

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Conversion

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Conversion, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's "Salvation, Session 11, Conversion" explores the theological concept of conversion within Christian doctrine. The session examines conversion as it relates to God's plan of salvation, emphasizing its application in believers' lives through union with Christ. **Peterson clarifies that conversion is essentially shorthand for the necessary and inseparable acts of repentance (turning from sin) and faith (turning to God through Christ).** He discusses how scripture sometimes highlights both, while more often focusing on either repentance or faith as the condition for salvation. **The lecture distinguishes between initial saving repentance and faith, and their ongoing role in the Christian life.** Peterson also touches upon differing evangelical views regarding the necessity of hearing the gospel for salvation, advocating for the exclusivist position.

**2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Salvation, Session 11 – Double click icon to play
in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org
[BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology →
Theology, Peterson → Salvation).**



**Peterson_Salvation_
Session11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Conversion

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Conversion

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 11 of his teaching on salvation, focusing specifically on the doctrine of conversion. Peterson outlines conversion as a crucial aspect of salvation applied, emphasizing its nature as the human response to God's saving work. He meticulously unpacks the components of conversion: repentance (turning from sin) and faith (turning to Christ), highlighting their inseparability yet distinct characteristics. The lecture also addresses different facets of repentance and faith, including their initial and ongoing nature, and explores the debated topic of exclusivism in relation to salvation and the necessity of hearing the gospel.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. **Conversion as Part of Salvation Applied:** Peterson places conversion within the broader narrative of salvation, which he frames as "salvation planned, accomplished, applied, and consummated." Conversion, along with faith and repentance, is presented as necessary for salvation applied – how God brings salvation into the lives of individuals. He states, "We're dealing with salvation applied, and that is how God actually brings into the lives of his people the salvation he planned before the creation of the world, the salvation that he accomplished in the work of Christ in the first century."
2. **Conversion as Shorthand for Repentance and Faith:** Peterson clearly defines conversion as theological shorthand encompassing the biblical doctrines of repentance and faith. He emphasizes their interconnectedness, stating, "Conversion, indeed, is shorthand for repentance and faith."
3. **Repentance: Turning from Sin:**
 - **Definition:** Repentance is described as "turning from sin." Peterson uses the example of the Thessalonians who "turned to God from idols" (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

- **Inseparability from Faith:** While distinguishable, repentance is inseparable from faith. "True faith always leads to repentance. People do not truly believe unless turning from sin occurs." He argues that they are "two sides of one coin" in the act of conversion.
- **Biblical Emphasis:** While sometimes mentioned alone (e.g., John the Baptist's preaching in Matthew 3:2, Jesus' call in Matthew 4:17), repentance is consistently presented as a necessary element. Peterson notes, "Repentance and faith are not identical, but they are inseparable."
- **Gift and Responsibility:** Peterson highlights the seemingly paradoxical nature of repentance being both a gift from God (Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:24-25) and a human responsibility (Matthew 4:17, 2 Corinthians 7:10). He suggests that God "graciously...enables sinners to repent and be saved."
- **Initial and Ongoing:** Peterson distinguishes between "evangelical repentance" (initial saving turning from sin) and "Christian repentance" (ongoing turning from sins to God out of gratitude and a desire to glorify Him). He explains, "Christian repentance ongoing repentance is repeatedly time and again turning from sins to God out of gratitude to Jesus and a desire to glorify God."

