

## Psalm 30 – On Conversion

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Good morning.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Imagine a scenario with me for a moment. Imagine you're at a church that doesn't have a building yet. Maybe it's a newer church. Maybe you're meeting in an elementary school auditorium for a while. But then, for whatever reason, the church got kicked out. Now, you've been meeting in a tent for years. You have some of those propane heaters in there, and some padlocks on the flaps, and just hoping that no one runs off with all the sound equipment.

Now, the church has finally been able to buy some land, and build a building. You're on the building committee, and it's almost all done. You got some designs, you hired a construction company. They hired some contractors. Now the building is finally almost done. The opening weekend is only a few months away. Then the committee asks you to do something special – they ask you to write a special song to help dedicate the new building.

They give you full freedom. Surprise us. We'll all sing it on the first Sunday.

So, here's the question. What would you write that song about? What would be the main theme of that song? Would it be about the glory of God, his power, his wisdom?

Would it be about God's faithfulness to the church in the past – how God guided you even through the wilderness of that Walmart parking lot?

Would it be future looking? About missional engagement with the city around you?

Well, that is more or less the context of this Psalm. This Psalm, as you can see in the little heading there, is a song written by David for the dedication of the Temple. Interestingly, David wrote this long before the Temple was built. He had asked God if he could build the Temple, and God said 'no,' but God allowed him to *prepare* for the building of the Temple, that David's son Solomon would build.

So, David made plans, he gathered materials, he got it all set up for Solomon. Then apparently, he also wrote a Song to commemorate the dedication of the Temple.

Now, what's really interesting about this Psalm is the topic that he chose. There could be lots of good topics to choose for this kind of an event, and maybe there were other songs written for the occasion – I imagine there probably were. But God only decided to include this one song for all generations.

So, what was his topic? What topic did David choose to celebrate the opening weekend of the Temple? *Conversion*. The new birth. The process where God takes a sinner and makes him a saint. Takes an enemy and makes him a son, or a daughter.

That alone blew me away this week. Why would individual conversion be the best theme for a song to dedicate the Temple?

With all that the Temple represents, with all the blessings that are wrapped up in the Temple – God's glory, God's presence, God's mighty deliverance of his people in the past, God's invincible promises for the future, the national splendor of Israel – all of it comes down to this – God's miraculous dealings with individuals to give them new spiritual life to repent and believe and walk with God.

So, this, *conversion*, is what we as individuals most desperately need. This is what our church most eagerly wants to see more of. This is what our nation most desperately needs. For God to bless the preaching of his Word to transform men and women from the inside out to love God and delight in his law from the heart.

So, on opening weekend for the Temple, David has something to teach us about conversion. With that in mind, let's jump into the text. In this text we're going to see 5 lessons on the miracle of conversion, on the miracle of the new birth.

### **FIRST (1-3) – The Miracle of Conversion is God Giving Life to the Dead.**

First, look at verses 1-3. The first lesson that this Psalm teaches us about conversion is that *conversion is the miracle of God giving life to the dead*. This is kind of the overarching summary point. Here he looks at the entire process, and he tells us two things about conversion – the who, and the what. Who is doing it – God, and what is he doing – giving life to the dead.

Verse 1, “**you have drawn me up,**” the idea here is like being at the bottom of a well, and God draws you up with a bucket. Verse 2, “**you have healed me.**” Verse 3, “**you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.**” That one needs a touch more comment.

Sheol, you may have run into this word. There’s a lot that could be said about it (most of it wildly speculative). Basically, it’s the place of the dead. It’s not Hell, it’s not the lake of fire that Revelation talks about. If you substitute the word “grave” there, you wouldn’t be far off. It’s more or less the spiritual place of the dead. It’s not a metaphor, it’s a place, but it’s not Hell.

So, notice what he’s saying here. ‘My soul was in the grave even while I lived, and I was numbered among the company of the dead.’ I was dead even while I still lived.

This is the consistent picture that the Bible gives for what we call conversion. This is how the Bible describes being transformed from one of the seed of the serpent – think, Genesis 3:15 – into one of the seed of the woman. We were dead, and then something happened. God found you, God grabbed a hold of you, and he breathed life into you. You were dead and he made you alive.

