

Values And Conversion

The Process of Conversion

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Last week I was attempting to emphasize that the Bible takes sin and death very seriously because immortality is not our natural birthright ["Four Views of Christ (Part 7)"]. We do not possess it simply because we are born. The Bible shows eternal life to be both a quality and a state that must be given. It is only given to one who is repentant, has been converted, and has received God's Holy Spirit, which is the beginning of eternal life.

Now such a person, we saw, is said to be dead to sin. But we found that the old man does not stay dead very easily. It constantly wants to revive and continue to exert its dominance over the converted person's life. So in the Bible we are urged to resist it, to fight it, to no longer be the slave to it. And it is through this struggle that we learn the reality that conversion is both a state that one is put into, and a process that one is going through.

Now if a person is converted and serious about his calling, going through the process is both enjoyable and difficult at one and the same time. It is enjoyable because there is reward from doing things right. It is difficult because doing something right after establishing wrong habits is both emotionally and physically draining.

I want to begin this sermon in Luke 5.

Luke 5:36-39 Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one, otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the skins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new, for he says, 'The old is better.' "

Jesus is using an illustration in which the wine represents the new things that are coming into our mind. And what is already there exerts a powerful influence on a person's choices because there is a natural rejection mechanism at work within us to something that is new.

I am not talking about an object like a new house, new car, or new clothing. I do not think that there is a natural rejection process to that, but rather to a new concept—a new, different way of doing, seeing, or understanding something.

The new thing jars our sensibilities because it disturbs our sense of values. It disturbs us and motivates us to resist accepting something even though there might be an admission that what we are rejecting is true. What is ours is valuable to us. I wonder if we realize how pervasive this rejection system is!

Jeremiah says:

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked [or incurably ill, or beyond cure]; who can know it?"

The source of this difficulty—this rejection process that is at work—is the human heart. It has some qualities that are stated by Jeremiah that begin to make it clear as to why this rejection process is so difficult to resist. We may be receiving new things, but it does not mean that they are accepted. It does not mean, necessarily, that they are put into practice either, because the heart is going to do its work to try to reject and try to hold onto, and not give up its position in the person's life.

In Proverbs 4 is a verse that adds to our understanding in this regard. Solomon wrote:

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

The Hebrews chose a part of the body—the heart—to represent the source of what a person is and what he does. It was a very natural selection because our life is in our blood. The issues of life are in the heart. And the heart is

what pumps the blood. Therefore, the heart is the wellspring of our life. If the heart is injured, or the heart stops, life stops.

By the same token, they chose that muscle to represent the center—the source—of what a person is. The heart is a collective term for a person's emotions, attitudes, reasoning, and intellect. Today we use the word "mind," but they used the word "heart." And so, it is the seat of a person's character. Indeed, the heart is the seat of one's whole personality.

We find that when we go to battle against it, according to Jeremiah 17:9, our heart is filled with deceit, falsehood we might say; duplicity, meaning it is double-minded. It is ambivalent. One day on this side, the next day on that side. And it is also very contradictory, because that heart, not only being a seat of evil, is also a seat of things that are good. Man is a mixture. And it all comes out of that heart. So, what a person does is generated by the heart.

Now recall these scriptures. You are going to know them right off. Matthew 12:34 is very easy to remember: Matthew 1—2—3—4.

Matthew 12:34 "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

What comes out of the mouth is generated from the heart. And a person cannot hide what they are because the heart is going to speak it.

Another scripture from Jesus,

Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

And so we find that not only what comes out of the mouth is generated in the heart, also these other evil things—what a person does that causes him to break the law of God—are also generated from the heart. And so we are told here in Proverbs 4:23 to guard it [the heart] because it conditions all of our activities. Therefore, character and quality of living depend upon the correct functioning of the mind—or heart. Out of it are the issues of life. The nature and outcome of our existence depend upon it.

