

Benefits of Belief XIII -- The Filling of the Spirit - Part V. The meaning of "Converted."

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- [0 : 00] Now if you've got a King James translation, you will see that the word converted is used. And Peter, when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.
- And that's somewhat enigmatic because we don't think in terms of apostles needing to be converted. What does that mean to be converted?
- It is an act performed by the Spirit of God and we are incorporating it in with our series on the filling of the Spirit or one of the divine operating assets that God has made available to those who come to faith in Jesus Christ.
- And conversion is one of those acts of the Spirit of God. It's very much akin to, cannot be separated from, the idea of regeneration.
- Or having been given a new life. The Bible has a great deal to say about conversion or being converted. And we're going to examine a number of texts from the Old Testament and the New.
- [1 : 10] But first I want to just give you my brief recollection of a personal involvement regarding the subject of conversion. The year was about 1947, possibly 1948.
- And I would have been about 12 or 13 years of age. There was a great furore in our family. Lots of controversy.
- Lots of people on edge. Lots of heads wagging. Lots of hand wringing going on. And a lot of anger. Particularly on the part of my maternal grandfather.
- My uncle. This was my grandfather's son. My uncle had been in World War II. Who had served in the island of Tinian in the South Pacific.
- Was there when the Enola Gay left Tinian for Hiroshima. All he knew that there was something special about this plane.
- [2 : 23] But he had no idea what it was. Until, of course, after the bomb was dropped. And then they knew. So this uncle of mine, who was in his mid-twenties at the time, and single, was eventually mustered out of the Air Force.
- Actually, it wasn't even the Air Force then. Some of you old-timers will remember. The United States Air Force didn't exist then. This was the United States Air Corps.
- The Army Air Corps. That's the title that it had. And he came home and was like hundreds of thousands of other GIs. Mustered out of the service.
- And decided that he was going to go to college. And he had always had a thing about Arizona. So he traveled out to Arizona as a single young man.
- Recently out of the Army. Or out of the Air Force. And was going to attend university there in Arizona on the GI Bill. And he had been there for about a year.
- [3 : 28] And he returned home to Ohio for a visit. And then, that's when everything started. He announced that while he was there in Arizona, he had met Miss Wright.

And he was madly in love. And they were going to be married. And everybody was quite excited. And eager to meet the new bride-to-be.

And there was a great deal of elation. And then, the bomb was dropped. She's a Catholic.

What? What? Catholic. And boy, the fat was in the fire. I'm telling you, my granddad, he knows better now.

I really believe he's in heaven. But out of an incredible ignorance, my granddad hated Catholics.

[4 : 41] And he hated Jews. Both of them with a passion. There was no talking to him about it. I didn't understand the issue.

I didn't understand what the big hubbub was all about. I didn't understand the difference between Catholic and Protestant all that much. Because after all, we were pretty much nothing.

And my grandparents did attend a Protestant church. My family and I, we did not go anywhere.

But that was okay as long as we weren't Catholic. We could be nothing. But you can't be Catholic. And certainly, you can't be Jewish.

Well, that was only half of the bomb. The other half of the bomb was this. And, I am going to convert in order to marry her.

[5 : 46] Because we want to be married in the church. And she cannot be married anywhere other than in a Catholic church. And I need to be Catholic. And I have already begun taking instruction.

And I thought my grandpa was going to have apoplexy. I mean, this was just, this was almost as bad as Judas. But not quite.

You know, I mean, this was terrible. And he was going to convert. And of course, they made it clear that they would not attend the wedding. That they would not provide gifts. That they would not even so much as send a card.

And on and on and on it went. Well, they went ahead. And they got married. And they lived pretty much an isolated life. But when they came back for a visit, things did begin to thaw a little bit.

And my grandfather was very much surprised that this new daughter-in-law of his actually did not have horns. She didn't have a tail.

[6 : 45] She seemed like she was almost human. And believe it or not, over time, they really came to love her. And so what is this business of converting all about anyway?

We have people who convert from Catholicism to Protestantism. And we have people who convert from Protestantism to Catholicism.

And we have people who convert from nothing or Protestantism to Islam.