The Bible seems to be very eager to make sure that we *know* that conversion is not something that we initiate. God isn’t waiting for you to come to him. He is walking around the graveyard choosing people to bring to life.

Matthew 11:27, “**No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**”

John 3:3, Jesus says, “**Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**” Unless God first gives you spiritual new life, new birth, you will not see and believe in Jesus.

John 6:44, Jesus says, “**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.**” There’s that water from the well image again. We come to Jesus because God draws us up out of the well of sin and death. We don’t climb he draws us up.

Romans 8:7, “**the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.**” Then verse 9, “**You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.**” How do you move from ‘in the flesh’ to ‘in the Spirit’? When the Holy Spirit comes to live in you.

So, until the Holy Spirit comes to you, regenerates you, and dwells in you, you will only ever be hostile to God. You cannot submit to God, you cannot believe in God, until he has *already* given you spiritual life.

Ephesians 2:1-2, “**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is at work in the sons of disobedience.**”

Then Ephesians 2:4-5, just a couple verses later, “**but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved!**”

So, what is conversion? “O LORD, you have brought up my soul from the grave. I was dead and you gave me life. I was your enemy and you made me your friend. I resented you and wanted nothing to do with you, and you changed my heart. I wanted to be my own God, but instead of giving me *justice* you gave me *mercy*.”

“You found my scattered bones and knit them back together. You found my withered flesh and stitched it back on. You found my wasted breath and put it back in my lungs. You saved me when I ran from you. You confronted me when I was hiding from you.

“When I was going about my life building my own little kingdom, driving my little life towards the cliff, you found me. You arrested me. You captured me. Adopted me. You washed me. You claimed me as your own and called me your son.”

Conversion is not the gentle changing of a few opinions. It is *the* great crisis of your life. It is the total transformation of the individual. As significant as a dead man coming back to life.

## **SECOND (4-5) - The Miracle of Conversion begins with conviction from the Law.**

Ok, so that’s the first thing, and that’s the main thing. Conversion is a dead man coming to life. But second, look at verses 4 and 5. Here we zoom in on the process a little bit more. The second lesson is that *the miracle of conversion begins with conviction by the Law*.

Verse 4 and 5, **“Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. <sup>5</sup>For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”**

So, this is interesting. We need to establish something of a healthy view of biblical conviction – and I mean conviction of sin. There’s a way in which we can try to be more gentle than God, more kind than God.

We, in our therapeutic and self-esteem age, tend to think that all bad feelings are inherently bad, and surely God would never want you to feel bad about yourself, or anything you’ve done.

And so, where God is trying to convict someone of sin – maybe you – we sometimes try to rush too quickly to gospel assurance. We end up like Jeremiah’s opponents saying, “peace, peace,” where there is no peace.

And so, thinking that we are preaching the gospel to someone, we might actually either be short-circuiting God’s work to sanctify that person, or even preventing someone from coming to real saving faith by not letting them feel the sting of the law.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, **“Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”** So, not all grief over sin is good and godly grief. But certainly not all grief is bad. God convicts us of our sin to bring us to true repentance, to bring us to true salvation. If we short circuit the grief, we might just short-circuit the salvation. God will get them eventually, but we can make the process longer and messier.

Godly grief is a tool in God’s hand that he uses to bring us to salvation and sanctification. We need to be careful that we aren’t trying to blunt God’s knives while he’s trying to do heart surgery.

Conversion often, I’d even say usually, begins with a sense of conviction. Usually, when God gives us spiritual life, the first thing that we become aware of is God’s wrath towards our sin. Before the Holy Spirit starts to work in us, we have no sense of God’s holiness, and no sense of the sinfulness of our own sin.

David here helpfully reminds us that this is just a part of a much bigger process. You go through a season, a few months, maybe a few years, with a sense of God’s wrath for your sin, in the end to experience for the rest of your life a sense of God’s favor and joy. His anger (and your weeping) is for a moment, but his favor and your joy is for a lifetime.

