

Introduction

1. Tertullian = great Christian leader in 2nd/3rd centuries. 1st use **Trinity** for Father/Son/H.S.
 - a. Memorable quote. One = **A man becomes a Christian, he is not born one.**¹ (Show)
 - b. The process by which we become a Christian = conversion. Matthew 18:3.
 - c. **Converted = change, turn around, turn one's self.**² Process of turning from self to Jesus.
2. There are many things we can substitute for conversion that will not make us Christians.
 - a. Having Christian parents; attending church; being baptized, confirmed; church membership.
 - b. E. Oulette asked if was a Christian said, **I've been confirmed.** Pastor said **I don't mean that.**
 - c. Those things are all important, but Jesus said the one thing makes Christian = conversion.
3. (Title/Text) This is probably most important question anyone could ever ask? Ask yourself.
 - a. Perhaps clearest answer for us is found in O.T. Usually think of N.T. about conversion.
 - b. Testimony of Ruth is one of greatest conversions of all time. No human reason converted.
 - c. Moabite woman; raised in pagan culture; worshiped false gods; suffered hard trials.
 - d. Yet she was converted & became believer. If she converted there is hope for anyone.
 - e. Will you do a favor and compare your life to hers? Sincerely ask, **Have I been converted?**

I. Conversion = A Faith-Commitment To The Lord For Life. vv. 16-17.

A. Central Focus of Ruth's Testimony.

1. One of most beautiful testimonies in all of the Bible; in all of human literature.
2. Structure of vv. 16-17 make it clear the central focus is v. 16c. Noun clause, no verbs.
 - a. Lit. **Your people my people; your God my God.** Central commitment causing all rest.
 - b. V. 16 Ruth calls God אֱלֹהִים [elohiym] = Creator. Everyone can call God [elohiym].
 - c. God is everyone's Creator by virtue of natural birth.
 - d. But v. 17 she calls God יהוה [Yâhovah] = God's personal Name. Only believers.
 - e. Ruth uses central covenant promise God made when took Israel as own people.³
 - f. Ruth is saying **I am taking that same God as my God. I am trusting Him as my Lord.**
 - g. This is the only time in the book Ruth uses God's personal name. But Ruth 2:12.
 - i. This is one of most beautiful images for faith. (Show) Also found in Psalm 91:4.
 - ii. **Take refuge = seek refuge, flee for protection. 1A to put trust in (God)**⁴
 - iii. Theodore Epp (Definition) said **Faith is personal trust in a personal Savior.**⁵
 - iv. Look how this little chick has fled for refuge in its mother's wings.
 - v. Here is total trust & total commitment to its mother for its safekeeping.
 - vi. Faith = total trust & total commitment to Jesus for salvation & safekeeping.

B. How Did Ruth Come to this Place?

1. She was witnessed to by Naomi & her family. Told her about Yahweh true Creator.
 - a. And then she watched them for well over 10-yrs. Naomi hurting now, but faith real.
 - b. She had been good wife, good mother & good mother-in-law. *Wept*, vv. 9, 14.

¹ Ritzema, E. (2013). *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Early Church*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

² Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

³ Exodus 6:7

⁴ Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁵ Theodore Epp was founder of Back To The Bible radio program. He defined faith this way at start of a sermon.

- c. It means loud wailing like at death of loved one. These girls loved Naomi.
- d. Ruth saw the reality of the Lord in Naomi so that she wanted relationship too.
- e. There are some people here today because Jesus is so real in someone else's life.
- f. We've come to faith in Jesus because we couldn't deny His presence in friend.
2. Her sufferings may have turned her to the Lord. Ruth been thru a lot.
 - a. Father-in-law, husband, no children due to infertility. Could've been bitter too.
 - b. Think of all her suffering, disappointment & grief. Instead of hardening it softened.
 - c. Same pain that hardens some softens others & they turn to Jesus.
 - d. Which is it for you? Are you being softened realizing need Jesus or hardened to Him.