1. **Faith: Turning to Christ:**

- **Definition:** Faith is defined as "turning to Christ," involving "believing in Christ, trusting him as Savior, and owning him as Lord."
- **Necessity for Salvation:** Peterson asserts that "the Bible teaches that faith is necessary for salvation." He quotes Hebrews 11:6: "without faith, it is impossible to please God."
- **Specific Faith in Christ:** He emphasizes that "generic faith in God is not saved in the New Testament. Specific faith in Christ saves." He cites John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 to support this.
- **Variety of Scriptural Depictions:** Peterson notes the many ways the Old and New Testaments describe faith, including believing, taking refuge, trusting, relying, waiting, putting hope, believing in Jesus' name, receiving Christ, accepting his testimony, and coming to him. He clarifies that these are different expressions of the same fundamental trust in God.
- **Components of Saving Faith:** Drawing from traditional post-Reformation theology, Peterson outlines three aspects of faith:

- **Notitia (Knowledge):** Understanding the gospel message (Romans 10:17).
- **Assensus (Assent):** Agreeing with the facts of the gospel as God's truth.
- **Fiducia (Trust):** Personally trusting Christ as Lord and Savior. He cautions that these are aspects, not steps.
- **Object of Faith:** Peterson stresses that "faith is only as good as its object," emphasizing that Christ and his saving work are the sole basis for salvation. He quotes John Stott on the centrality of substitutionary atonement.
- **Initial and Ongoing:** Similar to repentance, Peterson distinguishes between "initial saving faith" and "ongoing faith" or "Christian faith." He states, "For we aren't merely saved by faith once and for all, we also live by faith every day of our lives" (referencing 2 Corinthians 5:6-7 and Galatians 2:20).
- **Gift and Responsibility:** Like repentance, faith is presented as both a gift from God (Acts 13:48, John 6:35, 44) and a human responsibility (Matthew 8:26, John 8:24, Acts 16:31). Peterson concludes, "Faith is God's gift, but it's also human beings' responsibility."

1. **Theological Debate: Exclusivism vs. Inclusivism:**

- Peterson addresses the contemporary debate regarding the necessity of hearing the gospel for salvation. He positions himself as an "unrepentant exclusivist," believing that people need to hear and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved.
- He contrasts this with pluralism (all religions lead to God) and inclusivism (Jesus is the only savior, but salvation is possible without explicitly hearing the gospel, often through general revelation).
- He critiques inclusivist arguments based on Romans 1 and the mercy of God, arguing that Romans 1 emphasizes the inexcusability of those who suppress the truth, and Romans 10 highlights that "faith comes by hearing...the message about Christ" (Romans 10:17).
- Peterson advocates for the importance of evangelism, driven by the belief that people need to hear the gospel to be saved. He highlights the work of Transworld Radio as an example of reaching those who might not otherwise have access to the gospel.

Key Quotes:

- "Conversion, tiny biblical summary, faith, and repentance are necessary for salvation. Faith and repentance are inseparable but distinguishable. They are two sides of one coin when it comes to conversion, for true faith always leads to repentance. People do not truly believe unless turning from sin occurs. Faith is turning to God, and repentance is turning away from sin."
- "Conversion involves turning from as well as turning to...Conversion has two parts: repentance, turning from sin, and faith turning to Christ."
- "The faith that is unto salvation is a penitent faith, and the repentance that is unto life is a believing repentance." (Quoting John Murray)
- "Repentance is initial and saving evangelical. It is also ongoing and sanctifying..."
- "Faith is believing in Christ, trusting him as Savior, and owning him as Lord. The Bible teaches that faith is necessary for salvation."
- "Little faith in Jesus saves because of who Jesus is and what he has done. Great faith in unworthy objects does not save." (Attributing to Martin Luther's sentiment)
- "Even as repentance is initial and lifelong, so faith is initial and saving, and it is lifelong Christian faith as well."
- "Repentance is God's gift. Faith is also God's gift...Faith is God's gift, but it's also human beings' responsibility."
- "Rather, proclaiming Jesus as the savior of the world means proclaiming God's love for a world of sinners and inviting everyone to respond to him as savior and lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith." (Quoting the Lausanne Covenant)
- "So, put me down as an unrepentant exclusivist. People need to hear the gospel of Jesus to be saved."