If we are going to have eternal life, both as quality and length, the heart must be changed. It must be converted because the Bible shows that its nature is in a state of death. It is incurably sick, Jeremiah said. And it does not want to be changed from what it values highly already.

Our problem lies in that it is committed to those values. Do you understand what I am saying here? Our heart not only has these bad values; it is *committed* to them. That is why it fights change. Our heart is convicted. Remember the sermon, "Is it a Preference or a Conviction?" Our heart is convicted about these things that God says are evil thoughts, murders, fornications, and so forth. It is committed to these things because it has already lived with its values for many years and that heart is incredibly self-serving.

Just how bad is it?

Romans 8:7 "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, and nor indeed can be."

We have a foe of awesome, incredible, deceitful wickedness right within us!

So, we are faced with two difficult forces while going through the process of conversion. First is the pressure to resist, even acknowledging that our value system might be wrong. And then, secondly, actually overcoming the wrong attitudes and habits.

I know that Mr. Armstrong used to say that repenting is the most difficult thing that anybody will ever do in his or her life. He understood that this heart is so tricky. It likes to justify itself. So, it will make us hang onto whatever it is that we are doing that is wrong.

Now I may from time to time throughout this sermon use the words "values," "customs," "traditions," or something like that almost interchangeably. I understand that technically they may not be exactly the same, and sometimes in some verses one particular word is used, but I think that you will begin to see the connection between all of these as I go on.

Let us go to I Peter 1.

I Peter 1:18-19 Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

The very thing that we are being redeemed from is aimless conduct received by tradition. It is conduct that issues, or springs forth, from a heart that is formed as a result of conformation to what is traditional in our family, school, community, religion, club, cliques, and other associations. I think you get the idea of where our values come from—where our traditions come from. They are absorbed from those relationships.

I want you to notice that the conduct, which springs from tradition, is aimless. It is very important to what Peter is explaining here. The Bible views mankind as wandering all over the place and not really going anywhere except to the grave, because it is dead in sin. It is aimless. It does not have a focus on what is important to God's purpose. So a life's path, or its direction, must be changed and that change is what results in conversion.

Now beginning in Mark 7 verses 6-9, we can add:

Mark 7:6-9 "He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites., as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men [remember I Peter 1:18; the tradition of men results in aimless wandering.]—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

What these verses do is that they show the impact of human traditions, or the values, that we learned in our environment—family, home, club, religion, and on and on. The impact—the effect—is that the commandments of God are set aside on the basis of these traditions. That is what He said, "You reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own traditions."

The subject here is the washing of pots and cups, and things like that. This may seem childish to us, looking back on it from the 20th century and having the kind of background most of us have had growing up in either a Catholic or Protestant setting. The washing pots and cups, or the washing of one's hands at certain times, or the use of prayer wheels (that they use in some religions), or the burning of incense to Buddha, or the staring at the sun until one goes blind, or drinking cow's urine, or drinking goat's blood, or mutilating one's body in the service of one's god, or thinking that one is already God (as the New Agers do today). But brethren, these things are the only spiritual information that these individuals have to go on, and so it is important to them. And they base their life decisions on what their value system is telling them to do in their response to God.

That is what worship is. Worship is our response to God. Now Jesus said these things cause us to reject the commands of God in order to do our traditions.

What is so sneaky here is that without realizing it, we assign values to almost everything in life. In much of our life, this is a subconscious process. See? It is happening whether we are consciously making it happen or not.

The psychologists tell us that the most important formative years are the first years of life from the time the person is born until the time that they are about two or three years old. I have seen some psychologists write that about half of what a person eventually turns out to be occurs between birth and the second year of life.

This is taking place when we are hardly able to communicate in the sense that we have a very limited vocabulary, we have very little memory, and we have very few experiences by which to judge things. But you see, that does not stop us from assigning values! So, in the process, some things—objects, concepts, ideas, attitudes—have greater or lesser values than others. And our heart is such that it is ready to argue against almost anybody that what we value is better.