The Puritans – doctors of the soul – called this part of the process ‘coming under conviction.’ It’s where someone, who may have been going to church their whole life, all of a sudden realizes that their faith is just a formal, notional faith, and that they don’t really have peace with God. All of a sudden, they realize that they’ve been toying with God, and unconcerned for his holiness or their own sin.

But they haven’t *yet* come to true repentance and faith.

Often this results in a season of works. Where you basically just decide to work really hard to keep God’s law. You realize you’re a sinner, so you decide to stop being a sinner. There are often important lessons that need to be learned here, but spoiler, it never works.

For me this happened my freshman year of college. I’d grown up in and around the church. I believed in God. I was trying to be a good moral person. I just hadn’t been converted.

Then, one day, at a men’s retreat, sometime in early February 2013, in the dining hall at Riverside Bible camp, I had a conversation that changed the entire trajectory of my life. We were talking about lots of things, but the

thing that stuck with me was this. We were talking about the tail end of the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7, where Jesus wraps it all up and says, whoever hears my words and does them, is like a wise man who builds his life on a solid foundation, but whoever hears them and doesn't do them is like a fool who builds his life on a foundation of sand. The same storm comes to both, but only the house on the rock stands.

Then this guy looks at me, and he says, "what is that rock." I said, I don't know, Jesus? He just smiles. Then says, "what are you building your life on?" Now, I'm a freshman in college. I have no idea. What do you mean? I'm just trying to get good grades, trying to get a job, trying to find a wife. I don't know I'm just doing what I'm told, I guess.

And that shook me. For some reason, that woke me up. For the first time it just sunk in to me that God required more from me than just intellectual assent to the existence of God and being a basically decent guy.

So where did I go from there? Works. God is holy, I'm a sinner, so I need to cut it out – I need to shape up. I carried around a little 3x5 notecard for several months with a list on one side of things that I needed to stop doing, and a list on the other side of things I needed to start doing.

Now, some of them were pretty easy. It's really not that hard to stop swearing. Takes a little practice, but really not that hard. It's really not that hard to start going to church.

But what I kept finding, was that sin was something like whack-a-mole. I'd suppress one sin, then another would pop up somewhere else. Then I'd go deal with that, and another would pop up, then also the first one came back too. Or I'd stop some sinful external habit, and a sinful internal habit would pop up.

And most condemning of all, was that even where I was having success suppressing sin, instead of that making me feel peace and love towards God, it would make me feel resentment towards him.

And this is always what self-made righteousness does. It is hostile to God. Like now he owed me something, like I had something to boast about against God, and yet at the same time I felt that he was being unfair requiring such a high standard. "Look what I've done, now you owe me – why are you not pleased with me yet!?" Self-righteousness always leads to resentment towards God.

Whenever I turned to hold up my improved righteousness against God's holiness, it only ever seemed like the gulf was getting bigger. That the goal was getting farther away.

So, this is conviction, this is the first step in conversion, when God's law becomes this little rock in your shoe that you can never quite get out. This is the first step, but it's only the beginning.

### **THIRD (6-7) – The Miracle of Conversion overcomes our stubbornness.**

Then, next, the third lesson comes from verses 6 and 7, the miracle of conversion overcomes our stubbornness.

Listen to these verses, this is such an interesting experience. Verses 6 and 7, he says, "**As for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved.'** <sup>7</sup>**By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.**"

So, here, David is digging into a phase of the conversion process that isn't always as apparent. Most people probably pass through this to some degree or another, but notice how David starts this section, he says, "As for me," as in, this is what my experience was like, but this might not necessarily be a universal experience. From my experience and observation, I would say that this is a common phase, but not a universal phase.

What he's describing here is basically a season of stubbornness.

You've been convicted by the law, but for some reason you are just slow to come to repentance and faith.

And notice this, the very blessing of God is the thing that tends to trip us up. This is the same idea that Jesus touches on when he says that *'it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.'*

Verse 6, **I said in my prosperity.**

Verse 7, **you made my mountain stand strong.**

In other words, things were going well for me. The career was moving in the right direction. My family was happy and healthy. I had a good public reputation. Why should I repent? Why would I need to surrender to the

Lordship of Christ? If Jesus wants to be a consultant on my life, sure, I'd welcome his advice. But Lord? No, why? I'm doing a good job as my own Lord, thank you very much.

