain.

The world in which we live, whatever country we're thinking about, abounds in religion. In every country in the world, there are temples, shrines, priests, sacrificial offerings, temple worship rites.

[13:42] They may not be above ground. They may be hidden away, but they'll be there. And while we in the United Kingdom seem to be becoming more secular, lo and behold, religion appears on our shores.

Islam arrives, the Sikhs arrive, the Hindus arrive, the Buddhists arrive in their thousands and are building their temples and carrying on their religion. It seems as though Dawkins can't win, doesn't it really?

Now we're going to ask the question tonight, how did the apostles see religion? For temples and priests and sacrifices abounded in the world in which they lived.

And for this, we're going to turn to my, well, I think it's my favorite sermon in the New Testament.

And I'm going to ask you to turn for a moment only to Acts 17. We're only going to glimpse.

We don't have time for more than that. But it is a very great sermon. Incidentally, those of you who are older may remember the time when Paul was supposed to have made a mistake in preaching this sermon.

[14:51] I think those days have long gone. This is one of the great sermons that Paul preached. It's not the only things that he said. In some ways, it's preliminary. But it is a very important sermon indeed.

And verse 16 of chapter 17 sets the scene. While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

So in this city of intellectuals, religion abounded. It was said that if you walked down a street in Athens in those days, you were more likely to find an idol shrine than a human being.

And still today, at this very moment, tourists are gaping at the Parthenon and all the cameras are clicking, aren't they, at the temples in Athens. They are one of the sights and wonders of the world. And that draws the tourists today. Now, Paul begins his address to the learned men of Athens with breathtaking boldness in verse 22.

[15 : 57] He stands up at the meeting of the Areopagus where all these leading men are and says, Men in Athens, I see that you're very religious. Well, yes, indeed. As I said, the world is full of religion and they're very religious.

And then, with breathtaking courage and nerve, almost, I was going to say, cheek, he tells them that he's about to inform them of the uselessness of religion and tell them what they don't yet know about the true God who is their creator and judge.

You really would need courage, wouldn't you, to do that, to that audience. Let me give you some flavor before we leave him of the way in which he did it.

He turns their thinking upside down. Look at verse 24. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hand.

So, God doesn't want you to build all these temples as a home for him. On the contrary, God has made this beautiful world and everything in it as a home for you.

[17 : 13] It is not you who have to house God. He houses his creatures and he has made this glorious world for you to live in. Don't think you have to make a house for him to live in.

And then verse 25. Again, he turns their thinking upside down. And he has not served or worshipped by human hands as if he needed anything because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

So, with all this constant activity of sacrificial offerings and rituals that are going on in the temples, don't think that you have to do that to nourish and maintain God and please him.

Because actually, it is he who knows your need and provides you with everything to make life possible. You believe that, don't you? You wouldn't have got up this morning and nor would I if you hadn't got the breath in your body.

We depend upon God absolutely to a life, breath and everything else that he gives us day by day. Now, we won't go further in the sermon than that but do you see that he's turning their thinking upside down.

[18 : 23] In plain language, he is demolishing the paraphernalia of religion and introducing the God who made this world and us to enjoy it.

He's saying, in effect, these temples are useless as houses for God and all your service and offering and priests and so on, that is useless too.

And then at the end, I love the end, the astonishing courage confronting these men. I've heard many sermons that tell me that I ought not to do certain things but you don't often hear a sermon that tells you you shouldn't think certain things and here are great thinkers being told that their thinking is all wrong.

Look at verse 29. Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think like you think. And then verse 30. In the past, God overlooked such ignorance which means your ignorance.

That's bold talk, isn't it? Coming to these eminent thinkers, he says, you have been thinking all wrong and God condemns this ignorance now that Christ has risen.

[19 : 43] Oh, but Mr. Lucas, it's often been said to me, I can't help my convictions that have been honestly reached. To which the answer that Paul would give is, you can help your convictions and you may need quickly to repent of them.

thus, Paul deals with the religious man and with religion in the world just as Nerman saw that all the religion in the world was useless to bring you a knowledge of God.

Now, through the God who had revealed himself to Israel, there was a possibility of knowing God. And today, of course, we find that knowledge through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, there stands in front of Elisha a man who's been delivered marvelously from universal idolatry that was the norm in his day.

In the words of your Scottish Shorter Catechism, question, are there more gods than one? Answer, there is but one only, the living and true God.