Sometimes the value we place on things has very serious consequences. I recall hearing or reading, I am not sure which, of two homeless men. They

fought to the death of one of them for possession of a cardboard refrigerator carton that they both felt that they needed. Now I know that you cannot imagine yourself doing that. But at that time, they placed a value on that carton that was such that they felt that they needed it and were willing to die for a cardboard refrigerator carton. This also teaches us that we do not always place the same value on something, or a standard, or a concept either.

For example, if one has a home, has sufficient to eat, a job, and clothing to wear, a refrigerator carton means nothing. But given a different set of circumstances, people will even murder for the purpose of cannibalism, because at that time their value has shifted to where their living is more important than that somebody else should live.

On a recent trip, I saw a brief portion of a program on the Donner Party—the Donners who were trapped on the Donner Pass there above Squaw Valley, I think in 1849, but I am not sure. But the portion that I saw told the story of how they killed two Indian men who were with them—killed them, and ate them in order that the others would survive, because to them, an Indian was worth less than somebody else was. See? Their heart placed a value, and they murdered and ate those men in order that they should survive.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It can justify murder and cannibalism given the right set of circumstances. If the circumstances are not that way, then the value shifts, and we feel that such a thing is creepy and beyond us and we would never do such a thing. I hope that we never would.

But you understand what we are dealing with here, and why converting is so difficult. First of all, the heart has already established values. That heart loves those values. It is committed to those values, and it is going to resist changing those values. And even when we decide that we need to change those values, it is going to be very difficult because it is going to be raise its ugly head every so often and fight the change. That is why Paul wrote what he did in Romans 7 about finding himself doing what he did not want to do, even though his mind tells him he should not be doing those things. And he said,

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! [that there is salvation.]

This ought to illustrate, then, how deceitful, self-centered, incurably sick, and desperately in need of conversion the human heart is.

Now turn with me to James 2.

James 2:1-4 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, 'Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Remember Matthew 15:19? "Out of the heart comes evil thoughts."

Now these people judged, and therefore acted the way they did because their value system generated it. What they did showed what was important to them, what was in their hearts. It is very likely that their heart was telling them, "Impress this person and you may win favor with him, and maybe you can get something from him"—the person in the fine clothing. The human heart is incredibly self-centered. You see it assigns a value on the basis of something that is external. Now I am not going to say that this is entirely wrong, but our judgment ought to go further than that.

We place values on material things. That is what these people did here and their judgment was wrong. We place values on material things like cars, homes, and even wristwatches. Some people want a Rolex because of the name. There is a vanity there that needs to be satisfied.

How about varieties of beer? Or wine? Liquor? Sport teams? "My team can beat your team..." "The Braves are better than the Pirates."

Or, political philosophy. Some people support the Republican party and other people the Democratic party.

How about colors? Blue is better than green; and gold is better than either of them.

How about music? Rock, country and western, classical?

How about gestures? Inflections? Expressions?

How about clothing? How about rank? We assign value to almost everything!

Here in the United States and Canada, we assign a great deal of value to what we call liberty, or freedom, and we will fight to have it, even if it means taking away somebody else's freedom, or imposing our value on them!

Do you think that the world does not try to impose its value of Christmas onto you? I can understand why people want to fight against someone else's values. Because it is imposing something onto them that they do not feel they want in their life.

But all too often, what we value as being better is not better at all. It is only different. And it is simply a matter of taste, and is not even worth arguing over, let alone fighting over.

In society, there will be groups who adhere to, or have in common certain values, and this is how clubs, fraternities, and other organizations get started. You have the Moose, the VFW, Kiwanis, Masons, etc. who have values in common, so they tend to collect together. But even within a group like these, there will be smaller groups who will hold certain values differently from the larger group. This goes down all the way to the individual who may hold some values distinctly different from others.