This stubbornness basically comes in three flavors. Misunderstanding, pride, and fear. Stubbornness of misunderstanding is where you're convicted by the Law, but you just don't get the gospel. And this is not at root an intelligence problem. It might, at least in part be a bad preaching problem. You can't preach the gospel without the law, but you can certainly preach the law without the gospel. You can preach the conviction of the law, but never get to comfort from the gospel. You could preach all problem, but no solution. Some misunderstanding certainly comes from preachers just not getting to the gospel.

But even under the best preaching in the world you will still see this. Misunderstanding the gospel comes from a *spiritual* inability to see the perverseness and pervasiveness of human sin – of your sin. You need good clear teaching, but unless the Holy Spirit gives you eyes to see – to see Jesus as he really is, and to see yourself as you really are – you will always think that your sin is something small that you can handle, and your merits are something that God should be impressed with.

So, there's stubbornness simply from misunderstanding. But then there's stubbornness from pride. This is where God is convicting you of your sin and you basically just deny it. You get angry and offended at God because he's putting his finger on your sin. This is self-deception. You don't just deny it – you have enough spiritual sensitivity now to know that he's right – but you resist it, and so you don't just deny it and move on, but you get offended – you resent the gospel, and you resent the one preaching it.

You say, "I'm not that bad, what have I ever done? I've never cheated on my wife!" And God says in your spirit, "yes you have, but you look at porn all the time." And you say, "what's the problem with that, that's a victimless crime." And God says, "that's a lie and you know it – don't lie to God."

Then last, there's stubbornness from fear. And this could be all kinds of things. It could be as simple as the fear of your friends thinking you're the weird religious kid. It could be the fear of losing control of your life – you'd rather be the captain of your leaky canoe than a deck-hand on God's aircraft carrier. It could be the fear of losing your job. Or the fear of losing close relationships – what will your parents think? What will your husband think?

Or it could be the fear of loss that would come with repentance. You know that if you repent, you'd have to stop sleeping with your girlfriend, or living with your boyfriend. How would he respond to that? Could the relationship survive? Can you even afford your own place?

Now, if that's you, and you want to repent, you want to go all in, you want to surrender to Christ, but you're afraid consider Isaiah 43:1-2.

**"But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel."**

Pause. I love the opening of this passage. 'He who created you, O *Jacob*, who formed you, O *Israel*.' So, Israel the nation is named after Israel the man. But Israel wasn't his birth name. He was born Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham. God gave Jacob a new name after Jacob had a little wrestling match with God right before he crossed a river to get back to the promised land.

I quite confidently take this as Jacob's conversion moment. I am convinced that this wrestling match was the final moment that brought Jacob to true repentance and faith – thus his new name symbolizes his new birth.

So, when Isaiah uses both names here, I am convinced that he has conversion in mind – based on what he says next about crossing rivers I'm certain that he has that wrestling match in mind.

Ok, back to Isaiah. **"But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you."**

So, for you, if you're here today on the cusp of life and yet you pull back, afraid of what it might mean for you. God does not say that there will be no flood. God does not say that there will be no fire. What you fear might very well come to pass – it might not, sometimes we over-hype things – but it very well might.

God who gave you life at first – O Jacob – and who even now is giving you new life – O Israel – now says to you, **“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”**

Yes, there will be a cost to repentance. But God will be with you. Your shepherd will not leave you on your own. Jesus calls you, and he will hold you.

So, what does God do about our stubbornness? Often, especially for the second kind of stubbornness, pride, he does just what David describes here. **“You hid your face; I was dismayed.”**

Put quite simply, God starts to let us feel the gaping emptiness of all the things that satisfied us before.

And he does this not by making us delight in them less, not by making our work, or our family, or good food any less enjoyable. He does this by expanding our capacity to be satisfied. The numerator doesn’t shrink the denominator gets bigger.