[20 : 49] That's what Nerman knew that day and that's what he confessed. I'd like to stop on this unity of God for a moment. It may seem rather an unexciting doctrine.

God is one. But if we don't understand the unity of God, that God is one, the only God, we shall never understand our Christian obligations.

First of all, in the Old Testament, you remember the great words, here is there, the Lord our God is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. It's a powerful word, isn't it?

If you believe in one God, he will demand all of you. When you were pagans and you believed in many gods, when you were polytheists, you couldn't possibly give all your devotion to one of them because another god might be offended.

If you worshipped the god of fertility and ignored a god who had another interest, say the wither, they would be annoyed with you and say, why aren't you looking after us?

[21 : 56] You know, when you stand in a place like Hong Kong and you look up to those enormous skyscrapers of apartments and you see little lights shining in the window which are the place where the idol lives, there can be in some of those apartments one, two or three gods.

And the people have a difficult job paying enough attention to all of them. And in Israel, God comes to his people and says, I am one God.

And therefore, those dreadfully divided hearts, divided between all the gods in the idolatrous world in which they live, all those gods demanding their share, now they can all be brought under one God so that I want all your heart.

So the doctrine of the unity of God in the Old Testament meant a heart given wholly to that God who would not tolerate sharing you with anybody else.

What about the New Testament? Well, when we get to the New Testament, it's even more drastic. This one God will not share the world with other gods.

[23 : 08] he refuses to share this world with the many gods that are in the world. He wants it all. So he says to the disciples in that upper room, go into all the world and preach the gospel.

And the apostles say that on the last day, every knee will bow to him. No other god will have any worship. It is all for our Lord Jesus Christ. So you see, the doctrine of the unity of God is a very powerful one.

It means that God has rights. He has the right to the whole of your heart and how divided we often are. We constantly have to come back, don't we, to realize he will not share us with any other power, any other person.

But just as he won't share your heart, this one God won't share the world, which is why our missionary brethren go into all the world. Well, that's the first hallmark of true conversion.

And do you agree with me that as we go back now to two kings, will you travel back with me? I've lost my place but it's quickly found. Do you agree with me that Nerman, the soldier, soldiers like this, well, I don't know if they normally have this kind of conviction but this soldier did.

[24 : 30] By the mercy and grace of God, he stands up in front of Elisha and says, I know there is no other God but yours. Can you say that about our Lord Jesus Christ?

I know there is no other Savior but him. Yes, I think every Christian knows that. In our hearts, from the beginning, we may have no theological training, we may have read no books, but we know in our hearts from the moment we become Christ that God is our creator, he is our judge and he is our only hope.

Now what's the second mark of true conversion here in these very simple verses and very few words? The prophet said, so he says, please accept now a gift from your servant.

I'm going to call this new affections, new affections. During our conference this week, we looked at 1 John and 1 John chapter 2 verse 15, don't bother to turn it up, I'm going to read it, has a remarkable verse which goes like this, do not love the world or anything in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. You see, he contrasts the love of the world and the love of the Father. Now, Thomas Chalmers, who's one of your great Scotsmen and great Christian leaders, used in a very famous sermon a phrase to describe the love of the Father.

[26 : 08] I wonder if you remember it or can think of what it was. It was a phrase that's been in my head very often, the expulsive power of a new affection. Does that find an echo?

The expulsive power of a new affection. I have the love of the world. I'm gripped by the love of the world. God comes into my heart by his grace. Christ saves me and I find that I now love the Father more than the world.

Therefore, I'm able to put God first. It's a new affection. And there is the expulsive power of this new affection. Well, consider the new affections of this good soldier, Nehman.

In his case, it was simply a matter of money. He seems to be very wealthy, doesn't he? Vast numbers of shekels and clothes and so on. And what he wants to do now is not to buy his way to healing, but to show his great gratitude for what God has done for him.

And so it's almost a ludicrous situation. He says, Prophet, I want to give you some money now for the cause of God. And the prophet says, no, no, I'm afraid I won't take any. Now, I urge you to take it.

[27 : 16] It's rather the other way around from normal, isn't it? When the minister's urging us to give to some great project and we're not sure that we can afford it. I've only been to Japan once in my life.

I went to Tokyo and I was speaking in a number of churches and I had to be tied, of course, to an interpreter. And we were sitting at the back of the platform like this and the minister of the church, Pastor Obara, was a very famous pastor.