There is a movement afoot today in our nation's prisons that is making a tremendous impact, particularly upon the black population, by black Muslims who tell their black inmates that Christianity is a white man's religion.

And Islam is a religion for everyone. And some people actually believe that. There have been huge numbers of blacks in our prisons convert to Islam.

[8 : 04] Do you know how to convert to Islam? All you have to do is repeat the Shahada. You do not even have to mean it.

You do not even have to, as we would say, believe it in your heart. All you have to do is repeat it in the presence of a Muslim and he or she will consider you a bona fide Muslim.

You have just converted to Islam. If you say the magic words, there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet. That's it. You're a Muslim.

You may not feel like you've converted. You may not have meant it. You may not have had your heart in it. But that's all they require. And sometimes they have required that at the point of a sword.

You will say the Shahada or you will die on the spot. Take your choice. There have been multitudes converted, quote unquote, to Islam under the threat of death.

[9 : 17] And we don't have to worry about this in this country. But there are certain areas of the world where Islam is in the majority and there are some rather weird and strange things that take place there.

So conversion. The word literally means to change. You are changing from one thing to another. And insofar as the bare meaning of the word is concerned, it has nothing to do with truth per se.

It just means that you have made a change of some kind. You can be converted from anything to anything. You can be converted to communism. You can be converted to fascism.

You can be converted to capitalism, converted to communism, converted to just about anything, anything that you make a change from. That's all it means. It doesn't necessarily have any religious connotation at all, although that's the one we usually associate with it because of the word convert.

And its connection usually means converting from one religion to another, as we use the term. We have an automobile called a convertible, don't we?

[10 : 31] And all that means is you can change it from a car without a top to a car with a top. It's a convertible. It is capable of doing that.

Well, people are capable of converting from one position to another. And I want to say this up front and make it very, very clear because this is really the crux of the matter.

It doesn't make any difference at all in the final analysis if anyone is converted from one religion to another religion.

Because if religion is all that involves, it is involved, then the one converting is none the better, often none the worse, for the conversion. Because they have converted from a position of untruth to another position of untruth.

So nothing is really accomplished. There is only one conversion that matters and that is to be converted from anything to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

[11 : 37] That's the conversion that results in salvation. To convert from being a lost Protestant to being a lost Catholic doesn't really change anything.

It just maybe changes your form of worship and the manner in which you do things, but it doesn't change the heart. It doesn't change where the real person is.

Same thing is true if you convert as a lost Catholic to a lost Protestant. Nothing is really gained. Just some details are changed. That's all.

You can convert to Judaism. I don't know if you're aware of it or not. I suspect some of you are. You remember the multi-talented entertainer Sammy Davis Jr., who was a member of the famous Hollywood Rat Pack with Frank Sinatra and Joey Bishop and Peter Laufford and those four and they did the Las Vegas circuit and everything.

Well, raised a few eyebrows when Sammy Davis Jr. announced that he was converting to Judaism. A black Jew.

[12 : 48] That's an interesting thought. Especially when you consider that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were what we would probably consider Caucasian.

And Sammy Davis, I don't know how he came to that conviction, but it was a change that he wanted to make. And that's what conversion is all about. It means to make change. And the change is always made on the basis of information received.

And conversion is acting upon it. Now, let me explain this. Get the details out of the way if I can. Just the mechanics of this. It all begins with information.

Data. You hear information information, and this information that you hear persuades you or convinces you to change your position on the basis of this information you have just heard.

Ordinarily, we would associate that with the gospel, which means the good news. And you hear the gospel and you decide that you need to change. Well, this can be true about anything.

[14 : 00] You can hear about the claims of Judaism and get that as information, be impressed by it, and come to the conclusion that I want to convert.

What you have done is you have repented. That means you have changed your mind from your previous position, and you have, on the basis of the information you have received, you want to take a new course.

You want to take a new position. You are turning your back on what you formerly believed to embrace this new position, and you are doing so on the basis of the information you have gotten about it.

When you get this information and you change your mind, that's repentance. And when you do something about repentance, that's conversion. Now, you can repent without converting.

