

## 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 (NIV)

2 We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

52-01-01-The Heart in Conversion  
faith, conversion, spiritual examples

1 Thes 1:2-10

Conversion of the heart gradually turns the whole life around.

### INTRODUCTION:

–**Title**, and its theme is **HOM.idea**. [In Heb. & Grk., to convert means to turn back– Luke 22:32, “But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”] [Peter’s denial reminds me of my own dishonesty with a manager at work. I felt *convicted* and soon confessed the truth to her. This turned me back to my proper walk in the Lord. And perhaps my story can *strengthen* some of you in your own *ongoing conversions*.]

–In *Christian conversion*, Jesus becomes Lord. At first, there’s *initial change*, then *ongoing change*. [When a business is “under new management,” initial changes are gradually followed by others until the ideals of the new ownership are fully in place.] Today’s **text** describes *new management* under Christ.

–Changes that conversion produces in a believer’s heart are perfectly outlined in v.3, We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. I’ll be following that outline in exploring what the heart in conversion entails. *It means...*

### I. A Heart with Conviction (the “work produced by faith”)

A. Faith has two very inviting foundations— v.4, For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you...

1. The salvation we access by faith isn’t based on our love for God, but on our being “loved by God”— Rom 5:8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
2. God didn’t choose us because of our good works, but “he has chosen” us because we are in Christ—God’s truly *Chosen One*—by faith in His *good work* on the cross for our salvation.

B. Being God’s “chosen” people is seen in how we receive the Gospel— v.5a, because our gospel came to you not simply with words... (A message in words is like a map: trustworthy if followed, but useless if not.)

1. The rest of v.5 is (not simply with words), “but also with power”— a life converted is a life transformed. [John Driffil (from FLC) could take discarded scraps of wood and create beautiful works of art.] God’s power does that, too: transforms seemingly useless human souls, on the scrap pile of sin, into lives filled with “work produced by faith.”

2. (not simply with words, but...), “with the Holy Spirit”— God’s salvation is not coercive but conducive: a holy life isn’t enforced but enabled “with the Holy Spirit” [US military service] used to based on a Selective Service System. If drafted, you were “in the Army now” with no choice in the matter.] God’s way is not to draft people into His service, but to enlist them. You can choose to stay on Satan’s side or to turn back, taking up spiritual weapons to fight that devil.
3. (not simply with words, but...), “with deep conviction”— v.9b, ...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. – Only those convinced by Gospel truth will turn back to God from empty idolatry (A clean break from an empty lifestyle characterized the public conversions under Paul’s preaching in Ephesus— Acts 19:18-19 (NKJV), And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

**TRANS:** Conversion has a context. It always means turning back to God from whatever society puts before God. It’s a “work produced by faith”— not just the adoption of a doctrine, but a reversal of direction. [Helen Keller: “We should think of conversion, not as the acceptance of a particular creed, but as a change of heart.”] The converted heart translates creed into deed. And this translation work of the heart in conversion is done by...

## II. A Heart with Conformity (the “labor prompted by love”)

- A. Christian conversion replaces unholiness with holiness commitment to community. (This is an eternal fact for converts: on earth, it’s the Body of Christ; in heaven, it’s the Bride of Christ.)
- B. There’s wisdom in God’s plan of having just one Body— Eph 3:10. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms....
1. Paul said in v.5b, You know how we lived among you for your sake. (The duty of committed leaders is to “walk the talk”— to live holy lives before the converts to whom they have preached the Gospel.)
2. The task of converts is to adopt the holy life modeled by those devoted to following Jesus— v.6a, You became imitators of us and of the Lord... (Church isn’t just about Sunday worship; it means “labor prompted by love”: prayer, compassion, visitation, meeting needs.)
3. The goal of Christian communities should be for their testimony

to extend beyond their borders— v.7, And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. (Success in this depends on our conformity to Christ— Phil 2:4-5, Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

**TRANS:** [George B. Shea sang “Others, Lord, yes, others, / Let this my motto be; / Help me to live for others / That I may live like Thee.”] If this theme is on our lips and in our lives, we won’t be ashamed to meet Jesus at the end of our earthly mission. That’s why a heart in conversion is to be...

## III. A Heart with Confidence (the “endurance inspired by hope”)

- A. Confident conversion puts heaven in our hearts and sets our hearts in heaven, making us earthly pilgrims—sojourners who (v.10), wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (We’ve place our whole trust in God’s future.)
- B. Confident conversion sees Christ’s resurrection as the promise of our own. (Death is an enemy that Christ has already conquered!)
- C. Confident conversion sets our feet to follow Jesus, knowing that His power in defying hell and the grave will save us from both.
  1. What is this “coming wrath”? It’s God’s attitude against the dark lies of sin that destroy human souls which He created for truth.
  2. People clinging to sin’s deception have chosen a time-bomb soon to explode! (Our will is sacred to God! He warns, never forces!)
  3. Conversion is turning back from sin’s falsehood to the God of truth, giving our whole hearts to Jesus—whose name means “Jehovah saves” —the One “who rescues us from the coming wrath.”

## CONCLUSION:

—[D. L. Moody: “It is not necessary that we should be able to tell where or how we have been converted, but it is important that we should be able to tell that we are converted.”] And they who see our lives ought to be able tell it, too. — Conversion of the heart gradually turns the whole life around. It starts with the right heart condition: a contrite heart condition; it moves on to confessing where we are wrong so that God can set us right; and it culminates and continues in an initial and ongoing turning back from the idols of false living to serve the true and living God—that’s the only kind of life that brings us the happiness we were created for.