Now the question is this: How in the world can there ever be harmony with such divergent possibilities? All of man's problems are caused by a conflict of value systems! So, there cannot be harmony unless everybody looks to the same source for the values that really matter, and consciously chooses them

as their own, and has enough understanding, love, and respect to tolerate value differences that are merely matters of taste.

You know what I am talking about here. I am talking about unity within the Church of the Great God. Are we sure that we all have the same values? I know that we do not. And that is understandable, because all of us are on the road to conversion. We are converted, but we are in different stages of the development of that conversion. Sometimes this brings us into conflict with one another because we put a different emphasis, different weight, and different degree of value upon one thing than somebody else might.

Then, what does that make us do? Well, if nature has its usual way, we try to impress upon somebody else what we value as being right. Now it may be. I am not saying that it is wrong. I am saying that it may be the value you have is right, and somebody else is wrong. But if somebody does not watch out, and the person who is right is trying to impress upon somebody else who has a different value on a thing, it can very quickly escalate, and the passions increase, and somebody gets deeply offended.

In John 17, within Jesus' prayer that He made prior to His crucifixion, we find:

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

We all remember the motto of Ambassador College: "Recapture True Values!" God's Word sets the standards for those who believe in Him. As people accept those values, and begin to make them a part of their lives, those values sanctify them.

Sanctify meaning "set apart" from others who have different values. You see a selection process—a unifying process—begins to go to work. Birds of a feather flock together! Clubs, organizations, cliques, and groups tend to form around a common set of values. God is telling you that it is a true principle. He is not telling you that their values are correct, but rather that the principle is correct. And if His values are accepted, His people will become sanctified—set apart. They will begin to become unified around a common set of values. But in this case, they are true values—they are God's values.

If His values become a part of our heart, what will they do? They will produce freedom! "If you continue in My word—the truth—you shall be free," Jesus said. It will begin to produce freedom from murder, divorce, rape, lying, and thievery. But, you see, the change has to begin with each individual.

We cannot wait for others to accept the values of God. It becomes our responsibility to accept them and choose to use them—conscientiously use them in our own lives—and they will begin to separate us from other people because the values are now different. But at the same time it separates us from others, it begins to unify us with those who have the same values, until what? We become one with God! Is that not God's purpose? Exactly!

You see, conversion is the key element in this process because it is through conversion that this is accomplished.

I Peter 1:22-23 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth [which are the true values] through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart [that is a true value from God], having been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, . . .

I want you to remember that. The Word of God is the place where God establishes His values.

I Peter 1:24 . . . because "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. . .

What does he tell you here? All this aimless wandering that was in the few verses before this shows that flesh is on a trajectory—a wandering trajectory—toward death. All flesh is as grass! And as long as we are on that trajectory, we are going to be like the grass. We are going to die.

I Peter 1:24-25 . . . The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

Now since God's Word is spirit and is life (John 6:62-63) and is always true, His values will produce freedom from death. Is that not what you want? You better believe it! Because, it is those who possess the values of God to whom God is going to give life.

This process we call conversion is really nothing more than the changing or the converting from values that produce death to eternal values that are set in heaven by God. And because they are eternal, they just keep going on and on.

We have found that this is not easy, because our heart will rise to defend and protect what it already holds to be of value, whether it is gold, silver, home, family, etc., etc. So, when we really repent, we are giving up something that our heart values very highly, and that is what makes it so rough. It doesn't matter what it is. If our heart values it highly, it is going to be tough to overcome it.

In Mark 10 is a very interesting encounter that Jesus had that you will recognize immediately about the rich young ruler. There is a lesson there that we need to extract from it.

Mark 10:17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

There was recognition in the man that he did not have eternal life.

Mark 10:18-26 So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. Do you know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do no defraud,' 'Honor your father and mother.' And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these have I kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, and take up the cross and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples,

"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God." And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!" It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." They were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

And, Jesus went on to encourage them,

Mark 10:27 "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God are all things possible."