You can change your mind. Remember the threefold levels of belief or of faith that we shared with you earlier. Remember the notitia, you've been put on notice, and the essentia is something that you agree with, but then the fiducia is where the agreement comes in and is put into action, and you actually make a change.

[15 : 15] That is the commitment. Well, that commitment, the fiducia is much like the conversion. Conversion is an act of the will that is a result of repentance, and repentance is a result of information.

So, you hear the information, you decide to change your mind, and then when you implement that change, that is conversion. It is something that you do as an act of your will. So, the conversion is putting into practice or putting into reality that change that you have made as a result of the information of repentance, et cetera.

So, the Bible has quite a bit to say about being converted. Basically, it means, very closely aligned with repentance, it means to change your position.

We say repentance means change your mind. Metanoia means through the mind. You do so, and conversion, conversion is the activating of the change. It is the actual doing it.

The repentance is just mental. That is a mental conviction you have come to. When you act upon it, that's the fiducia, or that is the conversion.

[16 : 34] You convert. You become a convert. Convert is the verb, and convert is the noun. Now, let's look at a number of Old Testament references that utilize this phrase, and I think the first one we'll go to is Psalm 19.

Let's go there, please. Psalm 19, and you will understand that conversion is not just for unbelievers, it's for believers as well.

Just like repentance is not only for unbelievers, but it is for believers as well. Psalm 19 and verse 7. The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.

You've got a King James Version, what does it say? Yeah, converting the soul. Conversion, conversion is turning from perceived error to perceived truth.

I want to be very careful here, but I don't want to be so detailed that it gets confusing. And why do I use the word perceived? Because when one converts from a position, it may be he is converting from a position of truth to a position of error.

[18 : 10] So, we ought to use the term conversion is perceived. it is turning from one's perceived error to a perceived illustration of the truth.

And I use the word perceived because it may not be in reality. If one converts, for instance, if one converts from institutional Catholicism to institutional Judaism, they have not moved from error to truth.

They have moved from error to error. Nothing is in reality gained. It's just a different form of error. If one converts from nominal traditional churchianity Protestantism to atheism, all one has done is convert from error to error.

Nothing essentially has changed. It's just a different expression of an error. Truth is involved only when Jesus Christ and the work he accomplished on that cross is involved.

Conversion from anything, whatever it may be, to that is a conversion from error to truth. Now, this is not kindly looked upon today because of religious pluralism that has literally inundated our entire culture, and for that matter, the whole of the Western world.

[20 : 04] Religious pluralism says all religions, all faiths, all beliefs, even including non-beliefs, they are all equally legitimate and on the same footing.

Nobody can lay a claim to the truth and say they have the truth. Everybody has the truth. Every faith, every belief, every religion is just as valid and just as authentic as every other religion.

religion. They are all equal. There is great parity among all religions. That's religious pluralism. Now, let me ask you a question. If you endorse that premise, then where does that leave the subject of conversion?

conversion, it's redundant. It's unnecessary. It's really out of place. Because what are you converting from?

You aren't converting from error to truth. You're converting from truth to truth. So, if you're already at truth, why convert? What's the point? There is no point.

[21 : 28] because in religious pluralism, there is no error from which to be converted. Everything is equally valid. So, if there is no error, why leave it?

Why embrace something else? So, can you not see what this does to the proclamation of the gospel? And for the propagation of what we consider to be the truth of God, it's invalid.

It is therefore illegitimate and inappropriate to even think about seeking converts because everybody is on an equal plane and that means everybody is okay where they are.

There's no basis or validity for trying to convert from anything to anything. You're already wonderful. I'm wonderful.

We're all wonderful. Nobody is wrong. Everybody is right. How can people who hold completely contradictory points of view regarding a doctrinal matter both be right?

[22 : 42] That's the wonderful thing about religion. That's the wonderful thing about faith. It is so mysterious that people can hold completely contradictory viewpoints and neither one has to be wrong.

They can both be right. Isn't that great? You know what? That eliminates all basis for arguing because there's nothing to argue about anymore. That eliminates all basis for trying to convince anybody of a particular position because every position that everybody holds is already fine and already right.