Good food is still tasty. Your work is still productive. You are still proud of your kids. But all of a sudden you are starting to see it all in a bigger context. Food isn’t just tasty because of some chemical trick to keep you alive. Work isn’t just satisfying because the capitalists have found the right rewards to keep you stuck in your false-consciousness. You don’t love your family because of some meaningless herd survival instinct.

Just like the Holy Spirit is making you sensitive for the first time to the demands of the Law, so he is also making you sensitive for the first time to the deep meaningfulness of God’s created world.

You are starting to see your work and go, “wait, there’s more to this than I thought – what am I missing?” You are starting to see your family and go, “what am I not seeing here, there’s more beauty and significance than I understand.”

And yet, you’re still locked out. There’s meaning there, but now you know that you are living outside whatever that meaning is. There’s a deeper, richer story here – but you are locked out of it.

Over time, you start to realize that what you’re missing is God. There’s a story here, but I can only get in on it if I am right with the Author.

Pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, work, family, food, friendship, all of this is deeply meaningful, but only from *within* God’s story, only from within God’s blessing and purposes.

So, these are the two basic prongs that God uses to bring us to repentance – law and meaning.

As the Spirit gives you the beginnings of new life, the first two things you notice are these – there’s a divine *law*, and I have broken it; and there’s a divine *story*, and I’m locked out of it.

#### **FOURTH (8-10) – The Miracle of Conversion happens through the gift of repentance and faith.**

Ok, two more, but these will be quite a bit shorter.

The fourth lesson is in verses 8-10. The miracle of conversion happens through the *gift* of repentance and faith.

After conviction, after stubbornness, at last we get to repentance. Here is basically when you are finally at the end of your rope. You’re done trying to fix yourself. You’re done trying to earn God’s favor through merit. You’re done trying to be your own Lord. You’re done trying to find satisfaction and meaning apart from your Creator. You’re done – you have no other moves – so you finally call out to God for mercy.

Verse 8, **“to the Lord I plead for mercy.”**

Verse 10, **“Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me!”**

Now, here’s the great paradox of conversion. When you are the closest to safety, you feel the most fear and anxiety. When you are the furthest from true conversion and life, you feel quite comfortable. But it’s when you’re finally standing on the very doorstep of life, looking through an open door, that you feel the most fear and spiritual angst.

It’s very likely, though by no means necessary, that at this point you still don’t even really get the gospel. In fact, true repentance prays prayers here that are profoundly desperate in nature. You’re pleading for mercy as if

you've never heard of the cross. As if everyone else around you is justified on their own merits, and you're just pleading for a special grace.

"They seem to have made it, everyone else seems to be just fine, nobody else seems to have this thunderstorm going on behind their eyeballs, but for whatever reason, I, and maybe I alone, just can't do it. I can't beat my own sin. I can't live up to your law. Please, there's nothing I can do, I'm not like everyone else, please have mercy on me."

Now, there is one note I need to make on repentance here. It would be easy to think that repentance is the thing that you bring to the table. But, that is not the way that the Bible teaches us repentance. Conviction for sin is a gift from God. That expanded but unfilled capacity for satisfaction is a gift from God. And repentance itself is a gift from God.

Zechariah 12:10 makes this point, there God says, <sup>10</sup>**"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him."**

In other words – God gives us a spirit of asking for mercy as a kind of preparation to seeing God crucified. Or again, we can't get the cross right until God grants us this spirit of repentance. We can't really get the cross until God gives us a spirit that is pleading with him for mercy.

Acts 11:18, right after Peter tells the story of Cornelius and his house coming to faith, says, **"They glorified God, saying, 'then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.'"**

And the Apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:25, tells Timothy that pastors should *"correct their opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth."*

Wrapping that all up, repentance is something that we give to God only after he has first given it to us.

So, if you are not a believer yet. If you are not yet surrendered to Christ. Maybe you have been thinking this morning that you are somewhere in the middle of this process. Here is what you need to take away.

God has commanded you to repent and believe – this is your responsibility to do. He has invited you to come into life by repentance and faith. This is your invitation to accept or deny.

And yet, God is not anxiously waiting for you to repent. You are desperately waiting, whether you know it or not, for God to grant you repentance.

So plead with him for mercy. Plead with him to give you a spirit of true repentance.