Conclusion:

In this session, Dr. Peterson provides a comprehensive overview of the doctrine of conversion, firmly grounding it in the biblical concepts of repentance and faith. He emphasizes the inseparable yet distinct nature of these two responses to God's grace, highlighting their necessity for salvation. Furthermore, he addresses the crucial distinction between initial saving faith and repentance and their ongoing role in the Christian life. Finally, Peterson engages with the contemporary debate surrounding the necessity of hearing the gospel, clearly articulating an exclusivist position rooted in his understanding of scripture. This lecture serves as a foundational exploration of conversion within a broader understanding of salvation applied.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Conversion

Conversion: Turning to Christ

Study Guide

I. Introduction to Salvation Applied

- Define "salvation applied" in your own words based on the lecture.
- What is the significance of understanding salvation as planned, accomplished, applied, and consummated?
- What are the necessary elements for salvation discussed in this session? How are they related?

II. Understanding Conversion

- What is the "tiny biblical summary" of conversion?
- How does the lecture define conversion in systematic theological terms?
- Explain the two components of conversion as illustrated by the example of the Thessalonian believers in 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10.

III. Repentance

- Define repentance as presented in the lecture. What does it involve turning away from? What does it implicitly involve turning towards?
- How do the examples of John the Baptist's and Jesus' early preaching illustrate the importance of repentance?
- Contrast the conversions of Saul (Paul) and Timothy. What is the main point of these contrasting examples?
- How does the lecture address the relationship between repentance and faith? Are they the same? Are they separate steps? Explain.
- Identify scriptural examples where both repentance and faith are explicitly mentioned together as conditions of salvation.
- Identify scriptural examples where only repentance is mentioned. What does the lecture suggest about the implicit presence of faith in these instances?
- Distinguish between initial, saving (evangelical) repentance and ongoing (Christian) repentance. Provide a brief description of each.

- How does the lecture explain the concept of Christian repentance occurring in scripture without the explicit words "repent" or "repentance"? Provide examples.
- Discuss the dual nature of repentance as both a human responsibility and a gift from God. Provide scriptural support for both aspects.

IV. Faith

- Define faith as presented in the lecture. What key actions and orientations does it involve?
- Why is faith necessary for salvation according to the scriptures cited?
- Differentiate between generic faith in God and specific faith in Christ. Which is saving faith according to the lecture?
- Explore the various Old Testament descriptions of faith. What is the unifying idea behind these different expressions?
- Analyze the different ways the Gospel of John describes faith. What common theme unites these descriptions?
- Explain the traditional post-reformational analysis of faith using the terms *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*. Define each and explain their role in saving faith.
- Why does the lecture emphasize that these are aspects of faith, not steps to faith? What is the danger of viewing them as steps?
- What is the object of saving faith? Why is the object so crucial? Refer to the example of the Jonestown Massacre.
- Distinguish between initial saving faith and ongoing (Christian) faith. Describe the role of each in a believer's life.
- Discuss the dual nature of faith as both a human responsibility and a gift from God. Provide scriptural support for both aspects.

V. Implications for Evangelism and Theology

- How does the understanding of repentance and faith as both God's gift and human responsibility impact preaching the gospel?
- Explain the differences between pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism regarding salvation.

- What are the key points of agreement and disagreement between inclusivists and exclusivists as discussed in the lecture?
- What is the lecture's stance on whether everyone needs to hear the gospel to be saved? What scriptural support is used?

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Explain the relationship between faith and repentance in the context of conversion, using the analogy of a coin.
2. Describe two contrasting examples of conversion presented in the lecture and what they illustrate about the nature of God's work.
3. What is the difference between "evangelical repentance" and "Christian repentance"? Provide a brief characteristic of each.
4. According to Hebrews 11:6, why is faith essential to pleasing God?
5. Differentiate between *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia* as aspects of saving faith.
6. Why does the lecture caution against viewing the aspects of faith (*notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia*) as steps to salvation?
7. Explain why the object of faith is critical for salvation, drawing on the example of the Jonestown Massacre.
8. What does it mean for Christians to "walk by faith, not by sight," according to 2 Corinthians 5:6-7?
9. Summarize the lecture's argument for both repentance and faith being both gifts from God and responsibilities of human beings.
10. Briefly explain the difference between inclusivism and exclusivism regarding the necessity of hearing the gospel for salvation.