So nobody is wrong about anything and everybody is right. End of argument. No conflict. No debate. No controversy. No argument. No fighting.

No quarreling. Everybody's right. Nothing to be converted to. That's where we are. That's what our culture has bought into.

And let me tell you something. Nothing sounds better. That is very inviting.

[23 : 52] That is very keeps everybody happy. It's wonderful. It really sounds good. All faiths are equally valid.

That sounds so broad-minded. So inclusive. Just think of God wrapping his great big arms around everybody.

All faiths, all beliefs, no matter what they are, they are all equally acceptable to God.

I can promise you that will play well in a whole lot of venues. and when Christians come along with this claim about the exclusivity of Christ, narrow, bigoted, oh, you believe you're the only one that has the truth.

Everybody else is going to hell. You are immediately marginalized, and the tolerance that they preach applies to everyone but you.

[25 : 28] They are intolerant of you because you would dare to take this kind of position. Let's look at some other references.

Psalms 51. 51. Psalm 51 is familiar as David's great penitential psalm. His escapades with Bathsheba have been found out and he says in verse 12 of Psalm 51, Restore to me the joy of thy salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors thy ways and sinners will be converted to thee. That's the principal thing for which conversion is designed.

It is moving from a position of error to a position of truth. And there are a few New Testament references I would ask you to turn to. And the first is in Matthew chapter 13.

Matthew's Gospel chapter 13. And let's look for time's sake to verse verse 14.

[27 : 04] Well, let's read verse 14. Verse 13 is good too. Therefore, I speak to them in parables because while seeing they do not see and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

And in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, you will keep on hearing, but will not understand. And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear.

And they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted.

Here it is, return, and I should heal them. Conversion, that is a biblical conversion, always involves a movement from error to truth.

It is a movement from what you have come to recognize as error, and you turn to and embrace what you have come to recognize as truth.

[28 : 12] Earlier, I used the term perceived truth, because sometimes people think something is true, and it isn't. And you need to understand that your thinking something is true will not make it true.

You cannot think something into truthfulness. If it is true, it is true, whether you think it is or not. Consequently, there may be a lot of things that are true that you don't think are true, but they are.

And there are a lot of things that are not true, that you do not think of as being not true, but they are. Truth has its own definition.

Truth is that which corresponds to reality. truth is untrue. And to the extent that we are trafficking in anything that is untrue, we are dissociated from reality in that area, because we have bought an untruth or a lie.

It does not correspond to the truth at all. There are other references, and look over just a few pages. verses in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 3.

[29 : 43] Our Lord is speaking and he said, Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, I don't think he is talking about becoming naive or becoming childish, but he is talking about becoming childlike.

There is a difference between being childish and being childlike. When you are childish, you are behaving as a child, but when you are childlike, particularly when it comes to expressing faith or confidence in something, you are trusting, you are believing.

We all know that this can be a child's great liability. Because a child has an innocence and a trusting element about it that can make it very vulnerable to those who would harm that little one because they are trusting.

And Christ here is talking about a trust faith in him, a confidence in him, a belief in him that is certainly to the best advantage of anyone and everyone.

[31 : 13] And here he is saying, you need to trust me and put your faith in me as a child would believing and be trusting.

And the idea of conversion is wrapped up with that. In Acts chapter 3, there are other references. Acts chapter 3, and we'll just move through a couple of other New Testament passages here.

And may we, well, let's see. verse 18 of Acts 3, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he has thus fulfilled.

You see what Peter's doing here? He is providing information. He's giving these people a reason to change their mind by the information he's giving them.

he is enlightening them. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he has thus fulfilled.

[32 : 34] Repent therefore and return and the King James says and be converted that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

what is it that they need to be converted from and to? And this has nothing to do with their Judaism. Listen, let me make this really clear. Peter is not saying, Peter is not saying, listen, you people are a bunch of Jews and you need to become Christians.

That is not what he is saying at all. He is not trying to change their Judaism. He is not saying you are wrong for being Jews. Christians at this point in time didn't even exist.