He'd been very brave during the war. And he got up and preached a sermon to his congregation, which was one of the most intense that I've ever heard.

He, well, he really shouted at them for 20 minutes, appealing to them from the heart. So I turned to my little interpreter and I leaned over to him and I said, what's he talking about?

Is this a gospel appeal? Oh no, the interpreter said to me, he's just asking for money. He went on for 20 minutes. Clearly, this is a hard-hearted congregation.

[28 : 25] And to get it out of their pockets needed a 20-minute talk. Well, how different is this? Here's the congregation coming to the pastor and saying, please may we give it to you? And the pastor saying, no, I really can't take it.

And we know the reason for that, of course. There's got to be no misunderstanding. Salvation can't be bought. It's amazing. When you are my age, you have what I call senior moments.

That is, things fall out of your head that you wanted to keep in your head. And it was only this evening I remembered what I wanted to say about the change of affections.

Because, of course, the greatest example of all is the greatest conversion of all, the conversion of St. Paul, as we call it, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the Apostle.

Now, you know the story so well. But talk about a change of affections, a change of desires, ambitions, the very feelings and deepest heart wish that Paul had.

[29 : 28] As he comes into Damascus, what is he wanting to do? He's wanting to kill the Christians. Here's a man who does nothing by half. He's going to the synagogue. He's going to drag them to prison and if possible, kill them.

Do you know how he did it? I guess some of you do because the hints are clear in one of the Corinthian letters. He would go to the synagogue and presumably was a very distinguished visitor. And no doubt the leader of the synagogue would say to the people who are very glad today to have Saul of Tarsus. You will have heard of him. He is having a crusade against these wretched new Christians, these followers of this Jesus who was crucified.

And Saul, we're very glad to have you this morning. What do you want to say to us? And the Saul of Tarsus would stand up in front of him and he said, I want you all to stand up and I want you to say three words.

Jesus is accursed. All stand up. So they all stand up. And of course, some, for the Christians were still going to the synagogue in these very early days.

[30 : 35] some would be quite unable to say those words and would keep their mouth shut. And the eagle eye of Saul the persecutor would spot them. You didn't say anything just now.

Everybody else sit down. Would you stand up and say Jesus is accursed? And the young Christian would get up trembling and he would say, Jesus is a tremendous battle.

Jesus is Lord. One by one, Saul of Tarsus would pick these people off and up from the synagogue and take them to prison and kill them.

A horrible man with horrible ambitions, horrible affections, if you like to put it that way. Now turn to Acts chapter 9 and see what was happening immediately after his conversion.

It's very, very striking indeed. You can really hardly believe that a man could change so quickly.

[31 : 46] So verse 19b, Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is Lord.

All those who heard him were astonished and asked, isn't he the man who caused havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. And then what? After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him.

Before his conversion, he is out to kill others. After that great conversion, after this great change of what God did in his heart, he is willing to risk his life for the gospel and be killed, which of course in the end he was.

new affections. New convictions, new affections. And finally, as I look at this little passage and try to understand what's going on, I think I see new sensitivities.

[33 : 02] Verses 17 to 19a. It's a very intriguing passage, isn't it? I think we're all a bit puzzled that Elisha agrees that he may go back into the house of Roman, the house of idolatry, now that he's a true believer.

Is that right? Well, to start with, I hope very much that you know one of the Pauline rules for the early churches. I'm not going to ask you to turn it up, but I'm going to read it.

I think it's a very important rule. 1 Corinthians 7, 17. Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and in which God has called him.

Let me say it again. Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned him and which God has called him. It's hard to be a Christian, for example, in business.

So in our lunch, our services, young men would be saved by the grace of God. And quite often they would come to me a month or two later and say, you know, I'd really like to give up banking or accounting or insurance or what it was and I'd like to be a minister.

[34 : 14] Do you think that's all right? Well, a part of the temptation was the sense that if I'm going to live the Christian life in the city, it's going to be really difficult.

How am I going to be a consistent Christian? How am I going to avoid compromising? And that's why I think Paul laid down this rule that when God saves us, we are to stay where we are until he pulls us out, whether it's a butcher or baker or a candlestick maker, whether it's a banker, an accountant or an insurance broker.

And if it's a big soldier whose king depends on him, then he must go with his king wherever the king goes. That seems to be Elisha's thinking.

