

THE TURNING POINT

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Psalm 119:59.

That old familiar word "conversion" represents a genuine human experience, stands for a process that takes place in actual human hearts. When a man talks about his own life, about the things that have happened to him, about his various experiences, he does not use the stilted phraseology of schools and systems, but he uses the speech of every day. Such simplicity is very expressive and impressive. It is provocative of thought. Here, for instance, is a man who very plainly says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Technically we describe this as conversion; but how arresting, impressive, and suggestive to have that great experience spoken of in this simple way; how real and vital it appears to be when the very process is unfolded and set forth as a transcript of actual experience, a page torn from the man's religious diary!

This man is giving us a bit of his personal history. He is telling us how life took on a new departure for him. Human experience is a most abidingly interesting something. We delight to hear of the struggles, the failures and the triumphs of people. The experience of a soul with God is most gripping.

The Psalmist have made life's supreme discovery. How did he come to make it? What road did he travel? What was the secret of his conversion? What marked the turning point in his life? What was it that brought him to God? It was no momentary impulse of remorse consequent on some frightful sin; no terror caused by some sudden sense of the nearness of death; no stress of some affliction; no vision of judgment. What, then, started him on the quest for truth and the longing for salvation and godliness?

It was the outcome of thinking. He was thinking about himself. "I thought on my ways," said he. That was what started it. All right conduct has its source in right thinking. All wrong conduct is born of wrong thinking. He was somehow made to think. It is a good day in the life of any person when he is brought to do some straight thinking. Many of life's supreme tragedies are results, not of viciousness, cruelty, etc., but our thoughtlessness. A large number of accidents are due to sheer carelessness. They are born of a refusal to think. Many fine opportunities are thrown away because people refuse to think. Many trifle with their educational opportunities, fail to look ahead, and refuse to prepare for a definite task. The Psalmist said, "I thought on my ways." That is what God means for everybody to do. If you would live rightly and well, you must think.

I. What Led To His Thinking?

1. Perhaps it was a sense of the sheer futility of life as he was living it. He found himself in the grip of unsatisfied hungers. He was tortured by thirsts that the fountains of this earth had not been able to slake. In all probability he was driven to thinking by the aching void which this world could not fill.
2. Perhaps some terrible calamity burst upon him and left his life in ruins. Dire tragedy was upon him. The treasures to which he had clung were ruthlessly wrung from his hands. The staff upon which he had leaned was knocked from under him. He wondered if there was not a hand somewhere that could help him. It may be that he was made thoughtful by having his heart broken.
3. Perhaps he came in contact with a life of such rare spiritual beauty that it made his own seem paltry and cheap. The day before he perhaps thought, "I am as good as the average." About such a life of beauty, which he did not possess, there was a peace to which he was a stranger, so he was driven to the conclusion that God was back of his radiant life.

II. What Was The Outcome Of His Thinking?

1. He was forced to the conclusion that he was traveling in the wrong direction. He was forced to say to himself: "Life is not counting for me as it ought to count. I am not realizing the possibilities that I ought to realize. I am not traveling in the direction I ought to travel."
2. He took the next step, namely, he turned. He said, "I will get right." He changed his course. He went in the opposite direction.
3. It brought him to a newness of life. This turning is what the Bible calls repentance. Whoever so thinks and turns always finds God. This is true without exception. May this text be part of the biography of every one!

III. Why Is Thinking On Our Ways Neglected?

1. Lack of courage.
2. Occupation with other things.
3. The unpleasantness of it.

IV. When Is Thinking On Our Ways Wisely Conducted?

1. When honestly done.
2. When thoroughly carried out.
3. When the Scriptures are made the reference and standard.
4. When divine help is sought.

If God thinks upon our ways, and He does, it surely behooves us to think upon them. Self-examination will result in amendment of life. When a man turns his feet, he turns completely. That is not true if he turns his eyes, head or hands.