The unstated lesson here to you and me is that we are all rich. I am not talking about rich in money. Remember what I have been leading up to here. A thing is important to us to the degree that our heart values it. So what I am talking about here is not necessarily money. It can be an attitude. It can be some other thing than money. It can be a car, a job, accreditation by society, status in society, the acclaim of other people, a friendship with the community, or others in the world, or the acclaim of others important to you who might manipulate things for you so that you can have other things. It can be a way of doing things. It does not have to be money. All of us are rich in something.

We are rich in what we highly value because we are the ones who have place the value on it. It is important to us. And if what we value is not in agreement with God's value, it is going to make it just as difficult to repent of as it was for this young man who valued money.

I want you to see how far off base this young man was in his values. Jesus' response of quoting five of the commandments is in turn answered by the young man as having done all these things. Now Jesus did not dispute that his answer was correct on the surface. He had not murdered, committed adultery, or fornication, and as far as it appeared on the surface, he was legally righteous—he was blameless before the law.

I bring this up because you will sometimes hear people say, "The Bible says that I have to love people, but it doesn't say I have to like them." But

brethren, this begs the issue. The attitude is wrong. What it is saying in reality is that "I will meet the letter of the law, but not its spirit." It is saying that "I value God's values to a limited extent, but not to their full intent."

Brethren, Jesus did not let this man get away with that approach. Did you notice that all the commandments that Jesus responded with were the ones that have to do with the relationships with other people? Did you notice that there was one command that He left out?

"You shall not covet."

That is the most spiritual of the last six commandments. It is something that steps into the spirit of the law and Jesus hit that young man with a dagger right in the heart. He said, "You have been coveting" without saying the words. "Yes," Jesus said, "I agree with you. You have been meeting the letter of the law, but you are falling short in keeping the spirit of the law."

The young man got the point. His values were not the same and it was too great a price for him to pay. Brethren, we have to be faced with this challenge. Are we going to be satisfied to meet the mere letter of the law, or are we going to step into the spiritual obedience to the law of God?

We are going to have difficulty because that heart of ours is going to want to give itself away grudgingly. It is going to try to convince us that keeping the letter of the law is enough. By Jesus' own testimony here, it is not enough.

Do you remember what He said in Matthew 5?

Matthew 5:20 "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus magnified the law and made it honorable.

So, he told the young man that he needed to step into the spiritual dimension if he was really going to have life. That was the original question. "How can I have life?" Jesus said that if you are going to have life, you will have to step into yieldedness to the spirit of the law, and it was too much of a price

for the young man to pay. He valued the money more than he valued being a disciple who was committed to complete conversion.

And so, in the final analysis, the young man's attitude was completely selfish. He was out to *get* something; he was not out to *give* his life to God.

Did he really have freedom? He was so shackled to his possessions, that he was not going to let anything short of death separate them from him.

Do you see, brethren, that this gives us insight into eternal life, and what it is, and what one has to do to become converted to in order to have it.

Eternal life is life as God lives it.

The attitude, then, and therefore the action of God, is characterized by His concern for the well-being of His creation to the extent—how much of an extent? *He was willing to sacrifice His life for it!* That is the way His attitude is—to do it for our well being. And so the essence of eternal life is not a carefully calculated keeping of rules, but a loving and sacrificial generosity toward others, along with keeping the rules. The rules are necessary because they define what is right and wrong, and they are the starting point for agreement so that there can be unity.

It is interesting to note that Jesus did not enunciate the 10th commandment, and perhaps it is because—this is my opinion—the young man's conscience was so bothering him already that he interrupted Jesus, and would not allow Him to get to the 10th commandment. He interrupted Him—"Oh! I've done all these things!"—because he could begin to see where Jesus was headed, and his heart did not want to face it.

And so when we look at Jesus' answer, it was that the young man, in order to have life, could not completely give up what he most highly valued.