Very difficult not to compromise on those situations. And so he has a wonderful idea. He says, I've got to go with my king. I've got to go with him in the house of Roman.

And I don't want to compromise. I'm sensitive to this. So could you please send to the parks department and get them to bring some sacks of earth, which I can carry on my mule.

[35 : 24] And when I go into the house of Roman, in order to show that I'm separate from idolatry, I'm going to put the earth of Israel around me and stand on Israelite soil. And in that way, make my testimony that I belong to another country and another God.

I wonder how long he kept his job, didn't you? I can imagine, you know, that after the service, when they went to the reception, as we're going to tea and coffee in a minute, someone would come up to him and say, General, that was very interesting with what you were doing during the worship service.

What were those men doing carrying earth and you standing on it? Well, you see, I now believe in the God of Israel. And I no longer believe in the idolatry of Roman.

Oh, oh. Oh, I am very surprised. And the talk would go around, wouldn't it? I think to myself, he must have been in a very awkward position even though he tried to keep himself from compromise. Some decisions that have to be made as a Christian in business or whatever are very tricky. I don't think God has given us a book of do's and don'ts. He's given us a renewed mind and he awakens our conscience when we're converted.

[36 : 48] And he tells us that we've got to think it out. We'd prefer him to give us a rule book, but he doesn't. And so every young Christian has to think out, how do I live in the world in which I am?

Student, accountant, banker, shopkeeper. How do I work out my decisions in daily life in order not to compromise my confession of Christ?

That's your responsibility. Nobody can do it for you. The pastor can't do it for you. The Bible can't do it for you. Each of us has to do it for ourselves. Let me tell you that pastors have problems.

How am I not to compromise in a church increasingly apostate? That's a big question. So some decisions are very tricky, but some decisions are dead easy.

For example, Scripture says, do not let any unhealthsome talk come out of your mouth. But when I was rector of a city church for 38 years, I discovered that such talk is commonplace and that there are many men in the city of London who cannot speak at all without blasphemy and uncleanness.

[38 : 03] They can't even speak at all without it. And one of the joys was to see that at conversion, there was a new sensitivity.

In fact, I would say fairly dogmatically that usually God took a sponge and wiped their mouth clean in 24 hours. One of the quickest things that one saw in a man who came to know Christ, that unwholesome and stupid language simply fell away.

Now I know that may be a small thing. There are much bigger decisions than that. But it does illustrate, doesn't it, that conversion means not only new convictions, not only new affections, but also new sensitivity.

Well, that's true conversion. It's a work of God. In some ways, to produce conversion, we are as helpless as that little maid was captured.

She couldn't do anything, could she? She couldn't stand in a corridor and address the general and say, General, I want to talk to you about your soul. All she could do was to talk to Norman's wife.

[39 : 21] And I imagine she was doing her hair in the morning and then putting in a pin here and all the rest. I don't know what she was doing with the hair. I'm not an expert in these things, as you quickly gather. But I can see this little maid doing her duty in the morning to make Mrs. Nerman look all right.

And she could see that Mrs. Nerman is looking tired and sad because of her husband's illness. And so she just says, you know, I wish that, I wish you knew about true prophets because you don't have them.

I come from a country where there are true prophets. And if my lord and master were to go to the true prophet, he would kill him. Maybe that's all sometimes we can do to point people to Christ.

Nerman's journey was tortuous. There were many false turnings. But in the end, a new man and a fresh start. And so it is, if any man is in Christ, the old is gone and the new has come.

That's true conversion. So may God be gracious to you and bless you in this church so that you see in his goodness many true conversions.

[40 : 31] People with new convictions that cannot be swept aside. New affections that express themselves in a generous life given to others. And a new sensitivity that causes them to work through, to live in this wicked world in a way that does not compromise their love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's pray. Our great God and heavenly Father, we thank you for this luminous story.

We thank you that long ago this pagan man, this ignorant man, was brought out of darkness into glorious light. We thank you for those new convictions that he had and the convictions that by your goodness you have given to so many of us.

And these new affections that we know in our hearts as we want to give ourselves to you and to your service. And these new sensitivities. Our heavenly Father, we pray for your Holy Spirit to guide us every Monday morning, Tuesday morning, every day of the week.

So that we live carefully, wisely, and in a holy way in a very wicked, difficult, apostate world. And we ask it all through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

[41 : 53] Amen.