It's a term that hadn't even come into being yet. What he is saying is, as Jews, as the seed of Abraham, as regards the person and work of Jesus the Messiah whom you rejected and crucified, do you realize you got that all wrong?

you need to reverse yourself. On the basis of the information and the update that I am giving you, you really did crucify your Messiah.

[33 : 56] You need to be converted from a position of untruth to a position of truth. From Jesus is not the Messiah, he is an imposter, he is this, he is that, to he he is the Messiah, we crucified him, he is God's son.

That's conversion. And this conversion is a result of a change of mind. That's repentance. We've got information, repentance, and then what you do about it, when you activate that repentance, you convert.

You do that with your will. It is a volitional act that only you can perform. Every time the gospel is proclaimed, people are given a reason to change their mind, to reverse themselves, to move from a position of error to a position of truth.

truth. Now, if there is no such thing as truth, then there's nothing to move from, nothing to move to.

If all positions are equally true and valid, then there is nothing to move from, and nothing to move to. But we all know that life is fraught with error, all kinds of error, moral error, criminal error, all kinds of error.

[35 : 47] We are all in need of changing our position about something on a day-to-day basis almost. It just goes with living. It just goes with discovering and finding out that you were wrong about anything.

That's conversion. Not necessarily spiritual or religious conversion, but I'm dealing with the semantics of the word and what it means. As it is applied to spiritual values, it means converting from a position that God has nothing to do with, did not originate, does not endorse, did not approve, and is under the condemnation of God.

You change from that to that which is God ordained, God sent, God revealed, God approved, God is in it. It is his position.

It is from error to truth. That's spiritual conversion. It takes place when one as an act of their will deliberately, volitionally puts their case, their life, their future, their destiny, everything, into the hands of Jesus Christ as their only rightful Savior.

So that your trust is in him, not in you. Your trust is in him, not in your church. Your trust is in him, not in a religion or a philosophy or a belief or a lodge or your good works or anything else.

[37 : 33] It is in him. And when that takes place, when as an act of your will, you come to that position and you make that internal commitment of yourself to Jesus Christ, that is conversion.

That is regeneration. Regeneration is that which God does as a result of our expressing our faith in Jesus Christ. God performs heart surgery on us.

We don't know how he does that, but he changes our being from the inside. This is not window dressing stuff.

This is not for outward appearances. This is a deep inner working that God alone can do and he does it in our internal being.

We refer to it as the heart, a change of heart, simply because we don't know what else to call it. Preferably, my own personal position is, and the Bible uses the word heart a lot of times, but I think that a more encompassing term is that God regenerates or makes alive to himself the human spirit.

[39 : 07] Your human spirit is the intangible real you. It is where the real you actually resides.

I don't know where the human spirit is in the body. I only know that it is in the body, and everyone has a human spirit.

Your human spirit is either regenerated by the spirit of God and made new so that you are in union with Jesus Christ, or it is not.

And if it is not, it doesn't make any difference what religion you are. They're all equally wrong, all equally condemned, apart from Christ.

So it doesn't make any difference if you are an unbelieving Jew, an unbelieving Protestant, an unbelieving Catholic, it really doesn't make any difference.

[40 : 06] Your final destiny is going to be the same. It is a destiny apart from Jesus Christ, apart from God. So, conversion in this light perhaps is a little different than what you have thought of in the past, and there are yet some other references.

James, the last one I would have you consider is in the epistle of James, and it's chapter 5, it's the last, getting right down near the end of the book, interesting expression that James uses.

I take it that it is a principle here. Verse 19, saying, My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

And what's the word that King James uses there? It's convert. He who converts a sinner from the error of his way. So, that's what conversion really is all about.

And it has to do with moving from a position of perceived error to a position of perceived truth. A couple of biographical sketches that I would like to give you.

[41 : 42] First has to do with Martin Luther. We've already talked a little bit about Saul of Tarsus, but Martin Luther was an extremely conscientious young man.

He was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. He was of the Augustinian order. In the Catholic hierarchy, in the Catholic churches, the priesthood belongs to certain orders.

