

Turn From, Turn To

Joe Slater

Conversion means change. Conversion to Christ means **major** change! Conversion from worshipping false gods to serving Jesus makes that 180° turn even more obvious.

Acts 17 records many conversions as Paul and Silas preached in the synagogue at Thessalonica. But Paul's first letter to that congregation indicates conversions from the pagan population as well. Even in far-away places people had heard "*how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*" (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

"Turn" is the very same word as "convert" in New Testament language. Note that there was a turning **from** and a turning **to**. The Thessalonians turned **from** idols **to** God. What motivated them to convert (turn)?

First, they recognized the difference between fake gods and the living and true God. Turning from Apollo to Zeus would have been in vain; but converting to the one true God meant forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life!

In addition, they wanted to "*wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead*" (1:10a). They knew Jesus will return and raise all the dead; how much better to anticipate His return with joy than with dread!

Indeed, that same Jesus "*delivers us from the wrath to come*" (1:10b). No doubt Paul had proclaimed the doom of the lost in contrast to the happiness of the saved. The Thessalonians opted for happiness!

You may not have carved images from which to convert, an idol can be anything that comes between you and God. You must turn away **from** them as you turn **to** God. Serve the living and true God. Wait for His Son from Heaven. Only He can deliver you from the wrath to come!

Truly Hungry And Thirsty

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

It may be that in the Western world today we have, for the first time in human history, combined poverty and obesity. Through most of history only the rich could afford to be fat. Today, however, we may think of being hungry as what happens between breakfast and lunch.

Those listening to Jesus that day, knew both hunger and thirst in ways we would not like to discover. The seasonal rainfall upon which life depended was uncertain. When rain ceased, drought and famine followed. Being parched was not, "I'd like a Diet Coke," but "without water soon, I will die!" Being hungry was not craving a pizza, but knowing that without food shortly, your family might starve to death.

I mention this not to shame us, but to help us see this beatitude as Jesus meant for us to see. How badly do we want and need righteousness? There is no space here to fully discuss what righteousness means, but at its heart it is about being in a right relationship with God. The blessed are those who are like a deer panting for scarce water, in their longing after God (Psalm 42:1).

Here, however, is the great promise: "*for they will be filled.*" God, our Father, is not fickle as are the seasonal rains. He is constant to fill us if we are constant in desperately longing for Him! This kind of righteousness is first God's gift but is a gift we live out in grateful right living. Do we long for this—truly long? Do we seek righteousness as if our souls depend on it? The blessed do and are satisfied by their faithful Father.

Today, we must constantly monitor our food and sugary drink intake. However, with righteousness no such warning applies. Desire all you can eat and drink, and God will fill you full!

--Tim Kelley (Littleton, CO)

ARE YOU WORRIED YET?

Everywhere we turn we're being told that we should be worried about something. TV newscasters tell us we should worry about the economy, politics, our health, homelessness, world hunger, endangered animal species, the environment, and the weather. The commercials between the newscast and the next program want us to be concerned about having the right clothes, shoes, houses or cars. They tell us that we should worry about our savings and investments or our children might not get to go to college. We're told we need insurance for our house, car, teeth, eyes, ears, and anything else that might fail us. We can now purchase insurance in case our car's transmission breaks or the refrigerator goes on the blink. They say we need to have a certain lawyer's number handy just in case we're injured in an accident. Are you worried yet?

Truth be told, we spend a lot of our time worrying about things that never come to pass. Besides, as Christians, we are not to be a worrying people. We have put our trust, not in the securities of physical life, but in God. Jesus said, "*Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*" He then said, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow...*" (Matthew 6:31-34). Now does that mean that we should be "happy-go-lucky" through life without a concern in the world? Certainly, we are to be concerned about our relationship with God, raising our families, being good stewards over our blessings, and helping our fellow man. But not to the point that it cripples us into a state of ineffectiveness. The bible tells us not to worry, but in everything give thanks to God and His peace, which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts through Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:6-7). We can have confidence and ease our worries because, as Peter wrote, we can cast all our cares upon God because He cares for us. (1 Peter 5:6)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)