In one sense, this is advice for everybody. But everybody does not value money in the same way the young man did. So, it was specific advice for him, but the general advice is that we have to also give up what *we* value highly *if* it different from what God values. Sometimes brethren, conversion

can be a very hard process, but unless this young man did—give up, that is—he would not have life.

Now think about this. What does a lot of money do for a person? It gives them an apparent measure of security, and the power to isolate themselves from others, even to the point of being a complete loner like Howard Hughes if one wants to. He had a fetish about being alone. He did not want to be around people because they might infect him with germs. Most of us cannot do that. Most of us do not even want to do it. But because Howard Hughes valued it so highly, and he had the power to do so, he separated himself from others. That is what money can do.

There is a principle here. This is exactly what our values that are not in alignment with God's values give us the power to do. If we feel comfortable with our values, it gives us the power to isolate ourselves from others to the extent that we are willing to do so.

And you see that heart, because of those values, will tend to pull us away from the others who have the common values. It is an interesting process. You see, that is not where life is. Life is where God's values are held and practiced. God is creating a family that enjoys being together, and one of the major elements that draws them together, and unifies them, is that they highly value the same basic principles of living. It is that simple.

John 6:26-27 Jesus answered them, and said, "Most assuredly I say to you, you seek Me [notice what the people valued, and what Jesus accused them of], not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food that endures to everlasting life."

Do you see how what He is saying is important? What is important to God are the values that He wants to be in us. And so He says "Don't expend your energy worrying about money, but expend your energy toward those things that are going to please God, and are going to write those values—Recapture True Values—making them a part of what you are.

John 6:27-29 "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man

will give you because the Father has set His seal on Him." And then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that believe in Him whom He has sent."

Brethren, the work of God is not preaching the gospel to the world. The work of God has to do with faith. The preaching of the gospel is a work of the church. But God is working to produce faith in His people.

John 6:30 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will you do?"

What this begins to show is why faith is so important to God's purpose. Jesus Christ is the central figure through whom God's purpose is being worked out. And it is not just that He was sacrificed for us, but what He preached. Have you not heard somebody say, "Oh, those people really like Jesus." It was what He said that got them upset, and led people to kill Him. It was His Word that was so important.

In that word is contained the values God wants impressed upon our character. If we do not believe what He says, the values have no chance to become a part of us, because now we must consciously choose to make them a part of us, in spite of the resistance of our carnality.

Before, when we were little children, a subconscious process was going along in which we just accepted the values of the environment in which we grew up. But now, God is calling upon His children to consciously accept *God's* values. Which means, we have to think about them. We have to think about ourselves in relation to God. There has to be a comparison between what we are, and what God is. There has to be examination of what our character is, about what our values are, comparing them to the values of God. We have to consciously choose to go against our heart in many cases—making the choice to sacrifice things that we value very highly, give them up, throw them on the altar and burn them to God so that His values can become a part of our life, and a part of our character.

Do you realize that this is what He is talking about in this chapter, only He uses the term "manna," or bread. What is He talking about? He is talking about the Word of God that contains the values of God. He said, "You have got to take Me into you, and eat Me," using Himself as an example of the Word of God. And He says there,

John 6:54 "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Drop down to verse 63:

John 6:63-64 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe."

If we do not believe His Word, His values will never be in us. We will never change.

John 6:64-67 For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by my Father." From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then, Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

I might add this, also—that this is what I meant earlier when I said that it is not just that Jesus is our Savior, it is that what He preached is what is important to those who are converted. And what He preached was the values of God—those things that we have to be converted to, changed to—and faith is what makes it possible, with the Spirit of God, to have these things be a part of us.

John 6:69 "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

God's work is to produce faith in His people. Faith is the foundation of our relationship with Him, and the platform from which all else in His purpose is built. And faith comes by hearing His Word. His Word tells us what He values, and what we too must value if His purpose is to be fulfilled in us.