

# A New Direction

Step 2 – We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3 – We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.

- Have you ever needed a new direction in life?
- Have you ever taken a new direction in life?
- Was the new direction a Godward direction?
- What did that look like?
- Were you saved, born again, converted; what was your experience?
- Did that moment or experience in time trigger a new direction?

Many times there is a confession, profession or conversion, but often not evidenced by the person's life? This leads people to question their conversion, was it real, and often others begin judging whether a person is truly converted, saved, born again, etc., (whatever your term is).

- Conversion by concussion i.e. bible beating ~ Brennan Manning, The Ragamuffin Gospel



Back in the days Vince Lombardi, the Green Bay Packers had a most interesting beginning to pre-season training. All the players knew that at the first team meeting, the legendary coach would waste no time getting straight to the point. Many of the men, half Lombardi's age and twice his size, were openly fearful, dreading the encounter. The coach did not disappoint them, and, in fact, delivered his message in one of the great one-liners of all time. Football in hand, Lombardi walked to the front of the room, took several seconds to look over the assemblage in silence, held out the pigskin in front of him, and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." In only five words, Lombardi communicated his point:

We're going to start with the basics and make sure we're executing all the fundamentals.<sup>1</sup>

The Old Testament talked of a coming messiah; a looking forward to his coming. Early in the NT we began to hear about **repentance – changing ones mind, purpose, direction.**

**Luke 3:1-18** Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight. 5 Every ravine will be filled, And every mountain and hill will be brought low; The crooked will become straight, And the rough roads smooth; 6 And all flesh will see the salvation of God. 7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our father, for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, Then what shall we do? 11 And he would answer and say to them, The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise. 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, Teacher, what shall we do? 13 And he said to them, Collect no more than what you have been ordered to. 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, And what about us, what shall we do? And he said to them, Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages. 15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, 16 John answered and said to them all, As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. 18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.

- Both John and Jesus made reference to repentance as well as a tree being known by its fruit. This was a visual example of the change of mind or direction. To do otherwise is not true repentance. In other words I can say I am a peach tree but if there are no peaches, I am just a tree, no different from a non-bearing fruit tree. So what is so different about me; there is no noticeable difference.

<sup>1</sup> <http://packerville.blogspot.com/2010/05/gentlemen-this-is-football.html>

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- In a lot of people's lives, there may have been a confession; confession of sin, maybe even a profession of faith; but maybe no repentance. This would be why we see there is "no fruit in keeping with repentance".

## We want to come to a point of authentic conversion

Over 100 years ago in the Deep South a phrase so common in our Christian culture today "born again" was seldom or never used. Rather, the phrase used to describe the breakthrough into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was: "I was seized by the power of a great affection". These words describe both the initiative of God and the explosion within the heart when Jesus, instead of being a face on a holy card with long hair, and a robe with many folds became real, alive, and Lord of ones personal and professional life. The phrase lent new meaning to the old Russian proverb "Those who have the disease called Jesus will never be recovered". ~ Brennan Manning from The Ragamuffin Gospel

- **John the Baptist** called people to repentance – to take a new direction
- His kindness leads to repentance (Romans 2:4), not condemnation or fear.
- **Jesus** called people to repentance and to "follow Him" – **Matthew 4:17, 19-20** *From that time Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He \*said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.*
- **The Disciples** were sent out with the same message – **Mark 6:12** *They went out and preached that men should repent.*
- **Peter** called people to repentance and baptism **Acts 2:37** *Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
- **Paul** – **Acts 26:19-20** *So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. (See also Ephesians 4)*
- Notice the people's response: "What shall we do"?

**Israelites** – God did not bring the Israelites out to leave them out; He brought them out so that He might bring them in. This point has been lost in our teaching today. God brings us out, not that we may be out, but that we may be brought in.<sup>2</sup> into a life of Christ living in us.

- Were you saved from something or saved to something?

**Early Church** – In the early church the people were called "Followers of the Way" because that was what they did...they followed the way of Christ. Today we may have tendencies to identify with "followers of \_\_\_\_\_", a preacher, church, denomination, TV evangelist, recovery group, or you fill in the blank. Christ is probably in there somewhere but our following is more with the organized group surrounded by it's meeting times and events than a day to day following of a person we cannot see, feel, touch, or communicate with.

## Freedom Points – (Freedom is not based on works. Freedom is based in truth)

- Everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23) – we are all on level ground here
- The foundation for freedom is following Christ; going a new direction, not just knowing about him.

## Walking It Out – (Our part/responsibility based on Christ in You, strengthening us as we choose to walk forward)

- Have you truly repented, had that "what shall we do" moment where you responded to take a new direction in life with Christ?
- Talk about it. Admit where you are; Maybe you really didn't know what you were getting into when you "accepted Jesus". Maybe this is more than you bargained for, or I didn't realize what you were getting into when you "believed"; maybe you were never fully in.
- Jesus is the source and hope of our new direction. Pursue the relationship and person of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts.

<sup>2</sup> A.W. Tozer. The Crucified Life: How To Live Out A Deeper Christian Experience (Kindle Locations 524-532). Kindle Edition.