II. Conversion = A Choice To Enter Upon God's Narrow Way, vv. 14-16a.

A. Picture Worth 1000 Words (Show)

1. This shows us the poignant scene of Ruth clinging to Naomi while Orpah heads back.
2. But did you notice the crossroads? Artist painted a fork in the road. Only two ways.
 - a. There are not several ways, many options for Ruth, but only two.
 - b. Can't help but think of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-14.
3. Orpah chose the easy way didn't she? Went back to family, culture, easier future.
 - a. But in doing so she went back to her god. Chemosh = god of Moabites.⁶ (Show)
 - b. Moabites practiced child-sacrifice to appease Chemosh and win his favor.
 - c. When Naomi linked people & gods, v. 15 she knew Orpah abandon Yahweh.
 - d. **Go back = apostatize. 1A1F2 to turn away (of God).**⁷ Orpah not criticized, but no cost.
 - e. She was going back to the comfortable, familiar, but also idolatry & iniquity.

B. Look At The Price Ruth Paid

1. She left her customs, her culture, family, prospects for future husband & family.
2. Took on responsibility of caring for an aging woman in land where she'd be a stranger.
3. She was choosing lifelong widowhood and poverty as her outlook. **No turning back, v. 16.**
4. **There is no more radical decision in all the memories of Israel.**⁸ Why? Here's reason.
 - a. In the Psalms דָּבַק [dabaq, **cling**] = single-minded attachment to God.
 - b. Person who so values and treasures Jesus that He is worth more than all else.
5. In many ways she was willing to pay the same price as Moses, Hebrews 11:24-27.
6. When you have been genuinely converted you know there is no turning back.
 - a. You may lose friends; have change habits; give of yourself more; stop sinning.
 - b. But those things are nothing to you anymore because you've found true treasure.
 - c. Ruth has become that person. Her desires are now attached to the Lord.
 - d. She can pay the price because God has captured her heart & He is her reward.
 - e. She'd rather walk the narrow road w/Him than the broad road w/o Him.

II. Conversion = A Change by God of one's inner heart-disposition, vv. 16-18.

A. Share Augustine's Answer to the Question What Is a New Man?⁹ (Show)

⁶ <http://pixgood.com/chemosh-the-god-of-the-moabites.html>

⁷ Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁸ Constable, T. (2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Ru 1:15). Galaxie Software.

⁹ Ritzema, E. (2013). *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Early Church*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

1. Augustine is describing the God-wrought change in the heart when we are converted.
2. Only God can bring this about. Only God can replace old desires with new desires.
3. Jonathan Edwards said only true sign of conversion are new affections.

B. Signs of A Converted Heart (Show)

1. Self-sacrificing love for others, v. 16.

- a. V. 16b is a figure of speech called merism = 2 opposites = **going & staying.**
- b. The two opposites are a totality that mean whatever the activity.
- c. Whatever the circumstances Ruth will put Naomi's welfare above her own.
- d. That is God's love; agape love that sacrifices for the one loved.

2. Devotion to the people of God, v. 16.

- a. Ruth realized loving God also meant loving His people. **God our Father; church mother.**
- b. Jesus said, **You will know they are my disciples because they love one another.**

3. Living in God's presence as accountable to Him, v. 17.

- a. Ruth takes strongest oath possible in Jewish culture by calling judgment on self.
- b. She recognizes Yahweh as her highest authority & witness to all she does.
- c. She is now living as always in His presence & wanting her actions to please Him.
- d. When we want to be accountable to God because always watching, new heart.

4. Persistence in doing good despite pressure, v. 18.

- a. Three times Naomi pressured Ruth to give up and go back home, vv. 8, 12, 15.
- b. **Determined, v. 18 = strengthened herself.**¹⁰ Refers to an inner strength to do right.
- c. It = resolve when the pressure's on not to give in but steadfastly do what is right.
- d. Philippians 4:13: **I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me.**

Conclusion

1. I was converted to Christ as a teenager. As God changed my heart all 4 of these appeared.
2. I have never lived them perfectly but all four God has wrought in me thru the new birth.
3. One of the most dramatic was #3 when I was about 15-yrs-old. Goofing around back row.
 - a. Passing notes back and forth smirking while pastor was preaching. **Pastor can see me!**
 - b. Instant conviction like never known. Knew what had to do. Apologize.
 - c. One of hardest things ever done was wait in line to confess to my pastor.
 - d. He said **I didn't see you. Doesn't matter; you know God saw you.**
 - e. I have never been the same since I began living in God's presence as teenage believer.
4. I rejoice because Ruth's testimony is my testimony and it can be yours too.

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: King James Version.* (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version.). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.