

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33, "Conversion"

Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 4:17-24

Lesson Aim	To understand that conversion is a part of the process of sanctification, which is a lifelong pursuit.
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 33 and Ephesians 4:17-24 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>What is the popular conception of conversion? Many people think of it as the experience of coming to faith in Christ. In this popular conception, it is believed that when a person "accepts Jesus into his heart," then he suddenly changes from a bad, evil person to a godly, righteous person. This experience is often described as being dramatic.</p> <p>What is the biblical conception of conversion? There are two senses. <u>First</u>, in the strict sense, it is a person coming to faith in Christ for the first time. This happens when one hears the preaching of Christ in the Word. When this happens, the person is worked upon by the Spirit through the Word preached. <u>Second</u>, in the sense of the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, conversion is the lifelong process of "putting off the old self (man) and putting on the new self (man)."</p> <p>What does Paul mean by "putting off the old man and putting on the new man?" <u>First</u>, we have already, in an objective sense, put off the old man when we came to faith in Christ. That is, we are no longer defined by our relationship to Adam; his sin is no longer imputed to us. Rather, we've been imputed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must put off the old ways of sin, hating it and resisting the temptation to sin. And when we do fall into sin, we must repent of it with the purpose of not repeating it. This is a continual process. <u>Second</u>, when we came to faith in Christ, in an objective sense, we put on the new man. That is, we are now defined by our relationship to Jesus Christ who is our Lord and Savior. Now, we are required to act according to this new reality. That is, we must seek to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16ff.). This means that we must follow Christ all the days of our lives bearing our own crosses, dying to ourselves and following Christ despite the suffering that comes with it. Also, we focus on doing good works, which are only those done from true faith, according to the Law of God, for his glory; and not such as rest on our own opinion, or the commandments of men (Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 91).</p>
Bible Reading	Matthew 8-14 (Reading through the Gospels)