Answer Key

1. Faith and repentance are inseparable but distinguishable aspects of conversion. They are like two sides of the same coin: true faith always leads to turning from sin (repentance), and genuine turning from sin involves turning towards God in faith.

2. The conversions of Saul (dramatic, direct encounter with Christ) and Timothy (gradual, nurtured through scripture and family) illustrate that conversion can manifest in different ways but must be genuine. The key is not the manner but the reality of turning to Christ.
3. Evangelical repentance refers to the initial turning from sin towards Christ that accompanies saving faith. Christian repentance is the ongoing process of believers continually turning from sins to God out of gratitude and a desire to glorify Him.
4. Hebrews 11:6 states that without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.
5. *Notitia* refers to the necessary knowledge of the gospel message. *Assensus* is the intellectual agreement with the truth claims of the gospel. *Fiducia* is the personal trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
6. Viewing these as steps can wrongly suggest that salvation is a human work achieved by completing a sequence. Instead, they are intertwined aspects of a wholehearted, sincere faith that God grants.
7. The object of faith is critical because faith is only as good as what it is placed in. The Jonestown Massacre tragically illustrates how great faith in an unworthy object (Jim Jones) leads to destruction rather than salvation. True saving faith must be directed towards Jesus Christ.
8. Walking by faith means living the Christian life relying on God and His promises, even though we do not see Him physically. It is a step-by-step dependence on God's Word and the reality of the glorified Savior, rather than on tangible or visible evidence.
9. The lecture argues that scripture presents both repentance and faith as gifts from God (He enables us to turn and believe) and as human responsibilities (we are commanded to repent and believe). These two truths work together in God's plan of salvation.
10. Inclusivism holds that Jesus is the only Savior, but some may be saved without explicitly hearing the gospel through general revelation. Exclusivism teaches that while Jesus is the only Savior, explicit belief in Him is necessary for salvation, based on the necessity of hearing and responding to the gospel.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the interconnectedness of repentance and faith in the process of conversion, utilizing scriptural examples and the "two sides of one coin" analogy.
2. Analyze the concept of repentance as both a divine gift and a human responsibility, exploring the implications of this duality for understanding salvation and evangelism.
3. Compare and contrast the initial and ongoing aspects of both repentance and faith in the life of a believer, illustrating your points with relevant scriptural references.
4. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the inclusivist and exclusivist perspectives on salvation in light of the biblical understanding of conversion presented in the lecture.
5. Explain the significance of the object of faith in salvation, emphasizing the difference between general faith and specific faith in Jesus Christ and the potential dangers of misplaced faith.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Salvation Applied:** The process by which God brings the salvation He planned and Christ accomplished into the lives of His people, primarily through union with Christ.
- **Conversion:** A person's initial turning from sin (repentance) to God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a theological shorthand for repentance and faith working together.
- **Repentance:** A heartfelt turning away from sin, acknowledging its wrongness and expressing godly sorrow, which necessarily involves a turning towards God.
- **Faith:** Believing in Christ, trusting Him as Savior, and owning Him as Lord. It involves knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*), and trust (*fiducia*).
- **Justification:** (Mentioned as a new topic at the end of the excerpt) The act by which God declares a sinner righteous in His sight through faith in Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice.

