
LOGOS

Turnaround

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Billy Graham contrasted two basic types of adult conversion when he said, "Conversion can be like the falling meteor or like a sunrise." The "meteor flash" is perhaps the more publicized type of conversion, but in other cases conversion is like a sunrise because it's difficult to say exactly when the day has dawned. However, even in the most gradual sunrise there is a moment when we are sure that night is truly gone. And even in the most gradual conversion there comes a time when it is clear that death is gone and new life has come.

Upon first examination, the two men who approached Jesus were similar: both were fiery fishermen who became fishermen on fire for the Lord. As Peter and John expressed their desire to follow him, Jesus could see that both shared severe character deficits including over-ambition and excessive self-confidence.

But Jesus could also see that both had the potential for great love. Peter was big-hearted, while John was an earnest young man of deep affection. Both had leadership potential. Peter and John were the only disciples to follow Jesus to his trial; they were the only ones to follow up on the women's report on resurrection Sunday and to witness the empty tomb.

Because they seem to start out so much alike, it becomes all the more interesting to see how different their conversions were. Etymologically, the word *conversion* means "a turning" or "a turnaround." The chorus that says, "I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back," is theologically correct, because in true conversion the turnaround is a definite experience.

In *The Desire of Ages* Ellen White tells how John's turnaround began. The young man was first impressed when Jesus tenderly held a youngster in his arms, telling the adults around him, "The Kingdom of God belongs to men who have hearts as trusting as these little children's. And anyone who doesn't have their kind of faith will never get within the Kingdom's gates" (Luke 18:16, 17, LB).

"I wonder if that means I can forget this competition thing," John must have thought. Could it be that he, John, could just be himself and still be truly loved by God? If this were true, who or what else could matter? "I want to learn more!" decided John, and he got as close to Jesus as he could. Day by day, week by week, John watched Jesus' tender patience contrast with his own violent, son-of-thunder temperament.

Soon John opened his heart completely to the Saviour's life-changing influence. With his self hidden in Christ, John grew to depend on him more each day and to care less and less about what anyone else thought. His close friendship with Jesus was recognized, and he became known as "the one Jesus loved." The disciple's most intense desire was to be a reflection of his beloved Teacher, and through John, the Saviour was to communicate his deepest spiritual teachings to the world.

When John entered the judgment hall during the hours before

Jesus' death, he found an unnoticed corner as near to his suffering Master as possible. On the same night, Peter's desire to be near the warm fire got him into trouble (Matthew 26:69-75). He rushed away from the scene of his denial crying bitterly.

Running blindly into the night, Peter found himself again in the garden, in the very spot where Jesus had poured out his soul in agony to his Father. Falling to the ground, Peter wished he could die. He knew Jesus still loved him—what else could the tender and pitying look have meant? But why hadn't he defended Jesus instead of using his big mouth to hurt him?

Peter felt the ground beneath him was damp, not from his own convulsive weeping, but from Jesus' own anguish just a few hours before. "And where was I then?" Peter asked himself angrily. "Asleep!" With renewed remorse Peter realized he had let Jesus down even before the judgment hall scene.

The Saviour was not there to comfort Peter. The others were gone, Peter didn't know where. Only John was still around; how Peter wished the loving, empathetic disciple was here to keep him company. But he had seen John in the judgment hall. "Thank God he's still with the Master!" thought Peter. "He's the only one still there, and Jesus needs him more than I do."

John had always stayed nearest Jesus, and now, with no glorious kingdom in sight, only humiliation, John still cherished the same spot—beside his Master. "Maybe John really deserved to be on Jesus' right hand in the kingdom after all," thought Peter as he sat alone in the night.

"John won't tell the others what a fool I've made of myself," thought Peter. "But others will tell, and word will get around. How can I face anyone again?" He shook his head in an effort to clear his thoughts. "What are you thinking, you oaf! Jesus is the one in trouble, not you!" And instead of helping, he had added to his beloved Teacher's pain. Peter shivered in the cold. "If only I could die instead of Jesus. If anyone deserves death it's me!"

How long Peter suffered in Gethsemane we don't know, but we do know that when he finally rose from the ground, he rose a converted man. Gone was the excessive self-confidence, the carelessness of spirit, the unsanctified temper. The turnaround was complete. Finally he was ready to be used by Christ.

On the Sunday morning after the Crucifixion, an angel waiting at the empty tomb asked the women to "tell his disciples and Peter" of Jesus' resurrection. In his care to relieve Peter's anxiety, Jesus had left special instructions regarding him. Because of Peter's actions, the disciples thought he would never be allowed to resume his former position among them, and Peter also considered it forfeited. But after the resurrection, Jesus sought out Peter alone. We're not told what was said in this meeting, but it certainly left Peter a comforted man. I can imagine him shouting in the words of the song: "He's alive! He's alive and I'm forgiven! Heaven's gates are open wide! He's alive!"

Soon a small black cloud will appear in the east, a cloud that will grow brighter than the noon-day sun. Jesus, the resurrected and glorified Lord, will return in all his glory to take his friends home—the "Peters" who turned around after tearful crisis conversions, and the "Johns" who slowly grew to reflect Christ's character in all things.

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JORDAN MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Jerusalem

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop
Nazareth

From: Assessment Division

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the résumés for the 12 men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests, and we have not only run the tests through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultants. The profiles of all tests are included, and you'll want to study each of them carefully.

It is the staff's professional opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education, and vocational aptitudes for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capabilities.

Specifically:

- Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper.
- Andrew has absolutely no leadership qualities.
- The two brothers—James and John—the sons of Zebedee, place personal interests above company loyalty.
- Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.
- Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau.
- James and Thaddaeus have definite radical leanings, and both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He's a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your comptroller and right-hand man.

All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

**God does not always call the qualified,
but is faithful to qualify the called.**