The miracle of conversion happens through the *gift* of repentance and faith.

## **FIFTH (11-12) – The Miracle of Conversion results in gladness and gratitude**

Ok, last point, verses 11 and 12, the miracle of conversion results in gladness and gratitude.

This is not that complicated. Often, especially when conversion is a particularly rough process, finally coming home to Christ can feel like you are walking to the courthouse to turn yourself in. But then, as soon as you walk through the door you realize it is a homecoming party for you.

On the outside of the door repentance and faith looks like death. But as soon as you walk through it feels like life and peace.

Verse 11, **"you have turned my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."**

Conviction, guilt, and fear suddenly become peace, acceptance, and freedom. The terrors of the law are suddenly replaced with the comforts of the gospel. Christ has turned from a terrible judge to a merciful friend.

All at once, the process that felt like death suddenly breaks into life.

The Apostle Paul even compares this process to childbirth.<sup>1</sup> There's a ton of pain, and tears, but then all of a sudden there's a new life, a new son has been brought into the family, a new daughter has come into the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 4:19.

What happens here is that while you're pleading with God for mercy as though you were the only one who ever needed it, all of a sudden you see the cross. And you go, 'wait a minute. I've heard about that thing. Wait, is that for me?'

All of a sudden it clicks. All of a sudden you see the glory and holiness and majesty of God bundled up in this man Jesus Christ. But layered over it all is something else. What is that? Layered over all this is his love and mercy. Layered, not to cover the glory, or conceal the holiness, but to make it more glorious, more beautiful. And it's in this moment that your soul fully and finally wakes up.

All in a moment you get it. You see your sin as the black and invincible dragon that it is, and you see the glory and the grace of God in the death and resurrection of Christ piercing this dragon, and cutting it in two.

Somehow, by dying, this man gave you life. Somehow, by being rejected, this man gave you acceptance. Somehow, by taking on shame, this man has given you honor. In his death, you have finally found life.

In Galatians 1:16, the Apostle Paul describes his conversion as the moment that God **"was pleased to reveal his Son to me."** And that's just it. That's the moment of conversion. Conviction is not conversion, being unsatisfied with the world is not conversion, even repentance, crying out for mercy is not conversion. Conversion is the moment that God reveals his Son to you, the moment when you finally see Jesus and live.

Now, I want to end with one caveat. This is not a cookie cutter process. For some people this all happens over the course of a single sermon. For some people this happens over the course of a couple months. For me it was about a year. And for some it might even be spread over the course of a few years. For some it's intense and dramatic. For some it's less intense, and they couldn't even really pinpoint the events along the way. And for some this happens at a very young age, and you barely remember it, if at all, and what you do remember doesn't feel very dramatic, because it was conviction of the Law for a five-year-old. There is nothing wrong with that. God is pleased to work in your life when he is pleased to work in your life.

So, don't lose any sleep if your story doesn't perfectly line up with this process. The point isn't that this is the exact steps you need to follow or it doesn't count. Conversion is a work of God, not something you do.

(If you feel like you're in the middle of this, if you think God is convicting you, or you are standing on the doorstep of conversion, but not yet in, come talk to me, let's talk about that.)

And that's the point. However neatly you think your story lines up with this, or wherever you are in the process, the doctrine of conversion should give you comfort precisely because it is something God does, not you. You don't need to worry whether or not you did it right, or are doing it right, because it is God who does it, not you.

Look on the cross, and lay down your sins. Look on the ascended Lord sitting on his throne, and lay down your obedience.

As you reflect on your own conversion, whether it's something you remember from a few years ago, or something you can only reflect on by faith, marvel at the grace and power of God who did all this in you and for you, *who has drawn you up, who has brought up your soul from Sheol, and who has restored you to life.*

We will be celebrating the Lord's Supper this morning, so after I pray I invite the servers to come down to serve the elements.

Just as conversion is central to the Temple, so conversion is central to this table. This meal reminds us of the death that Jesus drew us up from by sinking down into. This table reminds us of our risen Lord, who even now calls all men to turn and be saved (for he is God and there is no other<sup>2</sup>), that they too might someday feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 45:22.