There's the Franciscan order, and there's the Augustinian order, and so on. Named after St. Augustine, who was a 4th century church father. Very incredibly intelligent.

man, by the way, and considered one of the most outstanding of the church fathers. Well, Martin Luther lived over a thousand years after Augustine, but he was an Augustinian monk, or a priest after that order, and he was extremely diligent, very conscientious, and a very guilt-ridden young man.

he would not only go to confession on a regular weekly basis, he would go to confession on a daily basis, and of course, in the order in which he served, who do priests confess their sins to?

[43 : 08] Well, they confessed their sins to other priests, sometimes referred to as the father confessor, and it got to the place of where these poor priests hated to see Martin Luther coming, because he was going to nitpick them about this or that, he had a conscience that wouldn't give him any rest at all, he was worried, sick, about the possibility of some unconfessed sin, no matter how trivial, so he was always waylaying a priest to hear his confession, and it just seems like every time somebody saw Martin Luther coming, a priest would beal off and go another way, he didn't want to go through all of that again with Martin, and the man could find no rest for his soul, he derived no lasting benefit at all from the confessions, his sin plagued him night and day, hand-wringing, pacing, exercising over it, and he could just simply get no relief, and all he could think about was, my sin, my sin, my sin, here was an extremely conscientious young man, and he understood one thing, that many do not, he understood, that if you have one infraction, no matter how minor, against the

Most High God, you were doomed, you were doomed, no matter how minor, it almost reminds me of Barbara's mother, bless her heart, she's 97 now, and in an assisted living situation out in Ellensburg, Washington, and she tells how that when she was a young girl, about 14 or 15 years of age, a very devout Roman Catholic, she would go to mass, and she would go to confession every Saturday night, and go to mass every time, and every time she went to the confession, and was in this little booth with the priest behind the screen and everything, she confessed every week to adultery, here she was a 14, 15 year old girl, confessing to adultery, every week, why did she do that?

Because, she didn't know what adultery meant, she didn't even know what it was, but she was terrified to think that she might have a sin that she had committed on her soul, and had not confessed it, so even if you don't know what it is, you're better off confessing it, to just cover all the bases, just in case you committed it, well, I don't think Martin was that bad, but he never could get any satisfaction, and he did as many other pilgrims did, he went to Rome, and there at the Basilica, he made the flight up the steps, they call them the bloody steps, where he went on his knees from the bottom step to the top step, which was a lot of steps, walking up the steps on his knees, saying the rosary, and confessing all of the sins that he could possibly think of, and still no relief.

and one day, reading the scriptures, he came to an obscure little verse in the book of Habakkuk, of all places, Habakkuk, and the prophet Habakkuk made the statement that the just shall live by faith.

And he recalled that being repeated in the book of Romans, chapter 3, where Paul, the writer of Romans, is quoting from Habakkuk in the Old Testament. And the phrase is found again, the just shall live by faith.

[47 : 31] He began exploring that and dissecting that, and he came to the conclusion, what this means is, the one who is justified, the one who is declared righteous by God, is the one who lives on the basis of simple belief, simple trust, simple faith.

That's it. That can't be it. That's too simple. That can't be it. God is a mysterious, infinite being, and any way to approach him has to be extremely involved and very complex and very mysterious.

But no, here it is. The one who is declared righteous by God is the one who has simply exercised simple faith and trust.

In what? In whom? In God. that's it. And it was as if scales fell from his eyes and the shackles came off and for the first time in his life, he felt forgiven.

God, it is that simple. It is refusing to trust yourself, your confession, your good works, your penance, your rosary, and all the rest of it, and just placing yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ, he who gave himself for you.

[49 : 16] Your trust is in him. it is the one who is justified on the basis of simple faith who shall live. And the living, of course, is spiritual living, is spiritual life.

He already had physical life. He knew it didn't mean that. It meant the life that God imparts is received on the basis just faith plus nothing.

What a revelation. What a liberating, exhilarating revelation. It transformed Martin Luther overnight into a joyous, grace-filled, grateful, rejoicing believer who knew his sins were forgiven because Jesus Christ paid it all.

There was nothing left for him to pay. What a life-changing development. And then, of course, as they say, the rest is history. And I want to close with another that happened about 200 years after Martin Luther.