- **Evangelical Repentance:** The initial, saving repentance that occurs at the point of conversion.
- **Christian Repentance:** The ongoing process of believers continually turning from sins to God throughout their lives.
- **Initial Saving Faith:** The faith that accompanies conversion and results in a person's salvation.
- **Ongoing (Christian) Faith:** The continuous reliance on and trust in God that characterizes the daily life of a believer.
- **Notitia:** (Latin for knowledge) The cognitive understanding of the facts of the gospel message.
- **Assensus:** (Latin for assent) The intellectual agreement with the truth claims of the gospel.
- **Fiducia:** (Latin for trust) The personal reliance on and commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- **Pluralism:** The theological view that all religions and philosophies lead to God.
- **Inclusivism:** The theological view that Jesus is the only Savior, but people can be saved without explicit knowledge of Him through general revelation.
- **Exclusivism:** The theological view that Jesus is the only Savior, and explicit belief in Him (through hearing the gospel) is necessary for salvation.
- **Syncretism:** The combining of different religious beliefs or practices.
- **General Revelation:** God's communication of Himself to all people through nature and conscience.
- **Lausanne Covenant:** A significant document outlining the beliefs and commitments of global evangelical Christians.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Salvation, Session 11, Conversion, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Conversion, Repentance, and Faith

1. What is meant by "conversion" in a theological context? Conversion is the process by which God brings the salvation He planned and Christ accomplished into the lives of believers. It is often described as "salvation applied." Biblically, conversion is essentially shorthand for the inseparable yet distinguishable acts of repentance (turning from sin) and faith (turning to Christ). It is not viewed as a set of sequential steps performed by humans, but rather as two sides of the same act of turning.

2. What is repentance and what role does it play in conversion? Repentance is the act of turning away from sin. It involves a change of mind regarding sin, a recognition of its wrongness, and a turning from it. In conversion, true faith invariably leads to repentance, as one cannot genuinely turn to God without turning away from what separates them from Him. Scripture sometimes mentions repentance alone as a call to salvation, implying faith in the coming Messiah or in Jesus.

3. What is faith and what is its role in conversion? Faith is the act of turning to God, specifically to Christ as He is offered in the gospel. It involves believing in Jesus, trusting Him as Savior, and owning Him as Lord. Scripture frequently lists faith as the sole condition of salvation, implying that genuine faith includes a turning from sin. Faith is not merely intellectual assent but involves personal trust in Christ for salvation.

4. Are repentance and faith two separate steps a person must take to be saved? No, repentance and faith are not two separate steps but rather two inseparable aspects of a single act of conversion. They are described as "two sides of one coin." Turning from sin (repentance) inherently involves turning towards something else, which is faith in Christ. While distinguishable in definition, they occur simultaneously.

5. Is conversion always a dramatic event like the Apostle Paul's, or can it be a more gradual process? Scripture illustrates that conversion can occur in various ways. The dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul) involved a powerful encounter with the risen Christ. In contrast, Timothy's conversion was a more gradual process, nurtured from infancy through the teaching of Scripture by his mother and grandmother. The key is that the conversion is genuine, whether dramatic or quiet, involving a true turning from sin and to Christ.

6. Is repentance and faith a one-time event, or do they continue throughout a Christian's life? While there is an initial saving repentance (evangelical repentance) and initial saving faith, both repentance and faith are also ongoing aspects of the Christian life (Christian repentance and Christian faith). Christians continually turn from sins to God out of gratitude to Jesus and a desire to glorify Him. Similarly, the Christian life is lived by faith, walking step by step with God, trusting in the unseen Savior.

7. Are repentance and faith solely human responsibilities, or does God play a role in them? The Bible teaches that both repentance and faith are simultaneously gifts from God and responsibilities of human beings. God graciously grants repentance, enabling sinners to turn to Him, and He also gives the gift of faith by drawing people to Christ. At the same time, individuals are exhorted to repent and believe, and they are held responsible for their lack of faith. This reflects God's sovereignty and human agency working together in salvation.

8. Does everyone need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ to be saved? The lecture emphasizes an "exclusivist" viewpoint, asserting that while Jesus' death and resurrection are ontologically necessary for salvation for all, epistemologically, people need to hear the gospel message and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. This view contrasts with pluralism (all religions lead to God) and inclusivism (salvation is possible through general revelation or sincere seeking in other religions). The speaker advocates for the necessity of proclaiming the gospel to all the world, trusting that God will work through His Word to bring His people to Himself.