In the 1500s, now, Martin Luther came to faith in the 1500s as well, but also in the 1500s, King Henry VIII had his departure from Rome.

[51 : 06] It is still debated as to whether he resigned from the church of Rome or whether he was kicked out. The Roman Catholics say they excommunicated him and King Henry says that he quit.

But anyway, he was out. And what did he do? He formed another church. He formed the Church of England, which also became the Episcopal Church or the Episcopalian Church or the Anglican Church.

Church of England, Episcopal, Anglican, all one and the same. And he brought with him much of the doctrine and the positions of the Roman Catholic Church he brought with him into the Anglican Church.

And he became the head of the Church of England. I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth is today the head and the defender of the Church of England.

That's part of her title and it's part of her responsibility. One may question how good a job she's doing, but nonetheless that's her responsibility as the head of the Church of England.

[52 : 20] And the Episcopal Church came out of the Roman Catholic Church, brought a lot of doctrinal content with it, and as a result, has great similarities to the Roman Catholic Church.

They even call their vicars priests. They're referred to as Anglican or Church of England priests. Just recently, you've been reading about a huge controversy that they have had in regard to the ordaining of gay bishops to serve in the Episcopal Church.

It's an issue that has just ruptured the Church and caused all kinds of division and is still having repercussions to this day. Well, John Wesley was an Episcopal priest and had come to the colonies in the 1730s, come over here to the colonies, particularly to the colony of Georgia where Governor Oglethorpe was the governor under the king's direction of the colony of Georgia and he came here for the specific purpose of converting the Indians and the settlers to Christianity which of course was the Church of England as they viewed it at that time.

And he came here with his brother Charles who later would be well known for having written some 6,000 hymns many of which are in our hymnal that is there before you today and his ministry here in Georgia was a colossal failure.

He succeeded in converting no one. He succeeded in never really explaining or conveying the gospel in a successful way to anybody and nobody including himself could figure out why that was.

[54 : 28] And later he came to understand why that was and it was because he himself had not embraced the gospel and didn't even know what it was. John Wesley had an early severe case of churchianity and knew nothing about Christianity.

And when he came back to England dejected depressed ready to get out of the ministry and pursue another occupation he had contact with some Moravians German Moravians who had influenced him and one of them had invited him to go to a Vesper service in the Episcopal church on Aldersgate Street there in London and reluctantly he decided to go and the topic for the evening was the reading of the preface to the book of Romans that was written by Martin Luther and as Wesley sat there and listened to that preface being read and I've read it myself personally two or three times I have a copy of it in my office in this preface

Martin Luther clearly explained the gospel the good news and what it is and Wesley said as I sat there and listened my heart was strangely warmed what he meant was I was converted my spirit was regenerated I passed from spiritual death and darkness into spiritual life and light and John Wesley who became the father of the Methodist church became gloriously converted this was in the 1730s now now he knew what to preach and now he preached it it is estimated that

John Wesley covered a quarter of a million miles on horseback preaching this gospel that was conversion that was changing that was receiving new life in Christ has your heart ever been strangely warmed like that I am not looking for some kind of an emotion or feeling because I don't think that's really necessary but I am convinced that there has to be some kind of internal awareness that something has happened you are not the same you are a different person you are a new creature nothing will ever be the same again that's what real conversion is that's what real salvation is and anything less than that may be just converting from one untruth to another untruth but when we are converted to

Jesus Christ that is the truth he is the way the truth and the life and our father how grateful we are for this glorious glorious gospel and for the history that accompanies it and for the manner in which it has moved the hearts and minds of men whom you use to move the hearts and minds of nations we do not know the status of every individual here but you do and we pray if there is one in our midst who has never experienced that conversion that renewing of their spirit the transformation that takes place within we pray that you will provide for them no peace no rest no comfort until they have placed their all in

[59 : 30] Jesus Christ and for those who understand perhaps even today for the first time what this gospel really means we pray that you will reveal to them that full body of information that they need to make a really intelligent decision so that they know whom they have believed and can be persuaded that they have committed unto him that which you will keep throughout eternity thank you for this glorious unchanging truthful gospel Christ's wonderful name you are dismissed